

SHARING OUR SPACES: FOXES



Practical advice for living alongside our wild neighbours

Foxes are highly adaptable animals and their versatility has allowed them to thrive in a variety of habitats, from isolated woodlands to city centres.

Those living in urban areas see precious little wildlife and foxes are likely to be the only wild mammal with whom they have any contact – we should be thrilled and willing to tolerate small inconveniences. However, while there is no real danger from foxes, some people may prefer to discourage them from their gardens and so this factsheet is designed to provide practical advice for living alongside foxes.

SUMMARY

- Reduce available food. Make sure bin lids are secure and only put refuse sacks out before collection. Bungee cords work well to secure bins
- Don't overfeed birds
- Replace fish-based or bone fertilisers with plant-based alternatives
- Use music, such as a radio left on in a shed, to deter vixens and her cubs
- Use proprietary repellents such as Get Off My Garden, which is harmless and effective
- Block gaps in fences and obstruct well-used pathways
- Fix leaky taps. Water is foxes' scarcest resource so removing the temptation will prevent visitors

Digging in your garden

Depending on the time of year, a fox will dig for several reasons: for food, to create a safe, quiet place to breed, to create a bolthole for safety, or simply to find a route across their territory. They may also dig if they can smell fish or bone fertiliser, as they're looking for a non-existent carcass.



What can you do?

You can deter foxes with products like Wash and Get Off, Scoot Fox Repellent, and Get Off My Garden, which are widely available in garden centres and DIY stores. The latter is a harmless gel, which can be sprinkled around affected areas. You can also block holes in fences and replace fish-based or bone fertilisers with plant-based alternatives.

If you find you have a vixen and her cubs in your garden, under your shed for example, the noise from a radio may be enough to encourage her to move on. Soaking some rags in 'Get Off My Garden' and loosely blocking gaps may also work – but please don't block holes very tightly, with bricks for example, as this will prevent their escape and they could starve to death. Each morning, replace the rags and once they've not been moved for a few days, you'll know the foxes have moved on.

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Fouling and noise

Foxes are just like dogs; they signpost their territory with scent to ward off strange foxes.

They can also be noisy during breeding season, which runs from late December to February. As they are largely





active at night, this can be a nuisance. However, each episode is usually short-lived, and the breeding season only lasts a few weeks.

What can you do?

Smell is very important to foxes, so using an artificial scent is a great way of deterring them. Again, Get Off My Garden is a harmless and effective solution. Foxes are creatures of habit and will have favourite spots for sunbathing, for example, so target these areas may work.

Whilst it may be impossible to rid your neighbourhood of all noise, you can limit foxes' access to your property by ensuring that there are no gaps under sheds or patios, or by using any of the repellents already mentioned.

Getting too close

Foxes are naturally shy creatures who will do their best to avoid confrontations with people. The media often wrongly demonises foxes and bites are extremely rare. Foxes are also unlikely to attack cats or dogs, preferring to flee than risk injuring themselves.

What can you do?

The best advice is to learn to co-exist with foxes; to delight in their visits to your garden and watch their cubs grow and flourish. However, if you would prefer to deter contact, then ensure you have secure fencing – especially vital for any small animals, such as rabbits and chickens. Fox-proof fencing must have mesh-welded wire, solid floors, and secure locks. There are more sophisticated deterrents available through specialist companies, but these must be fitted by a professional.



Please note that killing foxes does not work – kill one and another will take their place – and only serves to make money for so-called 'pest' controllers. Fox numbers are self-regulating, which means no amount of 'culling' will affect the population. Most councils now concede that killing does not work and is costly to you, the taxpayer.

For more advice contact Humane Wildlife Solutions:
www.humanewildlifesolutions.co.uk or phone 07771 361226

