

Arctic Fox

Vulpes lagopus

The Arctic Fox has been in Iceland for thousands of years, presumably from the end of the last Ice Age. The oldest remains of Arctic foxes in Iceland are around 3500 years old. The Icelandic Arctic Fox is special because of the long isolation from other populations and their adaptation of the conditions in Iceland.

The Arctic Fox is found in the Northern Hemisphere on islands and mainland. The southernmost point where they live are around the Hudson-bay in Canada at 53°N and the northernmost point is in Northern Greenland at 88°N.

They have two colour phases, either white or a rust-brown colour. The rust-brown colour is very variable, the foxes can be very dark but also almost grey-silver like. The white coloured foxes are almost completely white in wintertime but in summer they are bicoloured, grey-brownish on the back and light on their abdomen.



The foxes have mostly been considered as a vermin in Iceland, especially by sheep farmers as they are known to prey on small lambs. Most municipalities in Iceland pay hunters to kill foxes and empty fox dens each year.

Náttúrufræðistofnun Íslands. (e.d.) Melrakki. Sótt af <https://www.ni.is/dyr/spendyr/melrakki>

Image: Phil Garcia, taken from <https://www.ni.is/dyr/spendyr/melrakki>