

Arctic fox *Vulpes lagopus*

The arctic fox and the lemming are the only mammals that are associated with the woodless mountain areas (*kalfjället*).

The arctic fox occurs in two different color variants, which makes it unique among European mammals. In Sweden, the "white" variant is most common. It is white in winter but brown with a yellow-white underside in its summer fur. The "blue" variety, on the other hand, is blue-grey all year round and only makes up about 10-20% of the Swedish stock. This is despite the fact that the predisposition for blue-grey fur color is dominant, which means that if a fox has a genetic predisposition for white fur color, and a predisposition for blue, then it will be blue. The arctic fox is best adapted to a mountain climate where it is better to be white. The blue foxes are not doing as well.

The arctic fox has the warmest fur known among carnivores, and it is really needed when the winter storms sweep over the mountains. It also has hair-covered tread pads, which is another adaptation to an arctic climate. Hence, it has also received its scientific name *lagopus*, which means "hair on feet".

The mountain fox is highly dependent on the availability of small rodents, especially lemmings. The number of lemmings fluctuates, normally with a 4-year cycle. In some summers they are abundant, while in other years they may be completely gone. The number of arctic fox litters born, and the size of the litter, varies with the lemming supply. In bad rodent years, sometimes no pups are born at all, while a pair of arctic foxes in a good year can have more than ten pups in a litter. The record in Sweden is 16 puppies in one and the same litter.

An arctic fox territory is about 25 square kilometers in size and is normally located on a mountain plateau. One territory usually contains several dens, and the foxes can move the puppies to another lair when disturbed. In Lapland, the arctic fox has its strongest stronghold within Padjelanta National Park.

The arctic fox was declared protected in Sweden in 1928, but the tribe has not recovered. Today there are fewer than 100 individuals. The arctic fox is thus our most endangered mammal.

In the stand, you will see an arctic fox of the white variety with her pups. The adult fox has not yet had time to change to summer fur, even though it is the middle of summer. This is very rare but can occur. The animals in the showcase comes from Iceland where they are still hunted.