



Small Worlds Around Us

By
Lynn W.
Watkins

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The Fox Is Pretty 'Foxy' After All

Deep in his underground burrow, where the sun or light of day never comes, the red fox knew it was night. The fox is one of the characters that has for many years built up a reputation for being very wise and clever.

Extending credit where it is due, it must be admitted the fox does some clever things. In fact, because the animal is unusually alert, he has been credited with actions the serious student of animal behavior can hardly credit. The flea business is a classic example. The story has been repeated many times. Those who believe it claim to actually have watched the entire performance.

Sink or Swim

The fox, infested with fleas, grabs a stick in its mouth and swims out into a small lake or pool, holding the stick crossways in its mouth. Arriving in deep water, the fox allows its body to sink, keeping only its nose above the surface. The flea, like a drowning man trying to grab even a straw crawls toward the fox's head and arriving there, sees the stick and crawls out on it.

When the fox feels that all the fleas are on the stick, the canny animal lets go of the stick and swims ashore, leaving all the fleas stranded.

The fox is capable of some pretty smart tricks, but whether or not this is one of them is still a debatable question. However, the fox does exercise considerable judgment in another department that bespeaks of cleverness. And this has been observed many times.

Reluctant To 'Hole-Up'

The animal seems pretty sure when robbing a hen-roost to invade one that is far removed from his den, keeping its immediate vicinity unsullied by poultry killings. Even when hard-pressed by hounds a fox seems reluctant to "hole up" in its own den and will do so only as a last desperate resort.

By nature they only hunt by night, spending the day-time hours snugly curled up in an underground den with their bushy brush of a tail carefully wrapped around them.

None in South

The fox is pretty generally distributed throughout all the northern half of the world from tropical zones to the lands in the far north. None are known to live in the southern hemisphere. The species is hopelessly intermingled.

The red fox, which our forefathers hunted in Virginia and the one which the English sportsman hunts while dressed up in a red suit and astride a horse, is the best known. It was this one, too, that most of the fairy tales were written about.

The red fox in the fable did not want sour grapes as Aesop wrote in the nursery tale. Technically, it would seem a little far-fetched to say any fox would eat grapes; it would much prefer a mouse, squirrel or a rabbit.

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