



Photo by Berns Miller

# FOXES

## in the Wildland Urban Interface

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**T**hroughout most of the eastern and southeastern United States, foxes are often admired for their cunning and stealthy nature. To some people, seeing a fox in the wild is a captivating experience that awes and amazes. To others, the sight of foxes or physical evidence of their presence is unsettling. In recent years, the latter emotion has commonly been expressed as this canine species has made itself progressively more prominent within urban areas. As the sightings of foxes increase around homes and schools, the public's concern for children and pets has also increased.

Foxes are stealthy by nature and are most active during the early hours of morning and night. If weather permits, they will

also move during mid-day, such as when it is dark and gloomy. They readily adapt to most habitats within their range and have successfully established breeding populations within urban areas. Red and gray foxes have taken to this fragmented habitat arrangement quite well. Due to the abundance of readily available food sources such as pet food, compost piles, and even small pets, foxes are able to successfully establish den sites. However, it is not just food sources that attract them. Their ability to take advantage of undisturbed areas such as crawl spaces under homes, brush piles, and hollow trees allows them to live, feed, and breed year-round relatively undetected.

Although foxes are not generally destructive, disturbing odors are often emitted from their dens and they have the ability to carry and contract diseases such as rabies, canine distemper, and mange. Proactive methods and equipment have been developed (moving pet food indoors/exclusions around compost piles as well as frightening devices/repellants) to deter them from residing and feeding close to areas of concern.

If you have nuisance fox problems, check with your district Department of Conservation and Natural Resources office and local law enforcement officials to ensure that the approach you take is lawful and not disturbing to your neighbors. For more information on foxes and other potential nuisance animal concerns, visit [www.out-dooralabama.com](http://www.out-dooralabama.com).<sup>®</sup>



Photo by Joseph Berger, Bugwood.org

*Red fox found sleeping in the backyard.*