

Cape Fox

Silwervos *Vulpes chama*

Description The coat appears to be silvery-grey at close range, but grey at a distance. The upper front legs are reddish-brown and there are dark brown patches on the buttocks. The head is reddish-brown and the cheeks white, the throat is dull yellow and the belly white with a ruddy sheen. The tail is darker in colour, and long and bushy with a black tip. It is the only true fox in Southern Africa. It is more slender than the Bat-eared Fox and the ears are not as large.

Sexual dimorphism Males are slightly heavier than females.

Habitat Open plains with or without shrubs, open dry areas with trees, Karoo bushveld and fynbos.

Habits The Cape Fox is solitary and mainly nocturnal. It is most active just after sunset and just before sunrise. During the day it sleeps in a hole in the ground or in the shelter of tall grass. It defends a small area around its den when raising young. The Cape Fox is a strong digger and digs its own burrow or simply adapts an old springhare hole. It is a skilled mice hunter but, contrary to popular belief, does not prey on sheep or lambs.

Voice A high-pitched, howling bark.

Breeding 1 to 5 young are born from October to November after a gestation period of $\pm$ 2 months.

