

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# The Big-Eared, Bushy-Tailed Fennec Fox

by Guy Belleranti

In the deserts of North Africa and Saudi Arabia lives the smallest of all foxes with the largest of ears. This animal is the fennec fox.

Fennec foxes have ears that are 5 to 6 inches long. That's big for an animal that weighs less than four pounds. Their ears help shed body heat. And, as you may have guessed, they also provide great hearing.

It's interesting to compare the big ears of fennec foxes to the small ears of arctic foxes. Arctic foxes live in cold climates, so they don't need to shed heat. Instead, they need to save heat. Big ears would not save heat and would probably even cause an arctic fox to overheat.

It's also interesting to compare the needs of fennec foxes to those of arctic foxes. Both live in desert environments, but their needs are very different. Deserts aren't a cold environment like arctic regions. Deserts can be very hot. The large ears of fennec foxes help them cool down by shedding heat. They also help them hear prey at night. They have thick fur on their bodies and tails that they use as a blanket. And the hair on their feet helps protect them from the hot sand in the daytime.



Fennec foxes live in small communities of burrows or dens. They spend most of the day sleeping in their dens, out of the hot sun. Then, when night falls, they come out to hunt for food.



## ~PREVIEW~

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insects, lizards, snails, fruit and leaves.

Fennec fox mothers give birth to a litter of one to five babies (called kits). The average life span of a Fennec fox is 10 to 12 years.

The cream coloration of fennec foxes help them blend into their desert habitat. Still, they have to watch out for predators. These include caracals (a type of wild cat), jackals, eagle owls, hyenas and humans. Humans catch them for their fur and to sell as exotic pets.

## About the Author

Guy Belleranti works as a docent at Reid Park Zoo in Tucson, Arizona. The information in this article comes from his experiences working with animals and teaching others.

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1. List two ways the fennec fox's ears help it to survive.

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2. Why does a fennec fox have thick hair?

- a. to help it survive in cold, arctic climates
- b. to help it survive in the cold, desert night
- c. to help it hear enemies approaching
- d. to help it shed heat



3. Where might you find a fennec fox in the wild?



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4. Name \_\_\_\_\_

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5. Name some animals that are prey to the fennec fox.

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6. A fennec fox just had a litter of kits. Which number of kits would the fox be most likely to have?

- a. two
- b. seven
- c. ten
- d. twelve

**Challenge:** With a parent or teacher's help, use the Internet to print out facts about fennec foxes and arctic foxes. Then, make a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the two species.

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# The Big-Eared, Bushy-Tailed Fennec Fox

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Some of the sentences below are true. Others are false.

Read each sentence. If the sentence is true, write the word true on the line. If the sentence is false, cross out the underlined word(s) and write a new word on the line to make the sentence true.



1. A baby fennec fox is called a cub. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Fennec foxes are nocturnal. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Fennec foxes have long ears.  
A cartoon illustration of a superhero boy with brown hair, wearing a red suit and a blue cape. He is holding a shield with a map of North Africa on it. To his right, the word "PREVIEW" is written in large, bold, red letters with a wavy underline.
4. The heat of the day keeps them from hunting.  
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5. Fennec foxes have ears that are about 6 inches long. \_\_\_\_\_
6. A caracal is a type of wild cat. \_\_\_\_\_
7. Fennec foxes search for food in the afternoon. \_\_\_\_\_
8. Fennec foxes live about 20 years. \_\_\_\_\_
9. Fennec foxes spend a lot of time sleeping during the daylight hours. \_\_\_\_\_
10. Fennec foxes live in communities of burrows or dens. \_\_\_\_\_

# ANSWER KEY

## The Big-Eared, Bushy-Tailed Fennec Fox

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1. List two ways the fennec fox's ears help it to survive.

**Their ears help them shed body heat and provide great hearing.**

2. Why does a fennec fox have thick hair? **b**

- a. to help it survive in cold, arctic climates
- b. to help it survive in the cold, desert night**
- c. to help it hear enemies approaching
- d. to help it shed heat



3. Where might you find a fennec fox in the wild? **d**

- a. Brazil
- b. France**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Fennec**



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5. Name some animals that are prey to the fennec fox.

**Fennec foxes hunt and eat birds, insects, lizards, and snails.**

6. A fennec fox just had a litter of kits. Which number of kits would the fox be most likely to have? **a**

- a. two**
- b. seven
- c. ten
- d. twelve

**Challenge:** With a parent or teacher's help, use the Internet to print out facts about fennec foxes and arctic foxes. Then, make a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the two species.

# ANSWER KEY

## The Big-Eared, Bushy-Tailed Fennec Fox

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Some of the sentences below are true. Others are false.

Read each sentence. If the sentence is true, write the word true on the line. If the sentence is false, cross out the underlined word(s) and write a new word on the line to make the sentence true.



1. A baby fennec fox is called a cub. **kit**
2. Fennec foxes are nocturnal. **true**
3. Fennec foxes have long ears that are about 6 inches long. **true**
4. The highest mountain in Africa is Mount Kilimanjaro. **highest**
5. Fennec foxes have ears that are about 6 inches long. **true**
6. A caracal is a type of wild cat. **true**
7. Fennec foxes search for food in the afternoon. **at night**
8. Fennec foxes live about 20 years. **10 to 12 years**
9. Fennec foxes spend a lot of time sleeping during the daylight hours. **true**
10. Fennec foxes live in communities of burrows or dens. **true**

