

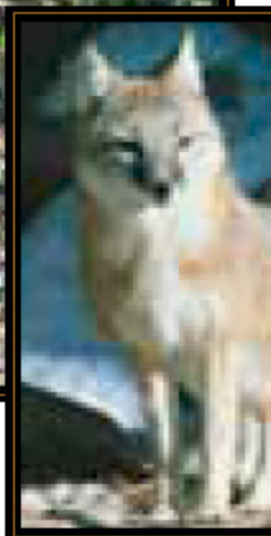
# KIT FOX

*Vulpes macrotis* (Endangered Colorado)

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**Kit foxes look similar to swift foxes (at right), which are classified as species of special concern.**



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**T**HIS SPECIES IS A SMALL fox of the Southwest desert weighing only about 3-6 pounds. They closely resemble swift foxes found on the eastern plains of Colorado, but have larger ears and a more angular appearance. They have long, black-tipped, bushy tails and yellowish to gray, grizzled coats.

Kit foxes occupy sparsely covered, semi-desert shrublands of saltbrush, shadscale and greasewood. Most of their range is in west-central Colorado around Montrose to Grand Junction. Colorado represents the eastern periphery of their range that extends across the Southwest United States into Mexico.

They prey mostly on cottontail rabbits, jackrabbits and kangaroo rats but will eat birds, reptiles and insects when prey is scarce.

They spend most of the day in their dens that are scattered around the landscape and are very important for raising young and avoiding predators, such as coyotes. The dens are scattered around

their territories, and they move from one den to the other while hunting at night. Kit fox cannot inhabit areas with rocky substrata, where den sites are limited but the area would otherwise be suitable habitat.

Conversion of native habitat to agriculture and development has resulted in loss of habitat. Predation by coyotes, road-kill, trapping, shooting and predator poisoning and are the main causes of mortality.

Once a furbearer in Colorado, the kit fox has been protected in Colorado since 1994.

A four-year study (1992-1996) by the Colorado Division of Wildlife and the University of Northern Colorado located only 47 individuals, most in one small population east of Delta. The statewide population is estimated to be less than 100 animals.

It will be very difficult to recover the kit fox in the state since most of their suitable habitat has already been lost to development and agriculture. However, their prospects appear better in other states in their range.