

TECHNICAL NOTES

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

WYOMING

SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE

Biology No. 122

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Subject: GRAY FOX*

General

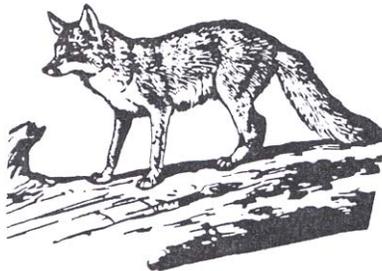
The gray fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*) is a common Colorado resident of grassland, scrub, pinyon-juniper, ponderosa pine, and riparian habitats. The gray fox is secretive and inconspicuous and mainly active at night.

Food Requirements

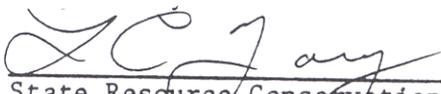
The feeding habits of the gray fox are largely dependent upon the availability of prey items. Rodents and rabbits are principal prey species and are eaten throughout the year, although utilization of these and other foods fluctuates by season. Over a 5-year period, an analysis of gray fox stomach contents in Georgia showed the following average annual composition: mammals, 40.0 percent; invertebrates, 35.0 percent; vegetations, 15.3 percent; birds, 8.1 percent; reptiles and amphibians, 1.4 percent. Rodents are a major component in the gray fox's diet in this region and the drier western regions of the United States.

Water Requirements

Three gray fox dens studied in New York were within 1,000 ft (300 m) of water. A permanent water source was found within 0.25 miles (0.4 km) of gray fox dens in Alabama.



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*Information taken from Ecoregion M3113 Handbook and Habitat Suitability Index Models, Wildlife Species Narratives (literature searches), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, various dates between 1978-1984.

Cover Requirements

Cover is used by the gray fox for resting, foraging, and seclusion of the den site. The gray fox inhabits scrublands and bushy woodland on hilly, rough, rocky terrain. Gray foxes in California showed a preference for riparian areas. Other habitat types frequented in California, in order of decreasing frequency of use, were agricultural areas, old field habitats, and areas in the vicinity of human activity.

Reproductive Requirements

Den sites of the gray fox are normally located in dense cover. Dens have been located in scrap and brush piles, under buildings, and in naturally occurring cavities in rocks and trees. The gray fox may use burrows excavated by other animals, including those of the red fox. Soils composed of sand and gravel were preferred in New York for digging burrows. Dens are used as nest sites and both young and dens are protected by the adult foxes who may use the same den for a number of years.

Special Habitat Requirements

No information on special habitat requirements was found in the literature.

Interspersion Requirements

Ecotonal areas provide a variety of foraging sites and are preferred by the gray fox. Gray fox home ranges vary in size from 12 acres (4.8 ha) in highly productive riparian areas up to 576 acres (730.4 ha) in semiarid regions. Variability in home range size is dependent upon a number of factors, including productivity of the site, season, sex, and age of the animal.