

**San Joaquin kit fox (*Vulpes macrotis mutica*)**  
Status - Federal: Endangered; California: Threatened



Photo: Bernard Peyton

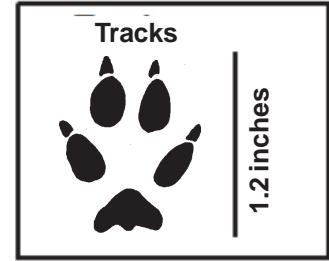
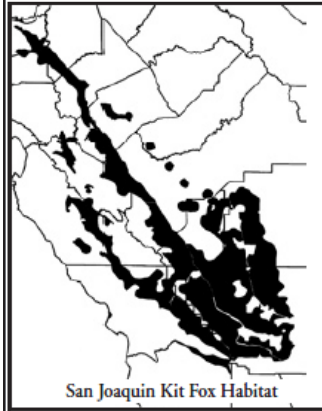
The San Joaquin kit fox is distinguished by its small size (four to six pounds), large ears, long legs, buffy tan color and black-tipped tail. The kit fox primarily lives in the flatlands of California's Central Valley; south of Contra Costa County.

**Biology** - Kit foxes spend most of the day in their soft, sandy burrows and leave hunting for the twilight and nighttime hours. They feed primarily on ground squirrels, kangaroo rats, desert cottontails, mice, insects, carrion and ground-nesting birds. Kit foxes appear to survive without drinking water, an adaptation to desert conditions, --

California Department of Pesticide Regulation  
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- obtaining all their water in the form of preformed and metabolic water from their prey.

The foxes are capable of breeding at age one, but may not breed their first year. Reproductive females clean and enlarge natal or pupping dens in September and October. Mating occurs in late December or early January. Litters of three to five are born in late February or early March. During nursing the female is rarely seen hunting, it is thought that the male does most of the hunting. Pups emerge from their den at one month of age, and may already be weaned.

**Characteristics** - The San Joaquin kit fox has a small (20 in.), slender (5 lbs.) body. Its ears are large (3.25 in.). It has a long (12 in.), bushy, black-tipped tail. Its legs are long and slender. The feet are small, with much hair between the pads. The coat is light in color: tan in summer and pale gray in winter.

**Distribution** - Kit foxes were once widely distributed on the valley floor and the adjacent low foothills of the San Joaquin Valley. Today, its range has been reduced (see map) to some regions of the following counties: Alameda, Contra Costa, San Joaquin, Fresno, Kings, Madera, Merced, San Benito, Stanislaus, Tulare, Monterey, Kern, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura.