

# River Bend Naturalists Notebook

Presented by: RIVER BEND NATURE CENTER, Faribault, MN 55021

## GRAY FOX

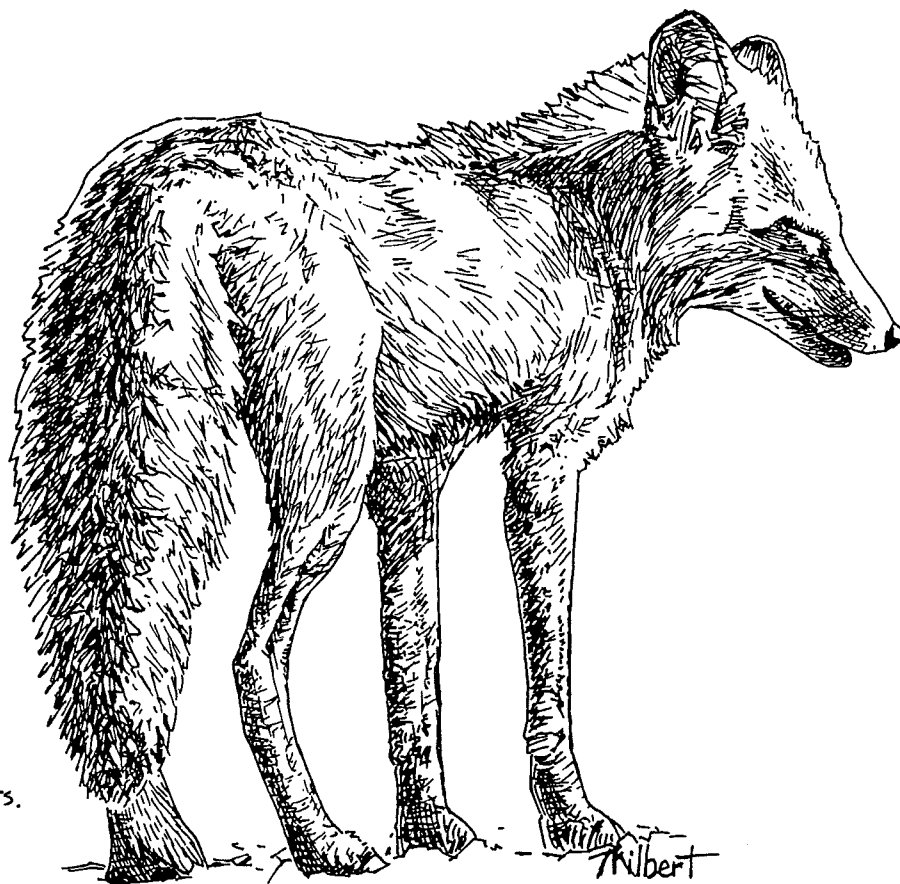
*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*

The Gray Fox is about the same size as the Red Fox, but is not generally as heavy; weighing from 5 to 14 pounds. The Gray Fox has an overall gray appearance. Down the middle of the back is a distinct black stripe, which extends onto the tail, which is tipped with black. (The fur underneath is yellowish buff in color, as well as the legs and feet, the back of the ears and the sides of the neck.

The Gray Fox is definitely an animal of the brush country. In contrast, the Red Fox favors more open habitats. While it is occasionally seen in most parts of the state, it is more common in the southeastern portions. It is a very shy animal and is seldom seen.

Even though their food habits are similar to those of the Red Fox, they more often feed on cottontail rabbits than on meadow voles. The Gray Fox is more nearly omnivorous than the Red Fox, frequently consuming insects which make up nearly half of the diet. In addition eggs are eaten, and all sorts of plant materials including acorns.

Like the Red Fox, the Gray Fox are



monogamous and mate from January to March. The den most often is a hollow tree or log, or in a pile of slash or rocks.

Gray Fox are the only members of the dog family that can climb trees, which they will do when pursued, when chasing squirrels, or even simply to sun themselves. The bark of the Gray Fox is louder than that of the Red Fox, and they also growl and squeal.— text by Orwin A. Rustad