

Awesome Ears & Amazing Appetites: All About Bat-Eared Foxes!

Hello Explorer! What's That Fox with the GIANT Ears? (10 minutes)

Have you ever seen a fox? Most foxes have pointy ears, but today we're going to learn about a very special fox with HUGE ears – the bat-eared fox! Why do you think they have such big ears? Let's find out!

Activity: Show a picture or search online for an image of a bat-eared fox. Ask the student:

- What's the first thing you notice about this animal?
- Where do you think it might live based on its appearance?

Discovering the Bat-Eared Fox (25-30 minutes)

Let's dive deeper into the world of these amazing animals!

1. Who Are They and Where Do They Live?

Bat-eared foxes (their scientific name is *Otocyon megalotis*) are small, African canids. They are not closely related to bats, but their enormous ears give them their name!

Watch & Learn: Search for a short, age-appropriate video about bat-eared foxes (e.g., search for "Bat-Eared Fox Fun Facts," "Amazing Animals: Bat-Eared Fox"). Look for videos showing them in their natural habitat and foraging.

Discussion Point:

- What did you see the bat-eared fox doing in the video?
- What did its home look like? (Grasslands, savannas, arid areas of eastern and southern Africa).
- (Optional: Use a map to locate Africa and these regions).

2. Super Ears & Super Diet!

Those big ears aren't just for show! Bat-eared foxes have incredible hearing. They can even hear insects moving underground!

Main Food Source: Insects! Especially harvester termites. They also eat other insects like beetles, ants, grasshoppers, as well as small rodents, lizards, and fruit.

How the Ears Help: They listen for the sounds of insects. Their large ears act like satellite dishes, catching faint sounds. They often forage by walking slowly, head down, listening intently.

Activity - Sound Seekers (Optional):

- Hide a few small toy insects (or crinkle some paper to represent insects) under a light blanket or in a box with some filler material.
- Have the student close their eyes and try to locate the "insects" by listening to you make tiny scratching or rustling sounds near them.

- Discuss how much harder it is for us than for a bat-eared fox!

3. Fox Families and Friends

Bat-eared foxes are quite social. They often live in pairs or small family groups. They communicate with each other using a variety of yips, barks, and growls, as well as body language.

Pups are usually born in dens dug by the parents. Both male and female parents help raise the young.

Did you know? Bat-eared foxes have more teeth than most other canids – up to 50 tiny teeth perfect for crunching insects!

Show What You Know! Creative Corner (20-25 minutes)

Now it's time to get creative and show what you've learned about the amazing bat-eared fox!

Choose ONE of the following activities:

1. **Draw a Bat-Eared Fox:** Draw a picture of a bat-eared fox in its habitat. Be sure to include its big ears! Label its key features (ears, bushy tail, insect prey).
2. **Create a Fact Sheet:** Design a mini-poster or fact sheet about the bat-eared fox. Include 3-5 interesting facts you learned, its habitat, and what it eats. You can draw pictures to go with your facts.
3. **Build a Bat-Eared Fox Diorama:** (More advanced/longer activity) Use a shoebox or small box to create a diorama of a bat-eared fox's habitat. You can draw or make a small fox and insects.
4. **Write a Short Story:** Write a short story from the perspective of a bat-eared fox. What does it see, hear, and eat in a day?

Lesson Wrap-Up & Review (5-10 minutes)

Let's quickly review what we learned about these fantastic foxes!

- What is the most striking feature of a bat-eared fox? (Its large ears!)
- What is their primary food source? (Insects, especially termites.)
- How do their ears help them find food? (They listen for insects moving.)
- Where do bat-eared foxes live? (Grasslands and savannas in Africa.)
- Tell me one cool fact you remember about bat-eared foxes!

Great job exploring the world of the bat-eared fox today! You're now a bat-eared fox expert!

Want to Learn More? (Optional Extensions)

- **Research Conservation:** Are bat-eared foxes endangered? What threats do they face in the wild? (Currently listed as "Least Concern" but local populations can be affected by habitat loss or changes in insect populations).
- **Compare to Other Foxes:** How are bat-eared foxes different from or similar to other types of foxes, like the red fox or fennec fox (another big-eared desert dweller!)?
- **Sound Experiment:** Explore how different shapes can amplify sound. Try making a cone out of paper and see if it helps you hear quiet sounds better – like a bat-eared fox's ear!