

The Fox

The **Fox** is widespread throughout Europe in various habitats such as wooded areas and coastal pine forests.

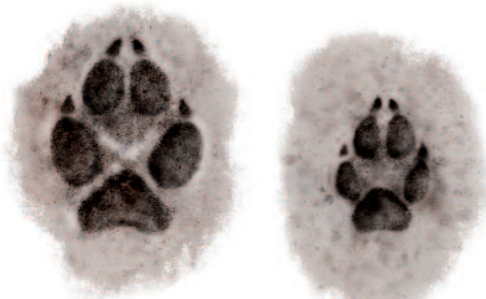
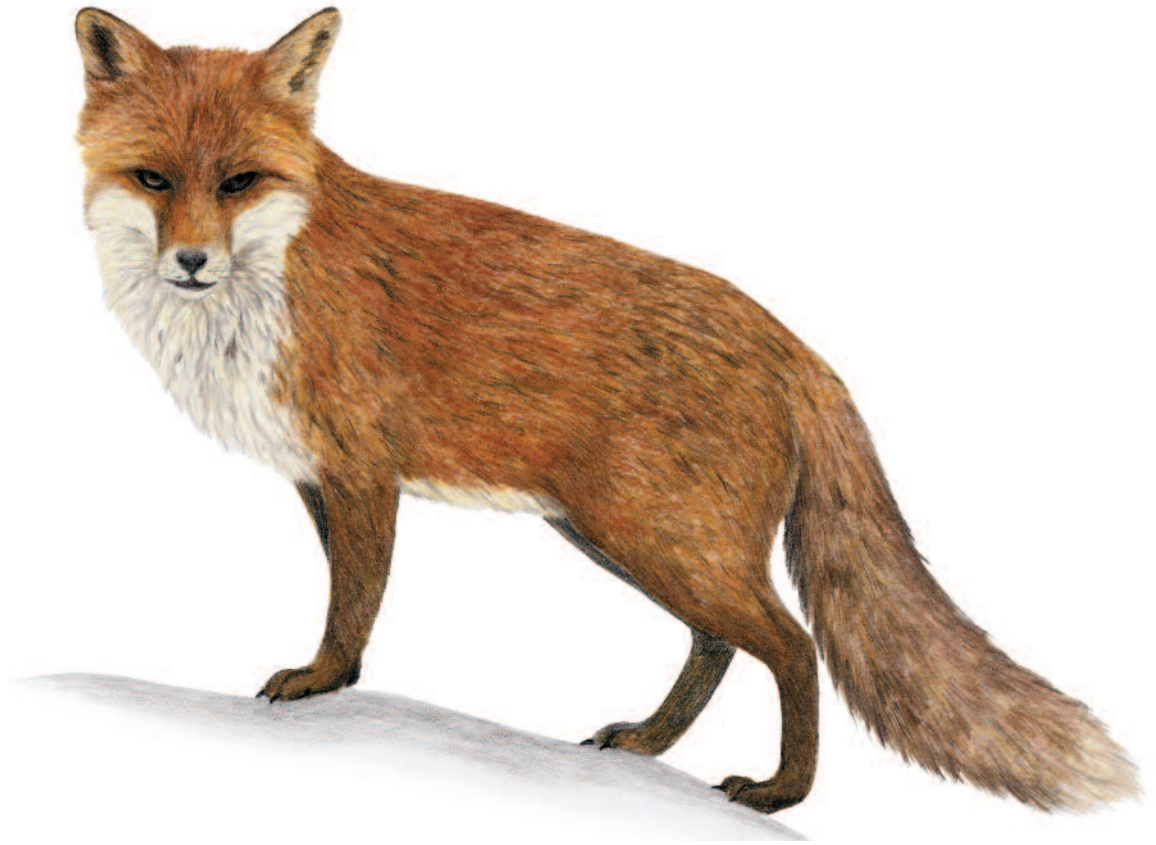
It belongs to the family Canidae. It is medium in size: 70-80 cm long plus 30-40 cm in tail length, about 35-45 cm tall and its weight varies from 5 to 11 kg.

Its fur is long and thick, tawny in color tending to red-grey and its tail often has a white tip.

The fox is a habitual animal that lives in deep dens, which it digs itself. A nocturnal animal that usually rests during the day in its burrow, in the thick bushes or in small ditches. If it is not disturbed in the area where it lives, it can also be seen out during the day. It feeds mostly on small rodents,

hedgehogs, hares and rabbits but

also on insects, birds and eggs. In summer and autumn, it also feeds on wild fruits. The mating season is between January and March and gestation lasts about 60 days. Four to six young are born around May time. Fox cubs suckle their mother's milk for about a month and during this time the male feeds the female. The average life span of a fox is 10-12 years.



The Wild boar

The **Wild boar** is widespread in Lazio and throughout the centre and south of Italy. The Mediterranean scrub, lowland woods, wetlands with streams or swamps are its natural habitat. The wild boar that is currently present in Tuscany is a cross with wild boars from Eastern Europe (which are more prolific and larger in size), which were introduced in Italy for hunting purposes.



The wild boar is recognizable by its elongated head and characteristic snout. It also has a heavy build with a sturdy and stocky body, and a coarse, bristly coat. Its canines are very pronounced and its so-called fangs can reach 15 cm in length.

It is an omnivorous animal and its diet ranges from bulbs, tubers, roots, acorns, wheat, corn eggs, bird hatchlings, amphibians, reptiles and small rodents. It hunts mainly at sunset or at night whereas during the day it stays in the dense undergrowth. The breeding season is from November to February / March. On average five-six young are born. The young boars have a striped coat till they are six months old and they are sexually mature at 10-16 months. The wild boar lives on average for 15-20 years.

The Marten

The **Marten** or European marten is a carnivorous mammal, which belongs to the Mustelidae family. The body is slender, 35–55 cm long, and its tail is 25–30 cm long. An adult can weigh on average 0.8-1.2 kg. Its coat is thick, soft and shiny, and its back is yellow-brown or dark brown; its muzzle, forehead and cheeks are light brown; and its flanks and belly are yellowish with dark brown shadowy patches on the legs.

The throat and chin are often a deep yellow colour, sometimes light yellow. The throat spot, unlike the Beech marten, never extends towards the limbs. The snout is elongated and the ears are rounded, the limbs are robust and have strong nails. In Italy it is widespread in hills and mountain areas and its numbers are increasing even in lowland areas. Typically martens inhabit deciduous and coniferous forests up to 2000 meters above sea level. A solitary, nocturnal animal, during the day it takes refuge in the vegetation, preferably in the canopy of trees.

The marten prefers to establish its shelters in trees that have natural hollows or which have been made by other animals. Very agile, it is able to move quickly through the tree canopy, even making long jumps. A predator, it seeks small vertebrates, especially birds, but also rodents rabbits and hares. It also feeds on invertebrates and fruit. It breeds once a year, mating in mid-summer.



The Tawny owl



The **Tawny owl** is a medium to large nocturnal bird of prey. It distinguishes itself from the Long-eared owl by the absence of ear tufts and by the color of the eyes.

It has a grey-brown plumage with light markings on the wings, black streaks and stripes on its back. Its plumage is soft which makes it silent when in flight: a very useful characteristic when hunting.

It has a voluminous, round head which is grey-brown in color with a dark beak and completely dark eyes, which is an unusual feature for the Strigiformes. To make up for the poor lateral visibility, it can rotate its head up to 270 degrees.

The Tawny owl has exceptional hearing that allows it to hear and locate even the smallest prey, even earthworms.

Its natural habitat is woods and forests. It nests in the hollows of trunks, using abandoned nests. It lays three to four eggs, which are white and are laid between February and March. Chicks leave the nest at around five weeks.

The Tawny owl is carnivorous and feeds mainly on small mammals, rodents, insectivores and small birds, which it swallows whole.

Non-digestible parts such as bones are excreted after digestion as pellets.

The Eurasian Sparrow

The **Eurasian sparrow** hawk is one of the smallest diurnal raptors in Europe. Females are much larger than the males. The Eurasian sparrow hawk has a small head, a slim body and relatively short wings and a long square or notched tail at the tip: these characteristics allow for maneuverability and speed. This bird also possesses long legs and a sharp hooked beak, which is used to pluck feathers and tear prey to pieces. The male's back is grey-blue, and its underparts have thin red stripes; whereas the females have a brown or grey-brown back and brown stripes on the underparts, furthermore the females have a pale spot on the nape of the head. Young sparrow hawks resemble females. The sparrow hawk's ideal habitat is in dense woodland that is next to open hunting ground, near a stream or river; however these birds of prey also live in parks, agricultural fields and other open areas.

The sparrow hawk is generally a reserved and solitary animal except when forming a pair for nesting. In general, this species nests in trees and hunts in woods where captures its prey by surprise. They are often seen circling in flight preceding the hunt.

The Eurasian sparrow hawk characteristically flies with a fast wing beat and short gliding movements.



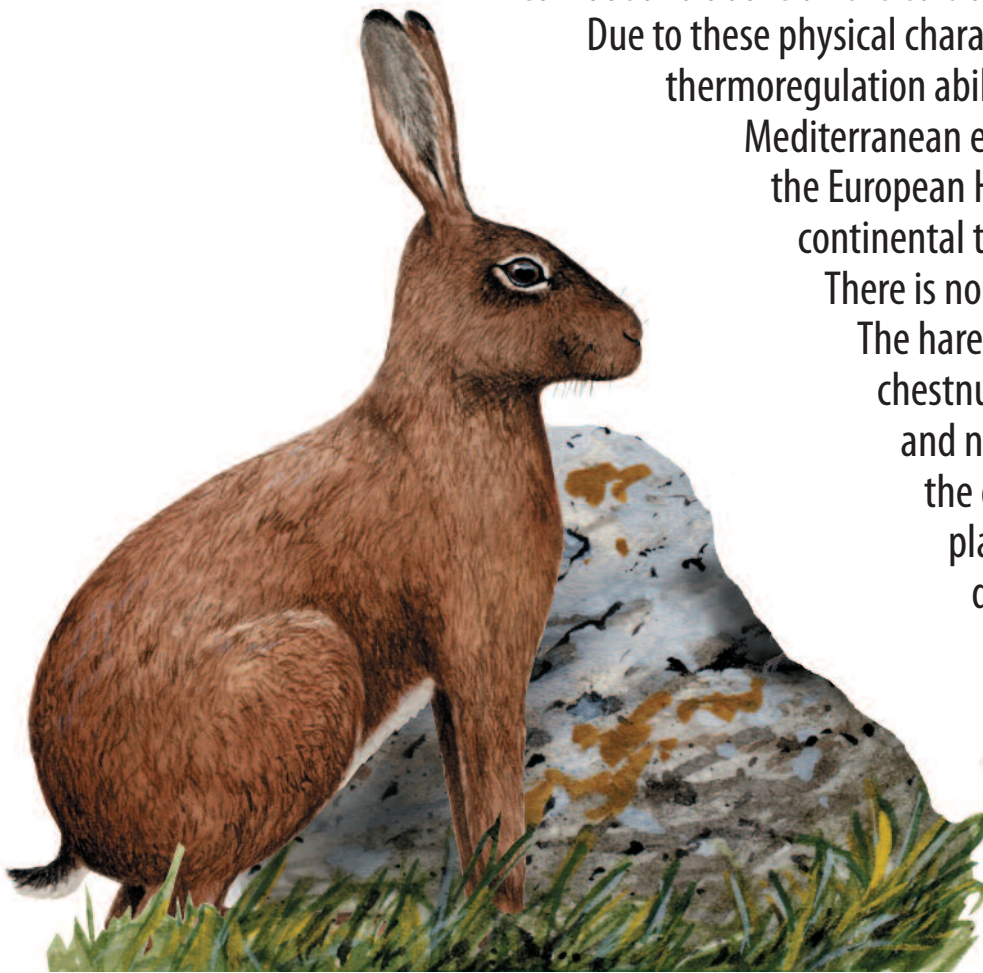
The Italian Hare

The **Italian Hare** appears to be very similar to the European Hare, but it is relatively more slender: the head-body length, the rear foot and above all the ears are also proportionally longer.

Due to these physical characteristics, it is thought that the Italian Hare has a better thermoregulation ability and a greater adaptation to the warm climate of the Mediterranean environments than the European Hare; on the other hand, the European Hare is well adapted to open environments with a continental type climate.

There is no sexual dimorphism between male and female.

The hare's diet is exclusively vegetation: fresh and dried grass, fruit, chestnuts, legume sprouts and grasses. The hare has crepuscular and nocturnal habits; however, it can also be observed during the day, even if this is quite rare and it can be found in quiet places or on particularly cloudy days. Unlike rabbits, the hare does not dig deep burrows, but takes refuge in natural crevices or shallow holes in the ground, no more than twenty centimeters deep. The animal nestles in these holes blending perfectly with the surrounding ground, thanks to its highly camouflaged coat. Two to five baby hares (leverets) are born and they open their eyes after a few hours and after about five to six weeks they become independent.



The Porcupine

The **Porcupine** is native to north and west Africa, it appears to have been brought by the Romans about 2000 years ago. Black-grey in color, it has a rather stocky build with short legs and the body is covered with hard bristles. Its eyes are large and clearly visible while its ears are small and hidden by bristles. The back of the body is lined with black and white quills that are 12 to 40cm long. When threatened, the porcupine turns around on itself and tries to intimidate the enemy by inflating its mane and quills. During these movements some quills detach themselves, but they are not thrown as mistakenly believed. Its natural habitat is the Mediterranean scrub up to 1000 meters above sea level, it prefers dry areas near cultivated fields, with rocks and ravines where it can take refuge.

Predominantly nocturnal, it lives alone or in small groups and it digs its den in the ground where it spends long periods during the winter even if it does not hibernate as such. The porcupine is vegetarian and feeds on fruit, roots, tubers, vegetables, bulbs, maize and bark. Mating occurs in spring, usually one or two babies are born with already open eyes and soft quills that harden in the first days of life. Already after about ten days the babies leave the den where they were born and at three months they are already independent.

Despite being a protected animal, the most dangerous pitfall for the porcupine is poaching, due to its tasty meat.



The Squirrel

The **Squirrel** is a small rodent that lives in trees.

It grows up to 20 centimeters in length, and its tail is just as long. The color of the fur varies according to the subspecies: in summer it is reddish brown on its back and white on its underparts; while in winter it is brown-grey. The squirrel is a skilled climber, it is very fast in climbing trees, and it is able to easily jump to the ground from considerable heights also thanks to its tail, which is used as a rudder or parachute.

Whereas, when it is on the ground it moves awkwardly, with quick hops, and if it has to go a long way, it jumps on every tree it encounters along the way.

It is a very sociable animal and spends the winter in partial hibernation feeding on the provisions it stores. The squirrel feeds mainly on walnuts, hazelnuts, berries, sprouts, roots, sometimes it can also feed on insect larvae, eggs and even nestlings. It nests in trees, usually close to the trunk, with a circular nest lined with leaves, grass or moss, and sometimes uses abandoned nests. The squirrel breeds from the end of December to September having up to two litters of 3-6 young that become independent after about three months from birth.



The Common European adder

The **Common European adder** is a poisonous snake, with an average length of 70 cm. It typically has a triangular shaped head. Its color and the spots on the body are very variable. During the last glaciation this snake was widespread throughout Europe, but as the glaciers retreated, the populations that were at low altitudes gradually moved to higher altitudes, where the climate and vegetation ensured habitats that were more suitable to them.

It feeds on a wide range of animals from lizards and frogs when young to small mammals and nestlings as an adult. These feeding habits actually make this reptile a useful ally to man in

agriculture. An ovoviviparous species (the embryos develop within eggs that remain inside the mother up until they hatch), mating takes place between the end of March and the beginning of April.

Between 2 and 12 young are born between August and September.

Normally the males are longer and more slender than the females. It seems that these animals can live at least twenty years. This snake is characterized by its varied colour. The base color can in fact be grey, beige, yellow,

brick-red, or show intermediate tones between these colors. The black dorsal pattern can be very distinct or almost non-existent. Completely black vipers are frequent in the Alpine area.



The Badger

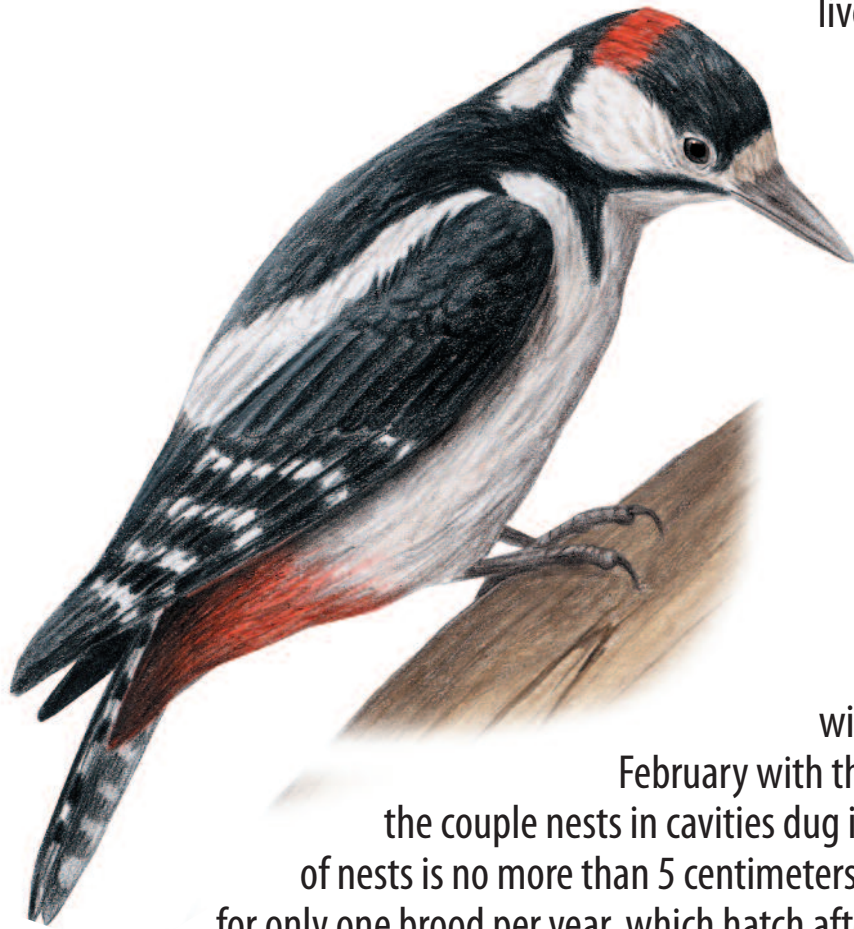
The **Badger** is the largest of the Italian mustelids. It is a plantigrade that can grow to 80 cm in length, including the tail of about 18 cm. It characteristically has a small and elongated head with a short and pointed muzzle, small eyes and rounded ears. Its coat is very thick, especially on the tail, and has a typical black and white colouring on its head. It has a strong set of teeth and its limbs are short and strong with 5 fingers equipped with long nails that are perfect for digging. Its movements are slow and lazy, its gait is uncertain and heavy. The females are distinguished from the males by their small size and the lighter color of the fur. It is hunted for the fur with which brushes are made. The badger is widespread throughout Europe and north-central Asia. In Italy it can be seen throughout the country but not in Sicily and Sardinia. It lives mainly in hilly



and lowland environments, not going beyond the limit of the trees in the mountain woods. It prefers humus-rich soils, where it can find its prey. With its strong claws, it digs large burrows with long tunnels that can reach up to several meters in length with a series of tunnels to provide ventilation to the central chamber. It lives in groups of up to ten organized individuals who need territories as large as a hundred hectares. It spends most of its life in the den, from which it only comes out at night; at the end of autumn the badger retires to its den and spends the winter there sleeping almost continuously. They can reach a maximum age of fifteen.

The Great Spotted Woodpecker

The **Great Spotted Woodpecker** is a small to medium-sized species, and usually does not exceed 21-26 centimeters in length. Its wingspan is about 42-43 centimeters and it weighs 60-90 grams in weight. The two sexes have a very similar livery, white and black with a red undertail. However, the male differs in the evident red spot on the nape. Even the young are easily recognizable due to the entire top of the head being colored red.



Its beak is black, pointed and very robust and its legs are shaped so as to facilitate its movements on vertical trunks, which the Great Spotted Woodpecker climbs up in hops, clinging with its strong legs and helping itself with its very robust tail.

Rather adaptable, the Great Spotted Woodpecker is present in both coniferous and broad-leaved woods, in tree-lined countryside and even in city parks. Mainly insectivorous, it supplements its diet with pine nuts and fruit, especially outside the reproductive period. Usually, it identifies the insects and larvae that live under the bark of the tree by the noise they emit while they gnaw the wood, and thanks to its sturdy beak, it pierces the wood and catches the insect with its retractable tongue. After a long courtship ritual - which begins in

February with the insistent "drumming" of the male on the trunks to attract a mate - the couple nests in cavities dug into the trunk or in particularly robust branches. The entrance diameter of nests is no more than 5 centimeters, it is made at about ten meters high. The female lays 4-6 eggs there, for only one brood per year, which hatch after about two weeks. It can prey on eggs or chicks from other nests.