

Nightly human-fox encounters in West Vienna

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Foxes are mainly sighted in the West of Vienna. Credit: www.wienerwildnis.at

Vienna's inhabitants have reported about 300 foxes in the urban area to the internet platform www.stadtwildtiere.at during the last three months. These reports demonstrate that wild animals do not only live in remote

woods, but more and more also in cities. Wildlife ecologist Theresa Walter from the Vetmeduni Vienna investigated when and where in Vienna it is most likely to meet a fox. First analyses show that foxes are primarily sighted in the western districts such as Hietzing and Penzing, particularly at night. The results will be presented at the Annual Meeting of the Ecological Society in Göttingen on 2 and 3 September 2015.

Europe's urban centres become more and more important as habitats for wild animals. Vienna with its area of 400 square kilometres provides abundant habitat for wild animals such as foxes, badgers and mice. Theresa Walter from the Research Institute of Wildlife Ecology at the University of Veterinary Medicine, Vienna investigates where and when it is likely to watch a red fox in the [urban area](#) of Vienna. For this purpose, she analysed more than 1000 sightings that Vienna's inhabitants had reported to the internet platform www.stadtwildtiere.at. Walter will present first results at the Annual Meeting of the Ecological Society (GfÖ) in Göttingen, Germany. This meeting will bring together 600 ecologists from 38 countries under the motto "Ecology for a sustainable future".

More activity in Vienna's west than in the east

First analyses show that foxes are mainly sighted in the western districts such as Hietzing and Penzing bordering the Vienna Woods. In the eastern districts like Floridsdorf and Donaustadt that border mainly farmland, inhabitants reported fewer foxes. Foxes were even watched close to sights in Vienna's centre such as Schönbrunn Castle. Theresa Walter estimates that a few thousand foxes live in Vienna. "Foxes live in the city because they find everything they need right there. There is food like compost heaps and mice, but also places like bushes and cavities under garden sheds providing space for offspring, sleep and rest", Walter explains.

Foxes are mainly sighted at night

Analyses of the fox observations in Vienna also show: It is most likely to watch a fox in the urban area between 10 pm and 2 am. According to the wildlife ecologist, foxes often look for food at this time.

But it takes two to watch urban nature: foxes and humans. Walter and colleagues from the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna want to find out what kind of early birds and night owls watch foxes in Vienna. People who observe [foxes](#) can voluntarily state their age, profession and education when registering at the platform. Observations can also be reported in other European cities for example in Zurich. Furthermore, encounters with other [wild animals](#), for example beavers, beech martens or raccoons, are also interesting for the scientists.

More information: Citizen science project "StadtWildTiere" Vienna: Red fox observability and influence factors of human-fox encounters. In: Gesellschaft für Ökologie e.V. (Hrsg.): Verhandlungen der Gesellschaft für Ökologie, Band 45. GfOe Annual Meeting 2015 August 31st to September 4 th, 2015 in Göttingen, Germany Görich&Weiershäuser, Marburg, S. 325-326

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