

# Ever wondered what red foxes eat? There's a database for that

March 30 2021

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Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

Research into the diets of a large number of the world's carnivores has been made publicly available through a free, online database created by a Ph.D. student at the University of Sussex.

From stoats in the UK to tigers in India, users are now able to search for detailed information about the diets of [species](#) in different geographical locations around the globe.

Created by doctoral [student](#) Owen Middleton, CarniDIET is an [open-access database](#) which aims to catalog the diets of the world's carnivores by bringing together past peer-reviewed research. He hopes it will be a useful resource for conservationists and researchers, as well as educators and nature-lovers alike.

Owen said: "There is so much information out there that is useful for conservation, but much of it isn't digitized, or it may be difficult for people to access.

"Typically, anybody interested in species' diets would have to go through an extensive body of literature, but through CarniDIET, there's now an easy way to access this information with all the original references cited."

The main purpose of CarniDIET is to facilitate further conservation research by providing a place to easily access data describing the ecological requirements and ecological effects of many endangered species, which can vary across their geographic ranges.

However, there are also hopes that the tool can be more widely used by teachers, students and citizen scientists.

Owen said: "Species diets can vary massively geographically and CarniDIET is a really easy way to find out how the [diet](#) of a red fox might be different in the UK compared to China, or how the diets of lions and leopards differ.

"Users can search by a particular species or country, and simply click on

an interactive map of the world to find out what carnivores eat in that area.

"It will be invaluable for younger school students learning about the [food chain](#), or older students delving into a bit more depth about endangered species or working on geographical case studies."

Dr. Chris Sandom, Senior Lecturer in Biology at the University of Sussex, added: "CarniDIET is a really exciting new tool for conservationists, researchers and educators.

"Understanding the diets of animals is hugely important for conservation; you can't protect animals in isolation, they're connected in food webs. If prey species are under threat or have dwindling numbers, it will have a knock-on effect on their predators, and leave those species threatened too.

"CarniDIET will be a useful tool to help demonstrate this by clearly showing which [prey species](#) carnivores are eating, and to an extent, are reliable on in particular geographical locations."

**More information:** Owen Middleton et al, CarniDIET 1.0: A database of terrestrial carnivorous mammal diets, *Global Ecology and Biogeography* (2021). [DOI:10.1111/geb.13296](https://doi.org/10.1111/geb.13296)

Provided by University of Sussex

Citation: Ever wondered what red foxes eat? There's a database for that (2021, March 30) retrieved 19 July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2021-03-red-foxes-database.html>

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