

The relationship between humans and carnivores is conflicting. Considered to be harmful, they suffer from constant persecution, often resulting from unfounded convictions. But they are also animals that provoke curiosity and admiration ...

After all, who are the carnivores?!

They are mammals, from small to large size. They occupy a wide variety of terrestrial environments. Most species have nocturnal activity.

They are animals adapted to predation. Among the outstanding morphological characteristics, we find strong jaws, developed canines and molars adapted to tear the meat (butchers' teeth).

Although typically feeding on other vertebrates, most species do not have an exclusive carnivorous regime, some are omnivorous or even occasionally frugivorous.

These are some of the 14 species of carnivores that occur in Portugal:

The **fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)** is one of the most abundant carnivores and a game species. It feeds on invertebrates, rabbits, hares, rodents, birds and, at certain times of the year, large quantities of fruits.

The **badger (*Meles meles*)** is more frequent in the central and southern regions. Although having a typical carnivore dentition, it has an omnivorous diet based on invertebrates, fruits and roots.

Explore the exhibition “Kings of wild Europe” to know more about large carnivores and their conservation

The **Egyptian mongoose (*Herpestes ichneumon*)** is also abundant and a game species. It was introduced in the Iberian Peninsula in historical times. It has preference for areas of high scrub and waterfront margins. It feeds on small mammals, insects, crustaceans, fish and amphibians.

The **common genet (*Genetta genetta*)** occupies a great variety of terrestrial environments and was also introduced in the Iberian Peninsula by the action of Man. It has a diverse diet, but dominated by small rodents and birds. It also consumes insects, reptiles and fruits (cultivated or wild).

The **least weasel (*Mustela nivalis*)** is the smallest European carnivore, with about 20-30cm and 60-100g. It occurs in abundance in open environments, especially agricultural land. It feeds on rodents, small birds, reptiles, amphibians and insects.

