

Snowshoe Hare (*Lepus americanus*)



Taxonomy:

Family Leporidae. Also called snowshoe rabbit, varying hare. There are 15 subspecies recognized including *Lepus americanus bairdii*.

Description:

Medium sized hare with large ears and hind feet. In summer it is dark brown with a gray chin and belly and in winter it is white with black tipped ears. Females are 10-40 percent larger than males.

Total length: 363-520 mm; Tail length: 25-57 mm; Weight: 900-1,700g (males) 900-2,200 g (females)

Distribution:

The Snowshoe Hare is broadly distributed in the north from coast to coast and down through the Rocky Mountains into Utah and New Mexico. It occurs in a variety of habitat types, including swamps, hardwood forests, and mixed and evergreen forests. They are common in the Wasatch Range at elevations above 8000 ft.

Ecology and Diet:

Most Snowshoe Hares change color, from a summer brown coat to winter white, offering camouflage in each season.

Nocturnal, this hare consistently travels along the same runways and tends to remain hidden in vegetation until sundown. It is active year round. It feeds on a variety of woody and succulent plants.

Life History:

Can produce 2-5 litters a year, beginning in March and ending in July or August. The gestation period ranges from 34-40 days and litter sizes vary from 1-8 young depending on the time of the year, and the offspring are weaned after only a month.

Reference: Murray, 1999.