

Rabbits



Eastern cottontail

The Eastern cottontail is an abundant species found throughout central and southern Wisconsin, while in the north snowshoe hares are commonly seen. Cottontails are abundant in urban and suburban areas, while snowshoe hare prefer young forests and are less commonly seen in town. While rabbits can be enjoyable to watch, they can also damage flowers, vegetables, trees and shrubs at any time of year. With the use of fencing, rabbits can be an attractive and interesting addition to your backyard.

Don't Feed Wildlife

- Clean up fallen bird seed, and don't provide additional food sources for rabbits and other wildlife.

Keep Wildlife Wild

- Rabbits commonly make nests in the middle of lawns, by sidewalks and in gardens. To avoid attracting predators, female rabbits do not stay with the young. If a nest is disturbed by a pet, child or because of lawn work, the nest can be rebuilt and the young replaced and the female will most likely return.
- To determine if the nest is abandoned, you can place leaves or grasses in a crisscross pattern over the nest and check it the following morning. If the pattern has been disturbed, then you know the female has been there to feed the young. Do not keep visiting the nest, as your scent could lead predators right to the young.

Discourage Rabbits

- Protect individual trees from rabbits with wire hardware cloth or fence barriers; the barriers should extend above standard snow depth and stand 1-2 inches from the trunk.
- Fencing around your garden 2-3 feet high and buried 2-3 inches deep will also deter any rabbit activity.
- Reduce habitat for rabbits around your yard. Remove brush piles and other debris piles, trim fencerows, tall grass, and other heavy brush around your yard.
- Taste and odor repellents can be effective for preventing rabbits from browsing on your vegetable patch, although their effectiveness can vary based on environmental conditions.



snowshoe hare

Quick Facts

- **Rabbit teeth continue to grow throughout their lifetime.**
- **Research shows that rabbits on average live less than one year.**
- **Despite their short lifespan, they are exceptional breeders. They can raise 6 litters in one year.**
- **There is only one rabbit species in Wisconsin, but 2 species of hare, the snowshoe hare and the white-tailed jackrabbit.**
- **Trapping and hunting for Eastern cottontail and snowshoe hare is legal year-round on your own property. However, many municipalities in Wisconsin have specific regulations regarding the discharge of firearms. Please check with your local government to ensure adherence to local ordinances. Jackrabbits are a protected species.**

For more information, visit our webpage:
dnr.wi.gov

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Urban Wildlife Factsheet: Rabbits