

# School-to-Nature



## Rabbit (Eastern Cottontail Rabbit)

The Eastern Cottontail Rabbit is our most common local species. They are found on Conservancy lands and are common in suburban areas where tasty greens are available in local lawns and gardens.

Rabbits range from 8-20 inches long and can weigh 1-4 pounds. Their life span is 1-3 years in the wild, and 7-10 for those kept as pets. Half of the rabbit population of the entire world is in North America.

Cottontail rabbits eat tender grass, clover, leafy weeds, wild strawberries or other small fruits, and garden vegetables like lettuce and carrots. In the winter they search for greenery under the snow, tender plant stems, and the bark of shrubs and small trees. They are most active eating at sunrise and sunset, when it is harder for predators to see them. They can be hunted by birds of prey, fox, coyote, and by human hunters in search of food and fur.

Males are called bucks and the females are called does. Their young are called kittens. Rabbits may have three litters per year, in nests created underground, lined with the doe's fur. The typical litter is four but could be as large as 8 kittens. The kittens stay with their mom for about 2 weeks, until they can forage on their own.

They live in meadows, woods, forests, grasslands, desert areas, and wetlands. In winter, they live in burrows (underground tunnels) or den-like holes. In spring and summer, nests may accidentally be found in our lawns in a shallow hole covered with mom's fur and grass; in this case: do not disturb!

Rabbits and Hares: they are not the same. Hares are typically larger, have longer ears and legs. Rabbits are born naked, and hares are born with fur. Hares may be spotted in our area, but they are rare here.

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