



San Francisco Bay Area Rabbits and Hares

Comparing *Domestic* and *Wild* Animals

Domestic Animals versus Wild Animals

Puppies need regular walks, water, healthy food, a clean, cozy place to sleep and lots of love and affection!



This puppy is a pet, also called a *domestic animal*.

Domestic animals are animals that rely on people to provide food, water and shelter.

- Domestication happens over many generations.

Wild animals are animals that take care of themselves without depending on people.

They get food, water and everything they need to survive on their own from the habitat where they live.



Coyotes eat fruit, berries, rodents, birds, insects and other small animals.

Domestic and Wild Goats, Pigs & Cats



DOMESTIC PIG



WILD BOAR



DOMESTIC GOAT



WILD GOAT



DOMESTIC CAT



WILD CAT



These are all Domestic
(pet) rabbits!





Domestic and Wild Rabbits

Appearance



Wild Rabbit

- Most domestic rabbits have short fur.
 - ❖ Some breeds have long fur, like Angoras or Lionheads.
- A domestic rabbit's fur is fluffier and softer than a wild rabbit's fur.
- Domestic rabbits have fuller cheeks and round eyes. (Some domestic breeds can have very narrow and pointy features.)
- A wild rabbit's fur is short & sleek.
- Some rabbits grow heavier fur in cold weather, but they never have fluffy fur like a Lionhead rabbit.
- Wild rabbits have long, narrow faces.
- Their eyes are narrower than domestic rabbits'.
- Their eyes are never blue or red.
- Wild rabbits never have floppy ears.



Domestic Rabbit

Behavior

A pet rabbits' behavior depends on how much human care they get!

- Many pet rabbits are extremely friendly.
- Some get scared easily if they lived outdoors in hutches, or if they've gotten lost.
- Most domestic rabbits don't run away very quickly, like a wild rabbit will.
- Wild rabbits have a strong flight response to keep them safe from predators like foxes and coyotes.
- Wild rabbits are afraid of people. They will run away.
- They get **stressed** easily and can suffer **stress** related heart attacks. **Do not ever try to catch a wild rabbit.**

Are these animals domestic or wild?

A



B



C



D

Can domestic rabbits survive in the wild?



Some families adopt bunnies, but do not know that...

- Baby bunnies need a lot of love and proper handling.
- Living alone in a backyard hutch, they can become prey to other animals.
- Living alone in a backyard hutch, if they are frightened by a dog or cat, domestic rabbits can have a heart attack from stress.

Domestic rabbits should never be “released” because they are not wild.

They can't take care of themselves and often end up as prey for raccoons, hawks and coyotes.

Animal Adaptations & Habitats

Over time, wild animals develop adaptations that help them survive in their unique habitats. Examples of adaptations are: color, shape, fur/feathers, beaks, enhanced senses, etc.

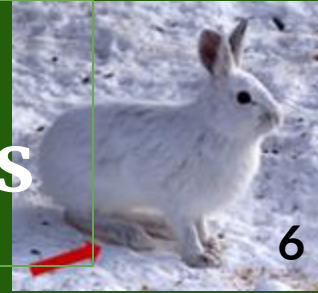


Raccoons have five toes on their front paws which are extremely dexterous. They use their toes like five fingers grasping food and other objects.

Pelicans have pouch-like beaks used for scooping up fish.



California Native Wild Rabbit & Hare Species



There are seven native rabbit and hare species in California.



1. Black-tailed jackrabbit, *Lepus californicus*
2. Desert cottontail, *Sylvilagus audubonii*
3. Brush rabbit, *Sylvilagus bachmani*
4. Mountain cottontail *Sylvilagus nuttallii*
5. Pygmy rabbit *Sylvilagus idahoensis*
6. Snowshoe hare *Lepus americanus*
7. White-tailed jackrabbit *Lepus townsendii*



California Native Wild Rabbit & Hare Species

The most common native species are the **Black-tailed jackrabbit** (*Lepus californicus*)



The **Desert cottontail** (*Sylvilagus audubonii*)

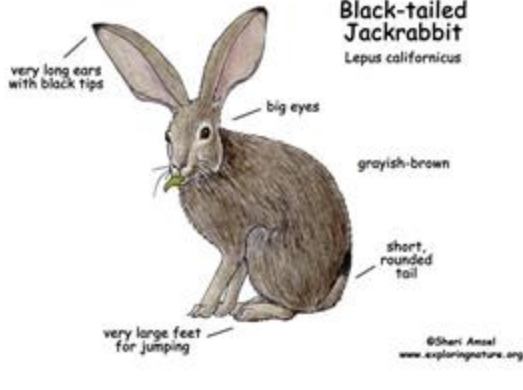


and the **Brush rabbit** (*S. bachmani*).



Black-tailed jackrabbit

Lepus californicus



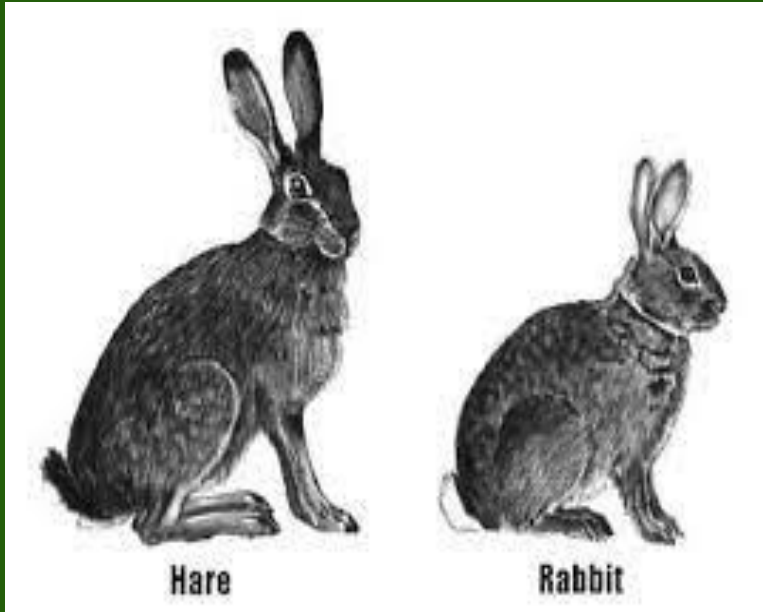
Not rabbits!

Black-tailed jackrabbits are a species of hare.

Adaptations that help them survive in the wild:

- Rely on speed, camouflage, and a "freeze" behavior for defense.
 - Jump up to 20 feet at a bound, top speed 45 mph over a zigzag course.
 - Leverets (babies) are born **with fur** and open-eyed. They can run around the same day they are born!
- Black stripe down the center of the back and a black rump patch.
 - Habitat: mixed shrub-grassland terrains in short grasses; live above ground, nest in small open depressions.
 - **Predators:** An important prey species for raptors, coyotes, foxes, and wild cats.

Rabbits and Hares



Rabbits and Hares are closely related.

There are important differences in their behavior, appearance and anatomy.

Side by Side



Rabbit Differences

20



live in burrows



babies born helpless



hide from danger

Hare Differences

21



live above ground



babies not born helpless



run from danger



Desert cottontail rabbits

Sylvilagus audubonii

- Named **Cottontails** because their tails are white and fluffy and look like cotton balls.
- Medium-sized rabbits, fast and agile, **good swimming and climbing abilities.**

Desert cottontails lives in deserts, but can also live in forests and grasslands.

They like heavy bushes, brambles, and holes to hide from predators.

Desert cottontails eat grasses, but also eat leaves, twigs, fruits, nuts, and even the juicy pads of cacti!



Brush rabbit, *Sylvilagus bachmani*



- Brush rabbits mainly eat grasses and other soft plants like clovers or new growth on shrubs. They will also eat berries if available.
- They live in dense brushy habitat. They do not dig burrows, instead using branches from the dense brush habitat to hide.

Brush rabbits are smaller than most other rabbit species. How do they avoid predators?

- Sit perfectly still to hide from predators.
- When frightened, they thump their feet and can squeal loudly.
- When pursued, they run in a zig-zag path, up to 25 mph, and *can climb trees!*



Predators

Predators help to maintain a balance in nature. They control herbivore populations, maintaining healthy and diverse plant communities.

Rabbits are an important food source for many other wild animals. These can include owls, hawks, coyotes, eagles, foxes, bobcats and other predators.

*By keeping other populations in check, predators ensure that other species occupying a variety of environmental niches can survive and thrive.**

*From [Biodiversity Heritage Library](#)



Great Horned Owl



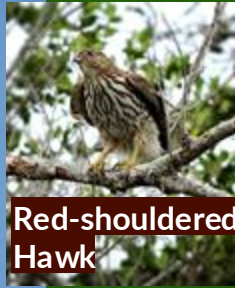
Cooper's Hawk



Coyote



Red-tailed Hawk



Red-shouldered Hawk



Barn Owl



Bobcat

Gray Fox

Adaptations to Survive in the Wild

An adaptation is a part of an animal's body or way that an animal behaves that helps it to survive in its habitat.

Looking at the following slides,

- List three adaptations that you notice about each animal.
- How do you think these adaptations help the animals survive in their wild habitat?

Example

Polar Bear



Habitat: Arctic Tundra
Range: Arctic Circle
Diet: Seals

Three adaptations that you notice about this animal:

1. *White fur*
2. *Large, wide paws*
3. *Small ears*

How do these adaptations help this animal survive in its habitat?

1. *I think white fur camouflages the polar bear so it can't be easily seen on the ice and snow.*
2. *I think its large, wide paws help it to walk on the ice and snow and to swim well in the ocean.*
3. *I think its small ears minimize heat loss so it stays warmer.*

Pelican



American White Pelican

Habitat: Coastal
Range: North America
Diet: Fish

Three adaptations that you notice about this animal:

How do you think these adaptations help this animal survive in its habitat?

Big Brown Bat



Habitat: Generalist: adaptable to many habitats
Range: North America, Caribbean
Diet: Flying Insects

Three adaptations that you notice about this animal:

How do you think these adaptations help this animal survive in its habitat?

San Francisco Garter Snake



Habitat: Coastal, aquatic and upland habitat
Range: Northern to Central California
Diet: Frogs

Three adaptations that you notice about this animal:

How do you think these adaptations help this animal survive in its habitat?

What can we do to help wild rabbits, hares and other wildlife?

Become a wildlife explorer! Learn about wildlife that lives near you.

- What are their needs for food and shelter?
- When do they nest or den to have babies?



Give wildlife their space. This is their home too.

- Enjoy watching wildlife at a safe distance.
- Call a rescue group to help injured wildlife.



Rescuing Wild Rabbit & Hares

“I found a baby rabbit.”

Baby rabbits found alone don't always need help.

- Female rabbits dig shallow nests and line them with fur and vegetation. They leave the babies hidden for hours, coming back to feed them through the day.
- People sometimes find nests while gardening. Because mothers leave the babies hidden for hours, people sometimes assume the



babies have been abandoned.
Wild rabbits and hares are highly susceptible to stress. Capturing or restraining them may cause death. Call a wildlife rescue group if you find a sick or injured wild rabbit or hare.



Prevent wildlife from visiting your home...

Reduce food, water, and shelter outdoor that attract wild animals.

- Harvest fruit and vegetables when ripe and pick up fallen fruit
- Rake areas around bird feeders
- Do not leave pet food or water outside
- Secure garbage and recycling bins



- Cut back overgrown shrubs and trim back trees
- Stack firewood neatly



Protect Wildlife and their Habitats

Leave wild animals in the wild.

- Wildlife should not be handled, caught or picked up. Animals need to stay in their home environment to survive.
- Take a picture instead.

Don't feed wild animals.

- Don't try to make wildlife into pets.

Create a wildlife habitat in your backyard.

Be respectful of the environment.
Wildlife needs a place to live and continue being wild without boundaries or human interference.



Rescuing Wild Rabbit & Hares

If you see a wild animal you believe is in distress, please call

- Burlingame PHS/SPCA Wildlife Care Center: 650-340-7022
Address: 1450 Rollins Rd, Burlingame
- **PHS/SPCA South Bay Wildlife Care Center: 408-929-9453**
Address: 3027 Penitencia Creek Road, San Jose
- Palo Alto Animal Services: 650-329-2413
Address: 3281 E. Bayshore Rd, Palo Alto
- Veterinary Emergency Group: 408-834-8180
Address: 725 Ridder Park Dr., San Jose
- San Francisco Animal Care & Control: 415-554-6364
Address: 1200 15th St, San Francisco

The End

