

Wiltshire Mammal Group's Mammal of the Month...Brown Hare



Latin Name	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>
Species Facts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Average size: 52-59cm; tail: 8-12cm• Averages weight 3-4kg• Average Life span 3-4 years• They use heightened senses and speed to avoid predation• Main Predator is the Fox
Population Number	600,000 and 800,000 Brown Hares in the UK
When & where to see	<p>This is an iconic species of arable and grass land, though it isn't confined to this habitat, they can be seen in open country and woodland. In Wiltshire can be seen across the chalk downs and the arable land. They are apparently abundant in the Upper Thames and Cotswold Wildlife Park regions; it was well surveyed in the Braydon Forest, and may be widespread across the Marlborough Downs and Salisbury Plain. Although there are few survey records to confirm this hence new survey and sightings will be really useful - and you can help!</p> <p>Their mating season is the best time to try and see the brown hare; this is between February and August. However, March sees spring madness. Sallies actively rebuke the attentions of courting Jacks and this behaviour can be observed easily and long periods of Time</p>
What to look for	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Around twice the size of rabbits, they are also Golden Brown in colure were as rabbits are grey. They also have larger ears that have black tips.• Forms – the shallow depressions in the ground where hares rest (and leave their kits)• Latrines – similar to rabbit's, but pellets are large, not associated with burrows and individually identifiable unlike deer• Feeding signs show a clean cut through vegetation (easy to recognise on woody plants) frequently above 6-8 inches from the ground• Tracks like rabbits, but larger in snow and occasionally in soft earth, seen in a Y shape print ranging from 11cm -15cm in length with the hind feet appearing much larger than the fore feet. They have four toes; they have fur coved sole making the print they leave much larger than a rabbits
Impacts on the species	<p>The Brown Hare is a UK BAP and NERC 2006 (Natural Environment and Rural Communities) section 41 species. Nationally Hare populations have fallen due in part to changes in farming practise and are now locally variable with distribution rather in pockets across Wiltshire. Where they do well they can be quite common, but there are many apparently good habitats where Hares do not prosper, however, wherever you are, you should be near to a local population.</p>
What is being done	<p>There is very little legal protection of brown hairs as they are classed as a game animal. However, brown hare was coved in the UK biodiversity action plan and the aim of this was to double the population of hares by 2010. Brown hares are also protected by the Hare Preservation Act 1892, this act prohibits the sale of hare's between 1st March and 31st it is also illegal for the hare to appear on any restaurant menu within this time span.</p>
More information	<p>http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/lepusewrevised_tcm6-4627.pdf http://www.hare-preservation-trust.co.uk/status.php http://www.conserveireland.com/mammals/brown-hare.php (shape of a print)</p>