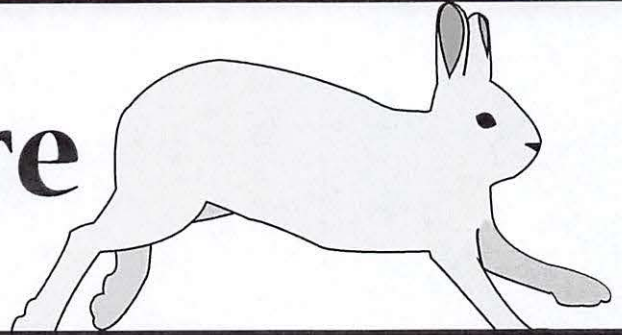




Did You Know?

Snowshoe Hare



- 1 The scientific name for snowshoe hare is *Lepus americanus*. The Inupiaq name is ukallik ("oo-kall-lick"); the Gwich'in name is geh ("geh"), and the Koyukon name is gguh ("guh").
- 2 Hares are not the same as rabbits. While rabbits are born naked, blind, and totally dependent, baby hares, or leverets, are born fully furred and can move around soon after birth.
- 3 Snowshoe hares are secretive animals that live in areas with plenty of brush to hide in. In Alaska, they are found throughout the boreal forest, which covers most of the state except for the western and arctic coasts.
- 4 Snowshoe hares are brown during summer, but as winter approaches, their fur changes to white, helping them to avoid predation. Adults retain a little white on their ears and feet after their first winter.
- 5 Female hares have 2-3 litters per year between May and August, with an average of 4 leverets per litter.
- 6 During summer, snowshoe hares feed on a variety of leaves and grasses. In winter, they browse on the stems and bark of shrubs.
- 7 Hares eat soil, too. Geophagy ("earth-eating") may help to maintain important mineral balances in their diet. It may also help neutralize some plant chemicals known as secondary metabolites that can inhibit normal digestion or be toxic to hares.
- 8 Many predators hunt hares, especially lynx, which rely heavily on snowshoe hares for food. In addition, great-horned owls, goshawks, foxes, coyotes and wolves prey on hares. Even red squirrels and ground squirrels will feed on leverets.
- 9 Snowshoe hares are known for their cyclic population peaks, which occur about every 10 years. The amplitude of these peaks, however, can vary, depending on such things as the number of predators around and the quality and quantity of food for hares.



Above: Through camera traps and GPS collars, NPS has teamed up with University of Alaska Fairbanks to learn that snowshoe hares regularly visit mineral licks, about once every day. Being a prey species targeted by both avian and terrestrial predators, hares may take great risk to obtain minerals. We found that hares visit licks in open areas mostly at night, but will visit licks in areas with cover vegetation also during daylight hours.