



ARCTIC HARE

Lepus arcticus



Appearance

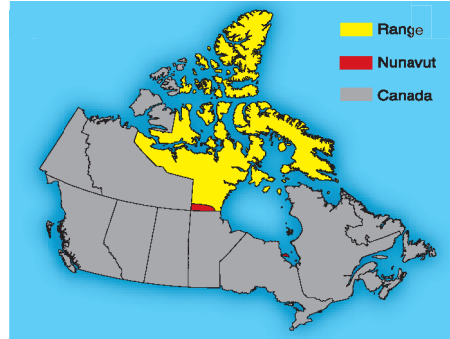
Arctic hare are the most northern dwelling of all hares and are also among the largest. In the winter, their coats are long, white and silky and their ears are tipped with black. The summer coat ranges in colour through shades of gray, cinnamon brown and even a pinkish hue depending on geographic location. Arctic hare have medium sized ears and big padded feet. The fur on their feet is a yellowish colour and they have long curved claws, especially on their front feet. These are very useful for digging in the hard packed snow. Females are between 60 and 70cm long and males are between 60 to 80cm in length. Males and females weigh between 2.5 and 5.4kg.

Food And Feeding

Arctic hare eat a variety of tundra vegetation including twigs and roots of arctic willow and crowberry. In addition, they may at times venture out onto the sea-ice in search of some seaweed. Finally, arctic hare also feed on meat, and are often attracted to bait left in traps.

Behaviour

Arctic hare do not appear to be very nervous around humans. However, if a dog, wolf or fox approaches, the hare immediately bolt. They easily hide behind rocks and unless a noise is very loud and close, they will not move. They have two ways of running, the more southern dwelling hare run using all four legs and the more northern dwelling hare hop like a kangaroo, on their hind legs. They resume a fourlegged run when danger has passed. At times, they hop up and down on their hind legs in an effort to scan the horizon for predators. Arctic hare either live alone or in family groups. Some are playful and have been observed 'boxing' one another and standing on their hind legs dancing around. They are mainly nocturnal but also active in



with a larger diameter inside the den.

Range

Arctic hare are found throughout Nunavut. Their home range is small which allows them to build up a series of runways and escape routes.

Habitat

Arctic hare are generally only found on the tundra beyond the tree line. In the winter, they tend to inhabit the northern slopes of hills where the wind keeps the ground more exposed. They are only likely to be found on low plains during the summer.

Reproduction

The breeding period is during the bright days of April and May. Arctic hare have a gestation period of about 50 days. They have one litter a year with between 2 to 8 young per litter. The young are born in a small depression in the moss or grass that may be protected by a boulder. Young hare are born with a full coat of grey fur and huddle together for warmth. Their weight, soon after birth is about 105g and they measure about 17.5cm. By early September they are fully grown and reach maturity at 1 year.

Status Survival and Management

According to the Nunavut Wild Species 2000 report, the current status of arctic hare is secure. They are thought to live about 5 years. Their main predators in Nunavut include some carnivores and birds.

Did You Know?

Young arctic hare grow twice as fast as other species of hare due to short arctic summers.

periods of twilight and just before sunrise. They are active all year long and sometimes huddle together to stay warm. They live in dens that have an entrance, which is about 10cm in diameter and 30cm long

