



U.S. Fish and Wildlife

EASTERN COTTONTAIL RABBIT

The most common rabbit species in Texas is the Eastern cottontail, identifiable by its two- to three-pound body, brown or gray coat, white belly, and distinctive white tail. They are widespread in brushy areas from southern Canada to South America, predominantly east of the Rocky Mountains. A related species, the desert cottontail (*Sylvilagus auduboni*), occurs in Texas and the deserts

Cottontails feed at night, subsisting on a variety of green plants, barks, buds, and grasses. Unlike the jackrabbit, which is actually a member of the hare family, cottontails are true rabbits. This distinction is important, as hares are born virtually self-sufficient, whereas rabbits are born hairless, blind, and helpless.

In addition, hares tend to be larger and more muscular than rabbits



HABITAT

The eastern cottontail rabbit prefers habitats that are between woody areas and open lands. It can be found in bushy areas, fields, woodlands etc.

DIET

The eastern cottontail rabbit is an herbivore. It eats a variety of different plants, fruits, and vegetables. In winter they eat twigs, dogwood and maple trees.

LIFE CYCLE

During mating season the male and female also perform a kind of mating "dance". The eastern cottontail rabbit mates between February and

September. The babies are weaned after about three weeks and leave the nest after about seven weeks. Female can have three or four litters a year. They are ready to mate when they are three months old.

BEHAVIOR

The eastern cottontails is solitary and very territorial. It is mostly nocturnal but it will come out early in the morning. They can leap distances between 10 - 15 feet. It can run at speeds of up to 15 miles an hour.