

BROWN HARE FACTSHEET

Key Features

Brown Hares (*Lepus europaeus*) have russet-coloured fur and long, powerful legs. The ears have black tips and are as long as the head. When running the black upper surface of the tail is visible.

Where to look and what to look for

Brown Hares are usually seen in **open countryside**, in grasslands and arable land, but also in long grass, hedgerows and woodland (up to 500m). They **do not burrow**. Instead, they create a shallow, <10 cm deep, indent in the ground that they rest in, often with just their head visible. These 'forms' can sometimes be in areas of long grass or scrub to provide cover. Wild grasses and herbs are their preferred diet. However, they will feed on some agricultural crops, especially winter turnips and early growth cereal crops in summer. When snow cover reduces grazing, they sometimes feed on the bark of trees and saplings, so gnaw marks may be visible. Brown Hares are **mainly solitary** and **primarily nocturnal** but can be active before sunset and after sunrise, especially in summer.

'Mad as a March Hare'

This expression comes from the courtship behaviour. Brown Hares can often be seen '**boxing**' in the breeding season (March to July). Dominant males will drive competing males away from females. However, most 'boxing' is actually undertaken by females repelling unwanted males.

Don't confuse with...

Mountain Hare (*Lepus timidus*) or **Rabbit** (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*). Brown Hares differ in having:

- ❖ **A larger body** (48 – 61 cm).
- ❖ **Russet-coloured fur**. Mountain Hares have grey-brown coats in summer, white in winter. Rabbit fur is usually light brown.
- ❖ **Larger ears** that are **as long as the head** and have **black-tips**.
- ❖ **A dark upper surface to the tail**, which is **held down when running**. Mountain Hares' tails are all white. Rabbits' tails are held upright when running, revealing the white underside.

If you see it, report it!

If you see a Brown Hare in the **Scottish Borders** please report it at: www.wildlifeinformation.co.uk/BordersBrownHareSurvey. The information we need about your sighting is:

- ❖ **WHO** – Your full name and contact details (in case we need further information about your sighting)
- ❖ **WHAT** – The name of the mammal you saw and, if possible, a photograph of what you saw
- ❖ **WHERE** – Grid reference (preferred) and nearest place name or postcode – please be as specific as you can
- ❖ **WHEN** – The date of the sighting in the form DD/MM/YYYY

BROWN HARE



Above: Running Brown Hare. Note black upper surface of tail.



Above: Brown Hare. Note the black ear tips and long legs.

MOUNTAIN HARE



Above: Mountain Hare in February with winter fur. Note shorter ears (shorter than head).

RABBIT



Above: Young Rabbit. Note short ears that lack black-tips, shorter legs and light brown fur.

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