

## Black-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus*)



### Taxonomy:

Family Leporidae. Also called California jackrabbit. Seventeen subspecies are recognized; the regional subspecies is *Lepus californicus deserticola*.

### Description:

Readily distinguished from other rabbits by its large size and elongate ears and limbs.

Total length: 515-550 mm; Tail: 76-90 mm; Hind foot: 120-130 mm; Ear: 109-125 mm; Weight: 1,300-3,300 g.



### Distribution:

The arid regions of western North America, from the Great Plains to the Pacific coast, and from the northern Great Basin and adjacent Columbia Plateau south to central Mexico including the Baja peninsula. Common at lower elevations along the Wasatch Front.

### Ecology and diet:

This species is most abundant in open desert shrub or woodland habitat. It occurs in valley bottoms and in the foothills along the Wasatch Front. Although mainly nocturnal, by day they are seen resting in the shade of shrubs and other vegetation. Diet includes grass, forbs, and leaves of shrubs. Physiological adaptations for heat tolerance and water conservation enable them to cope with the extremes of desert climate.

### Life History:

Most births occur from late winter through early summer. Gestation is approximately 45 days. Litter size ranges from 1 to 6 young and females have multiple litters. Males reach sexual maturity in about 7 months, and females breed in the spring of their second year.

**References:** Best 1996; North & Marsh 1999.