



# FIELD OBSERVATION REPORT

By Mary Wilson  
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## Plants in Bloom

Common sunflowers, Desert straw, vinegarweed, autumn vinegarweed, Kellogg tarweed. Ragweed has the male flowers and are just starting the female flowers. Tumbleweed are starting their white and pink flowers. The long stemmed buckwheat are having a good year and you can see the pink/purple fields of flowers in the Fairmont area. Jimsonweed is finishing up its season but you can still find the white trumpet flower in bloom. The rubber rabbit brush has flower buds and are just starting to bloom.

## Research on Poppy Flowers

This year was wonderful for the amount of poppies that bloomed. As I was doing research I thought they lasted longer than most years so I checked back in my records and found the following. I went through my research notes that go back to 2005 and made up a chart with the date I went to do research when the poppies were done for the season.

2005 July 3	2008 July 18	2011 July 1	2014 June 21	2017 July 14
2006 July 10	2009 May 9	2012 May 5	2015 May 24	2018 April 23
2007 June 27	2010 July 1	2013 April 3	2016 May 20	

Set a new record—



Photo take at the Poppy Reserve on August 7, 2019

## Arthur B. Ripley Desert Woodland

November 6, 2016 Milt Stark passed. He had wanted to have two benches put in at Ripley and his family wanted a plaque on one of those benches in his honor. Both have been accomplished as of this month.





### DESERT COTTONTAIL

*Sylvilagus audubonii*

#### The Cottontail is a rabbit.

- The male is called a buck and the female a doe; a young rabbit is a kitten or kit.
- Desert Cottontails are found throughout the Plains states from Montana to Texas and Nevada and Southern California.
- They occur in dry desert grasslands and shrub, riparian areas and pinyon-juniper forests.
- The adult is light colored, tan to gray, with yellowish tinge. The underside of the body is whitish. The tail is rounded and looks like a cotton ball.
- They are about 13-17 inches in length, ears average 3-4 inches and the average weight is 2 to 3 pounds.
- They live to about 9-12 years old..
- When alarmed, they can run up to 20 mph in a zigzag pattern or they may freeze, scrunch down to blend into its surroundings and when cornered may kick with its powerful hind legs.
- They are active in the early morning, late afternoon and at night.
- Live in shallow burrows or tunnels.
- Rabbits are herbivores that feed by grazing on grass, forbs, and leafy weeds. They prefer soft stems. Their diet contains large amounts of cellulose, which is hard to digest. They solve this problem by passing two distinct types of feces: hard droppings and soft black pellets. The soft pellets are eaten again to absorb the nutrients.
- They live in groups. Courtship behavior involves licking, sniffing, and following the doe. Spraying urine is also a common sexual behavior.
- After mating the female makes a nest or burrow, and lines the nest with fur from her flanks and belly.
- A female may bear young year round up to eight months a year. She can breed at eighty days old, then mate again soon after giving birth. She may bear twenty to thirty young in four to five litters. A normal litter has 2 to 6 young.
- Rabbits are born helpless; they are without fur and are blind.



Called a kitten or kit



### BLACK-TAILED JACKRABBIT

*Lepus californicus*

#### The Jackrabbit is a hare.

- The male is called a buck and the female is a doe; a young hare is a leveret.
- Jackrabbits are common in the western United States and Mexico, where it is found at elevations from seal level up to 10,000 feet.
- They reside in prairies, pastures, orchards, and cultivated areas before crops grow too tall.
- The adult fur is a silver and tan color and keeps its brownish coloring year round. The tail is gray to white with a black stripe. They have longer ears and hind legs than a rabbit.
- They are about 16-28 inches in length, ears average 4-7 inches and the average weight is 9-13 pounds.
- They live to about 10 years old..
- They prefer to live in open areas where they can see predators coming. When alarmed they rely on their acute hearing and speed which can reach 40-45 mph, they can leap 19 feet in a single bound.
- They can be seen during the day, though they are predominantly nocturnal.
- Live above ground among plants.
- Hares are herbivores and they feed by grazing on grass, forbs, and leafy weeds. Hares tend to eat more hard food than rabbits, including bark and rind, buds, small twigs and shoots. They will also eat cactus, sagebrush, mesquite, juniper berries, clover and alfalfa. Similar to rabbits, they re-ingest the soft pellets and discard the hard droppings.
- Normally a shy animal, it changes its behavior in spring, when they chase one another around and can be seen "boxing" which is usually the female striking a male and refusing copulation.
- Hares bear their young in a shallow depression or flattened nest of grass called a form.
- Hares have only two or three litters, with 4 to 6 young in a litter. The doe makes a depression in the ground in a protected area and usually gives birth to her offspring in and close to thick brush.
- Jackrabbits are born capable of independent movement, have fur, and have vision. They can hop within five minutes of being born.



Called a leveret

## COTTONTAIL—RABBIT

- The young are weaned at two weeks old and leave the nest area three weeks after birth.
- If the mother has to leave her kittens, she will cover them up with lots of fur and leaves to keep them warm and safe. They also may share their burrows with other rabbits.
- A group of rabbits is known as a “colony” or a “nest”.
- Natural predators are hawks, coyote, foxes, bobcat and humans.
- They are hunted for their meat, fur, and hides.
- Rabbits have been domesticated and can be pets.



## BLACK-TAILED JACKRABBIT—HARE

- The mother may nurse her babies for a full 12 weeks before weaning them.
- The mother is not afraid to leave their leverets just hours after the babies are born. The babies are equipped to living without their mothers at just about a hour old.
- Hares usually live solitarily or in pairs, not in groups.
- Natural predators are hawks, coyote, foxes, bobcat and humans.
- They are hunted for their meat, fur, and hides.
- Hares have not been domesticated.



- Both rabbits and hares are famous in numerous myths. They are known as tricksters and as symbols of fertility due to their high reproductive rates.
- A rabbit/hares foot is sold as a good luck charm.
- Rabbits and hares are often used as a symbol of fertility or rebirth, and have been associated with spring and innocence.



Peter Rabbit is a cottontail; so he is a rabbit.



The Easter Bunny is most likely a hare. The Easter Bunny started with a goddess named Eostre, who was linked to hares and fertility. Around the 1600s, the Germans invented a bunny figure called Oschter Haws, who left colorful eggs in nests that children had made in baskets.



The hare in the story Tortoise and the Hare was chosen because hares are known to be quicker than rabbits. Since they live on the open ground rather than in burrows, hares had to become fast so that they could get away from their predators.

## RABBIT DRIVES IN THE ANTELOPE VALLEY

The following excerpts are from articles by Milt Stark on Rabbit Drives.

“Rabbit drives were a fact of life up until at least the late 1920s. In fact as a small boy, I participated in a night drive in which a number of automobiles were driven across the desert floor herding rabbits into a chicken wire fence on the edge of my aunt’s alfalfa field where they were either shot or clubbed. With literally millions of jackrabbits in the valley in the early part of the century, for farmers, it was an economic necessity. Rabbits did a tremendous amount of damage to the alfalfa fields, which were developed after about 1906 when the first powered water pump was introduced in the valley. Fences did not keep many of the rabbits out and additionally was expensive. To stay in business, farmers had only one alternative, which was to get rid of them. Rabbit drives became a weekend sport for both rural and city people. Until the early 1930s when jackrabbits developed a disease, both jackrabbits and cottontails were frequently eaten. The relatively few people living in the Antelope Valley in those days could only eat so many rabbits, so the question is what was done with the bulk of the harvest? The story is that they were loaded onto the train and hauled to orphanages in Los Angeles or sold in L.A. meat markets but the probability is that most were left for the scavenger birds.”

In 1909 an issue of Outdoor Life had an article on the rabbit drives and below are excerpts from that article.

“The town of Lancaster with about two hundred fifty citizens has sprung into being and the surrounding valley is liberally dotted with farm houses. Alfalfa is considered the crop best suited to the soil, and hundreds of acres of the land are devoted to the raising of it. Jackrabbits are extremely fond of alfalfa, and the valley has been producing about two crops of rabbits to every one of alfalfa hay. The jackrabbit crop is not marketable, but all the hay that can be produced is always in keen demand. The rabbits are consuming too much of the latter crop, and the farmers, in consequence, issued a proclamation of war.

In preparation for a rabbit drive, a corral was constructed of wire netting into which the rabbits are to be driven. This corral is usually square with an opening on one side, probably twenty-five feet wide, from which flare wings of netting were about sixty feet long.

Early in the morning of the drive farmers and city folk began to arrive from all directions, some coming in wagons a distance of ten or twelve miles and some arriving on trains from towns twenty miles distant. Captains are chosen and the hunt begins. The captains divide the hunters into squads and from various section roads they are started on foot toward the corral, the distance between the hunters at a start being not more than one hundred feet. Six or eight square miles are enclosed in this way, and gradually the marching wall of men and boys drive the rabbits toward the mouth of the corral. As the wall of men gradually nears the corral there seems to be a living sea of long-eared rabbits. The opening in the corral seems to offer to the rabbits the only avenue of escape, and into it they pour by the hundreds, almost clambering over one another in their mad flight.

When corralled the slaughter begins. A limited number of hunters, armed with clubs, enter the corral, and with quick sure blows rabbit after rabbit is killed. The sight is pitiful. The rabbits dart in all directions, clambering over each other and trying to escape through the netting. Sometimes they pile up in corners two and three deep. After the killing the rabbits are left in piles to be devoured by scavengers. The long ears are cut from them as souvenirs, but otherwise no spoils of the drive are taken. After the hunt there is a free barbecue for dinner for all – not of rabbit, however, but of beef.

To bag between five and ten thousand jack rabbits in a single day should be considered a very good record for a single party of hunters – especially when clubs constitute the only weapon used.”

