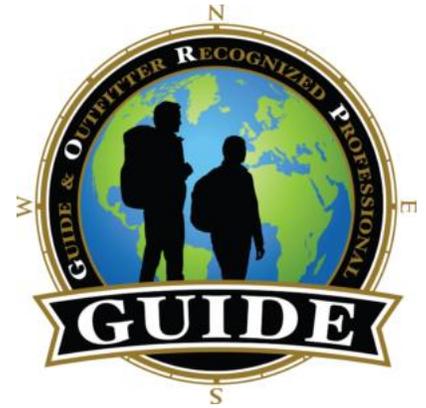




Oregon Sea Grant Extension  
Sustainable Tourism &  
Outdoor Recreation Program

# Interpretative Fact Sheet

## Brush Rabbit (*Sylvilagus bachmani*)



The following short article is from the [Oregon Coast 101 Species](#) collection used by the Guide and Outfitter Recognized Professional (GORP) training program. These articles are intended to provide interesting facts you can share with your clientele and add value to your services.

An Interpretive Fact Sheet has been written about each species. We are currently uploading these blogs and creating the links.

**Come visit us!**

Tourism and Business Development College of Business,  
Oregon State University Extension - Oregon Sea Grant at  
<http://tourism.oregonstate.edu/>

Guide and Outfitter Recognized Professional Program  
<https://www.GORPguide.org>

For more information about the GORP training program see:  
<https://www.gorpguide.org/become-a-gorp-certified-guide>

# Brush Rabbit (*Sylvilagus bachmani*)

---

 [tourism.oregonstate.edu/brush-rabbit-sylvilagus-bachmani/](https://tourism.oregonstate.edu/brush-rabbit-sylvilagus-bachmani/)

By colliiek2

August 28, 2020

***Have you ever seen a rabbit climb a tree?***  
**Somehow seeing a bunny in a tree just seems out of place.**

---



Brush Rabbit (courtesy ODFW)

## Identifying

---

Brush rabbits are one of the smaller rabbit species with short legs and gray tail, and long ears. They are dark brownish gray with a pale gray belly. Adults measure around a foot in length and weight up to two pounds.

In some parts of Oregon, the Brush Rabbit and the introduced Eastern Cottontail have interbred. The resulting hybrid is small like the Brush Rabbit and has a white cottontail of the Eastern.

## Range

---

Brush Rabbits are found along the Pacific coast from Washington south through Baja California, Mexico. They are also found in the Willamette Valley and coastal stream valleys up to the Cascade Range.

## Habitat

---

Typically, Brush Rabbits stay very close to home and make their home in extremely dense brush. They clear runways in the brush for feeding, quick escapes, and snacking in our gardens.

## **Food Sources**

---

Normally, these animals are solitary but have been known to become gregarious when foraging. Probably when they are having fun eating my azaleas to the ground.

In summer, the rabbits love to eat green clover. They also eat grasses, flowers, weeds, blackberries, wild roses, tree saplings, and farm and garden crops.

In winter, their diet will shift to more twiggy materials and practically any green plant especially ground hugging shrubs. They will devour plants like Gumpo Satsuki azaleas and miniature blueberries almost overnight.

Not sure it was a rabbit? Rabbits make a 45 degree cut with their incisors; deer and elk just twist and rip.

Rabbits and hares will pass soft pellets of undigested vegetation (called coprophagy). They will later re-ingest these nutritional pellets to meet their nutritional requirements.

## **Nests**

---

Nests created by the females are typically located in brushy areas such as fencerows, edge habitat, brush or rock piles, and other areas with suitable cover. The nest would resemble a shallow bowl-lined with grass, leaves, and her belly fur.

Once the kits are born, the mother will avoid the nest for two weeks and return only at dusk and dawn to nurse and care for her young. This behavior helps hide the young from predators.

## **Predators**

---

Brush Rabbits are always cautious around predators and will often use underground or brush tunnels rather than crossing open ground. They use a couple of different techniques to foil predators which include:

- Sitting absolutely still for long periods of time.
- Running in a wild zigzag pattern. They are able to run 15-20 miles an hour in one stretch.
- Rabbits will emit a high-pitch sound similar to a cry when it feels threatened.

**Predators include:** Bobcats, cougars, domestic dogs/cats, coyotes, shunks, snakes, weasels, fox, mink, and a variety of raptors (particularly hawks and owls). They are also vulnerable around vehicles, mowers, weed-wackers, and habitat changes.

## Population

---

Quick like a rabbit. These polygynous breeders can produce over 15 young each year with multiple litters. The average litter size in Oregon is 2.8.

Brush Rabbit populations in Oregon are not threatened. Many species here are considered game animals. Check with the Oregon Dept of Fish and Wildlife for harvest regulations.

## Cute Stuff

---

*Did you know that rabbits purr when they are content?* The purr may sound like teeth lightly chattering, but just as sweet as a kitten.

They also have a way of expressing joy called 'binky.' They will run and jump, twisting their body, and flicking their feet. Something like a whirling leap for joy. Most likely brought on by eating small and expensive ornamental shrubs...well maybe...

## Not so Cute stuff

---

Rabbits gnaw a number of things from bark on young trees to small diameter plastic irrigation lines. Plants and irrigation lines are difficult to protect from the rabbits once they get started. There are several ideas for living with rabbits (and discouraging them) on State Fish and Wildlife websites.

## Disease

---

This spring biologists found a fatal hemorrhagic disease spreading through wild and domestic rabbit populations in California. The disease does not affect humans or other animals. Be sure to report any dead or weird acting rabbits to your local Fish and Wildlife office.

Rabbits and several other related animals can be infected with a bacterial tularemia, rabbit fever, which can be passed to humans through undercooked meat or handling meat. Wear rubber gloves and wash hands well to avoid problems.

**So, will a Brush Rabbit climb a tree?** Yes, if they are hungry or need a predator escape, and if the trunk is sloped. *Who knew?*

## REFERENCES:

–Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, Brush Rabbits (<https://myodfw.com/wildlife-viewing/species/pikas-rabbits-and-hares>)

- Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, Rabbits (<https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/living/species-facts/rabbits>)
- Wildlife Organization, Deadly disease found in California rabbits for first time, May 2020 (<https://wildlife.org/deadly-disease-found-in-california-rabbits-for-first-time>)
- Wikipedia, Brush Rabbits ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brush\\_rabbit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brush_rabbit))