



# YYC Young Citizen Scientists

## BIOFACT WEBPAGE



**Common Name:** Mountain Cottontail Rabbit

**Scientific Name:** *Sylvilagus nuttallii*

The mountain cottontail rabbit can be found in shrubby bottomlands, ravine areas, conifer forests, and sometimes bordering agricultural lands. During the day, these rabbits are very active searching for food while returning to their burrows at dusk and dawn to prevent predation. As herbivores, they mostly feed on a variety of grasses, fruits, leaves, buds, bark, grains, and weeds. Based on their diet and their habitat, this species acts as a pollinator. Pollen from the plants it feeds on and travels through sticks to its fur, carrying it from flower to flower allowing for pollination. Furthermore, since they are continuously eating, cottontail rabbits act as plant and weed control within their habitats. Unfortunately, this species is also a food source for many predators such as coyotes, hawks, owls, foxes, and bobcats.



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### Unique qualities:

- Mountain cottontail rabbits have very nutrient dense urine and feces which is very effective as a soil fertilizer in their wild habitats but also in gardens
- This species reaches sexual maturity within 3 months of life, allowing it to have up to 5 litters of young per year!
- These rabbits can hop up to 8 feet with their strong legs to confuse or flee from predators, often they will run in zigzag patterns to escape a threat
- The position of eyes on either side of its head, allow the mountain cottontail rabbit to have great eyesight

### Human actions that enhance or threaten their existence:

Species found in the Okanagan in British Columbia are considered under special concern, as the suitable habitat available within the region is declining. The habitat is being fragmented and lost due to agriculture and urbanization. In other regions, the rabbit populations are able to remain stable due to their high reproduction rates. Some threats for this species are loss of habitat, urbanization, and deforestation.



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