

A jackrabbit isn't a rabbit

By Sheldon Dingle

The jackrabbit, common to the Nevada and California deserts, is not a rabbit at all. Actually, it is a hare.

The main difference between hares and rabbits is that rabbits are born naked in burrows while hares are born in nests above ground and have fur and can walk a few steps at birth.

There are two species of jackrabbits, the *Lepus Californicus*, mentioned above, has a black tail and does not change its color according to season. The *Lepus townsendi*, or white-tailed jackrabbit, lives on the northern prairies and turns white in the wintertime.

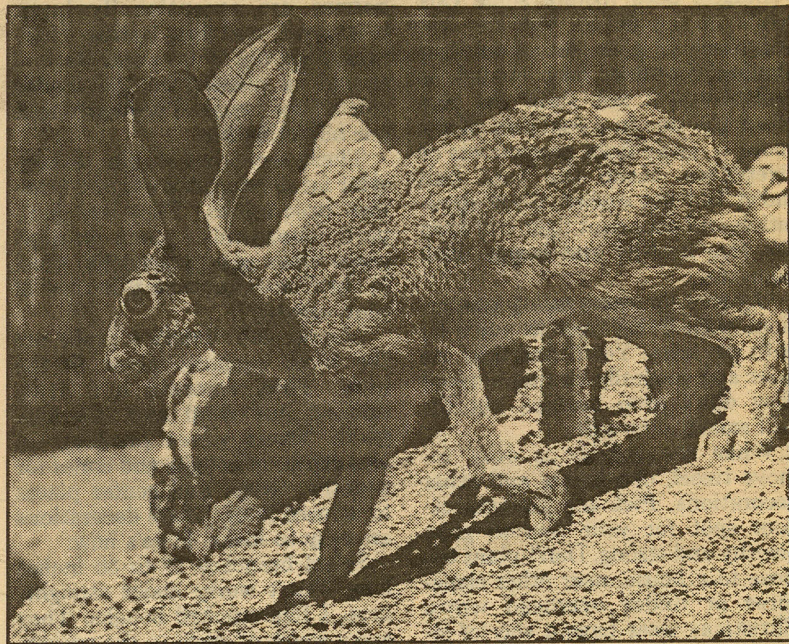
The black-tailed jackrabbit has the longer ears (up to 8 inches) and gets its name "jackass rabbit" because the long ears remind one of a donkey. The ears also are useful in heat regulation. They act as radiators that transfer body heat into the atmosphere, thus cooling the animal. The desert heat is so intense and water so scarce that often the jackrabbit's very life hinges

upon two or three degrees of temperature up or down.

Jackrabbits also have shallow nests in shady spots wherein the cooler ground will absorb heat from the animal's body.

The common jackrabbit is highly specialized for desert living. Like its most common enemy, the coyote, jackrabbits can be found in Sandy Valley, the Blue Diamond area, and the lower elevations of Mount Charleston. It is even still common in large vacant lots of 20 acres or more scattered about the metropolitan area. These fields of undisturbed vegetation can support several families of jackrabbits — until several families of human beings displace them.

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Ralph Fountain

Pioneers dubbed them "Jackass rabbits" due to their huge ears.