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| Eastern Cottontail Rabbit |

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| |  | | --- | | http://www.dnr.state.oh.us/Portals/9/wildlife/images/speciesguide/whitetaildeer/angled_bar.gif |  |  | | --- | | **Eastern Cottontail Rabbit**  Sylvilagus floridanus  **At-a-Glance**   • Mating: Polygamous   • Peak Breeding Activity: April-May   • Gestation: 29 or 30 days   • Young are Born: Early March-late September; May-June is peak   • Litter Size: 2-7, average 5   • Young Leave Parents: 3+ weeks   • Number of Litters per Year: 2-5, 3 is average   • Migration Pattern: Year-round resident   • Typical Foods: Clover, dandelion, plantain, lamb’s-quarter, and ragweed. Winter foods may include ear corn, dry hay, and bark of tree saplings, raspberry, blackberry, and multiflora rose. | | |  | | --- | | **Description**  The Eastern cottontail rabbit is a small mammal with a brownish-gray body, long ears, and a small white tuft of a tail that resembles a cotton ball -- the feature it derives a part of its name from. There is also a rusty colored patch of fur on the nape of the neck. The feet can be whitish.  **Habitat and Habits** Eastern cottontail rabbits prefer open areas bordered by thickets or brush areas. Preferably the open area is an old field with tall grass. Nearby burrows are used as protection from predators and harsh weather. Open woods with nearby brush piles or near fields are also used. Still rabbits are found inhabiting suburbs and cities using lawns and nearby borders of shrubbery and other boundary plantings for food and cover.   Rabbits prefer to eat near cover, and rely on “travel lanes” not only for safe haven, but as a relatively safe way to get from place to place. A travel lane may be a brushy fence row, multiflora rose hedges, immature pines, corn rows, stream banks or dry drainage ditches--cottontails are reluctant to get into water although they are capable of fording water, but only if necessary.  **Reproduction and Care of the Young**  The nest is a shallow depression made in the ground that is four to six inches deep and four to five inches wide. A variety of field types ranging from pastures to pine plantations to mowed lawns are used as nesting sites. As long as there is suitable cover and food near by, a site is acceptable for nesting. The nest is lined with dry grass and fur from the female’s body. The young are born with their eyes closed, deaf, and without hair. The female doesn't stay on the nest however; most of the time she is away from it returning only to feed the young. | |