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| . | **Snowshoe Hare**snowshoe hareThis hare changes its coat two times a year, exchanging a thin brown summer coat for a heavy, white, fluffy winter coat. These different colored fur coats help the hare blend in with its surroundings. In the summer, the snowshoe hare is rusty brown with black on the top of the tail and ear tips; grayish-white on its underside. This blends well with summer twigs and leaves. In fall, the new winter white coat comes in; starting with the ears and feet. This transformation to white takes about 10 weeks. The white blends in and hides the snowshoe hare in the snowcovered woodlands. Some people call this animal the "varying hare" because of this seasonal color change.**Food for Thought**Rabbit or hare, that is the question. A snowshoe hare looks like a rabbit at first glance, but in general hares have longer ears, very large hind feet, and longer legs made for jumping. Hares are also born with their fur and their eyes open, unlike the rabbit. The snowshoe hare is slightly larger than the cottontail rabbit, but smaller than the black-tailed jackrabbit, measuring 15-10 inches long and weighing only 2-4 pounds. Telescoping ears helps the hare gather sounds from many directions, giving it a keen sense of hearing. Large hind feet help it stand up and reach branches to feed on. It has a sensitive nose and whiskers, which helps it smell or sense danger in the air. Its teeth are very strong, made for gnawing on tree bark, woody twigs and tree buds from aspen, willow, birch, maple, sumac and alder in the winter. The hare will also eat the needles of [conifers](http://dnr.wi.gov/org/caer/ce/eek/veg/trees/evergreen.htm) like [fir](http://dnr.wi.gov/org/caer/ce/eek/veg/trees/balsmfir.htm), [cedar](http://dnr.wi.gov/org/caer/ce/eek/veg/trees/whtcedar.htm), [hemlock](http://dnr.wi.gov/org/caer/ce/eek/veg/trees/hemlock.htm), [spruce](http://dnr.wi.gov/org/caer/ce/eek/veg/trees/whtspruce.htm) and [white pine](http://dnr.wi.gov/org/caer/ce/eek/veg/trees/whtpine.htm). In the summer, green vegetation like grasses, clover, dandelions, sweet raspberry, and blackberry shoots makes up their diet. Snowshoes have up to three litters in a year, with three to four young per litter. Did you know that a young hare is called a leveret?**Making Tracks**hare track, ©DNRLook for snowshoe hare tracks in the snow--you can find out where they live or where they've been by following them. Snowshoes get their name from the shape of their back feet, which look like snowshoes and help the hare stay on top of the snow. You can't miss the large track prints from these unique feet with the dense fur pads. The fur pads keep their feet insulated and warm. If you want to look for tracks, you'll need to look in the northern third of Wisconsin where conifer forests grow with thick understories--good hare habitat. But, be careful, hare tracks can fool you. The hind foot print is in front of the front foot print. (Think about how a hare moves along and you'll understand why.) If you find a print and follow it, you may find out where the hare lives.The snowshoe hare really likes wooded forests with [coniferous](http://dnr.wi.gov/org/caer/ce/eek/veg/trees/evergreen.htm) trees in lowland areas and places with young aspen trees or spruce and cedar swamps. By day, they rest or hide in low vegetation, inside hollow logs, or inside abandoned animal burrows. At night they travel along "runways" or worn down paths through low vegetation. Snowshoes are late eaters and really chow down around 11:00 p.m.Snowshoe hares are not alone in the nighttime woods. They are stalked by many predators like coyotes, foxes, weasels, great horned owls, and larger hawks. The [bobcat's](http://dnr.wi.gov/org/caer/ce/eek/critter/mammal/bobcat.htm) favorite meal is also the snowshoe hare. Beware snowshoe hare, there are lots of predators out there!Source: <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/caer/ce/eek/critter/mammal/hare.htm> |