

## What's the difference between a hare and a rabbit?

Appearance for a start: Hares have longer hind legs and ears. And unlike rabbits, hares are precocial which means they are born with fur, eyes open and ready to move. Rabbits are less agile and their young are not fully furred. Finally, Scrub hares do not live in burrows. They build shelters which are simply a small indent in the ground called a form.



## Did you know?

- When fleeing from danger, Scrub hares can reach speeds of 70km/h.
- Young leverets will become totally independent from their mothers after just one month.

**No.2 in the series of Mammals of the Greater Woodmead Estate will appear in October and will feature the Yellow and Slender mongooses.**



**Want to learn more about the exciting environment of the Greater Woodmead Estate?**

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**THE COUNTRY CLUB**  
JOHANNESBURG



## African Scrub Hare

**No.1 in a series:  
Mammals of the Country Club Estate**





***We will be producing a series of pamphlets, each representing a mammal that has been seen on the CCJ Woodmead Estate. We will be covering Scrub hares, mongooses (yellow, slender and white-tailed), genets, hedgehogs, rock hyrax, vlei rats, moles, jackal and bats. With the advent of Spring, we've selected the Scrub hare as first in the series.***

Scrub hares belong to the family – Leporidae. Hares & rabbits represent this family. They were once classified as rodents because of their incisors, but have a second pair of peglike incisors behind the constantly growing first pair. Their hind legs are adapted for running and, being largely nocturnal, their large eyes are adapted to low light conditions.

## Habitat

Scrub hares are native to southern Africa. They are found in southern Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, and Lesotho. The reason we see them on the CCJ estate is that they enjoy a combination of open grasslands and thickets.



## Escaping the predators

Long grass helps them to conceal themselves during the day. As long as they remain motionless, predators can't detect them because their coloration blends in with the scrubland and vegetation. When a predator is near, the hare remains completely motionless, hoping it is not spotted. But at the last possible moment, it will use its long hind legs to jump and run away as fast as it can. It runs in a zigzagged formation in hopes it will be difficult for the predator to catch it. When caught, it makes a loud squeal for distress and tries to kick or bite, which is usually unsuccessful. They also produce a loud chirping sound if they are disturbed in an open habitat during the night.

## Population threat

Main threats to Scrub hares include habitat fragmentation, commercial plantations, and development. All this destroys their habitats and leaves them exposed to predators. These animals also suffer from hunting. Many local people hunt them for food and sometimes create gloves out of their soft, warm fur. There has been a distinct population decline due to hunting in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

## Diet

They eat grass, roots, and shrub stems. Scrub hares have an unusual feeding behaviour, in that they perform coprophagy (the eating of dung), with two distinct types of faecal pellets being formed. One is hard, round and yellow and is produced in the main stream of the digestive tract. The other, less frequently produced, is dark and softer. This pellet is eaten directly from the anus to extract much needed nutrients; this replenishes the micro bacteria necessary for the fermentation of food in the stomach.



## Breeding

Scrub hares gestate for about six weeks and can live for up to seven years. They are solitary unless seeking to mate. The females are larger than the males and can weigh up to 4kg. Births peak from September to February, but they may give birth throughout the year to between one and three leverets per litter. Triplets are more likely during good rainy seasons.

