

## THE EASTERN COTTONTAIL

*Sylvilagus floridanus*

Named after their adorable fluffy tails  
- a tuft of white fur.

Cottontail rabbits are small mammals with speckled brown-gray fur. They have big eyes, long erect ears, and strong large hind legs and feet. Average weight is usually not more than 3 pounds but they can reach up to 18 inches in length.



### DIET



Herbivore - cottontails eat a variety of different plants including grasses, clover, fruits and veggies. In the winter they eat woody parts of plants like twigs and bark from birch, oak, dogwood, and maple trees.

### RANGE



Cottontails are found throughout the eastern and southern to central parts of the US, on farms, in orchards, and even backyards.

### HABITAT



The eastern cottontail prefers habitats that are between woody areas and the open land. They can be spotted in bushy areas, fields, woodlands, swamps and thickets.

### BEHAVIOR



A territorial and solitary creature, the cottontail is crepuscular - meaning that they are most active at dawn and dusk. They do not burrow, nor do they hibernate.



Eastern Cottontail -  
Spout Springs Virginia

Photo courtesy of Steve Bradish

# Eastern Cottontail

*Sylvilagus floridanus*

## HOW TO ATTRACT COTTONTAILS

Similar to people, rabbits are particular about their food choices. To attract them, consider growing their preferred foods. According to PBS's Nature Works, clover, lettuce, and, naturally, carrots are top picks for rabbits visiting your garden. Conversely, certain vegetables you enjoy might deter your new puffy tailed friends. If you have potatoes or cucumbers growing in your garden, relocating them to a different area of your yard can help create a more inviting environment for these furry visitors.

If transforming your current garden to attract bunnies seems like it could lead to more challenges than benefits, think about dedicating a small area in your yard to cater specifically to these adorable visitors. Just as humans enjoy berry bushes, bunnies are also fond of them, so planting a few near your rabbit garden is a smart move. Keep in mind that you might need to take precautions to safeguard your main garden from curious intruders who come hopping over to explore the rest of your yard.



### REFERENCES & FURTHER READINGS

Virginia Wildlife - A folding pocket guide to familiar animals  
by Kavanagh/Leung

NH PBS - Nature Works  
<https://nhpbs.org/natureworks/easterncottontail.htm>

Maryland Department of Natural Resources  
[https://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Pages/plants\\_wildlife/Eastern\\_Cottontail.aspx](https://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Pages/plants_wildlife/Eastern_Cottontail.aspx)