

LEPUS TEXIANUS.—AUD. and BACH.

TEXAN HARE—VULGO JACKASS RABBIT.

PLATE CXXXIII.—MALE.

L. Magnitudine, L. Californicum excedens, auriculis maximis, capite tertia parte longioribus, linea fusca supra in collo, striâ nigrâ a natibus usque ad caudæ apicem productâ, corpore supra luteo nigroque vario, subter, collo rufo gula atque ventre albis.

CHARACTERS.

Larger than the Californian Hare ; ears, very large—more than one third longer than the head ; a dark brown stripe on the top of the neck, and a black stripe from the rump, extending to the root of the tail and along its upper surface to the tip. Upper surface of body, mottled deep buff and black, throat and belly white, under side of neck dull rufous.

DESCRIPTION.

Crown of the head, depressed or flattened, forming an obtuse angle with the forehead and nose ; ears, of immense size, being larger than in any other species of Hare known to us. Body, full, and rather stout ; fore-legs, of moderate length and size ; thighs, stout and large ; tarsus, of moderate length ; nails, strong, deeply channelled beneath.

COLOUR.

Hairs on the upper surface of body, white from the roots for two thirds of their length, then brown, then dull buff, and tipped very narrowly with black. On the belly, throat, and insides of legs, the hairs are white from the roots to the tips.

One of our specimens has a black patch on the inner surface of the ear near its base ; another has a brown patch in that place ; anterior margin of the ears, buff ; posterior portion of the ear for an inch and a half from the tip, whitish ; a narrow line of dark brown runs from between the ears for an inch along the back of the neck ; the anterior outer half of the ear, and the posterior inner half of the ear, are clothed with a mixture of parti-



Drawn from Nature by J. W. Audubon

On stone by W. E. Hitchcock

Desert Hare

Lith. Printed & Col'd by J. T. Bowen, Philad'a

coloured gray and yellowish hairs ; the posterior outside half of the ear is white, with the exception of the extreme point, which in one of our specimens has a slight margin of brown at the tip of the ear, while another specimen is more deeply tinged with brown for three fourths of its length.

Around the eye there is a light yellowish-gray ring ; under surface of neck, rufous, faintly spotted or marked with brown ; tail, black above, the same colour continuing on the rump and dorsal line in a stripe for about four inches from the root of the tail ; eyes, orange hazel ; nails, brown. The line of white on the belly and flanks is irregular in shape where it joins the dark colours of the upper surface, and in this respect differs from *Lepus callotis*, in which species the white extends higher up the sides and is continued in a tolerably straight line nearly to the tail.

Whiskers, white, a few of them black at the roots.

DIMENSIONS.

	Feet.	Inches.	Lines.
From point of nose to root of tail, - - -	1	9	
“ “ to ear, - - -		4	1
Ear, externally, - - -		6	5
Width of ear, - - -		3	
Length of tarsus, - - -		5	
“ tail (including fur), - - -		4	2
“ longest whisker, - - -		3	6

HABITS.

This Hare received from the Texans, and from our troops in the Mexican war, the name of Jackass rabbit, in common with *Lepus callotis*, the Black-tailed Hare described in our second volume, p. 95. It is the largest of three nearly allied species of Hare which inhabit respectively New Mexico, Texas, Mexico, and California, viz. the present species, the Black-tailed, and the Californian Hare. It is quite as swift of foot as either of the others, and its habits resemble those of the Black-tailed Hare in almost every particular. The young have generally a white spot on the middle of the top of the head, and are remarkable for the rigidity of the fringe of hairs which margins the ears. The feet of this species do not exhibit the red and dense fur which prevails on the feet of the Black-tailed Hare (and from which it has sometimes been called the Red-footed Hare).

The Mexicans are very fond of the flesh of this animal, and as it is widely distributed, a great many are shot and snared by them. It is very good eating, and formed an important item in the provisions of JOHN W. AUDU.

BON's party whilst passing through Mexico, they at times killing so many that the men became tired of them.

Fabulous stories similar to those related of many other animals of which little was formerly known, have been told us of this Hare, which has been described as enormously large, and was many years ago mentioned to us as equal in size to a fox. Of course we were somewhat disappointed when we procured specimens, although it is a fine large species.

Among other old stories about the animals of Texas and Mexico, we have a rather curious one in CLAVIGHERO's notes or attempted elucidation of HERNANDEZ, which we give as translated by Capt. J. P. McCOWN from the Spanish. The *Ocotochtli*, according to Dr. HERNANDEZ, is a species of wild-cat. He says that "when it has killed any game it climbs a tree and utters a howl of invitation to other animals that come and eat and die, as the flesh was poisoned by its bite, when he descends and makes his meal from the store that his trick has put at his disposal."

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION.

This Hare appears to inhabit the southern parts of New Mexico, the western parts of Texas, and the elevated lands westward of the *tierras calientes* (low lands of the coast) of Mexico, and is found within a few miles of San Petrichio, forty miles from the coast: so J. W. AUDUBON was informed by some Rangers who accompanied a party sent from San Antonio in 1845, who having the use of "Col. HARNEY's" greyhounds, had many a chase, but never caught one! How near it approaches the sea coast we could not learn. It was not observed west of Ures in Sonora by J. W. AUDUBON, and seems to be replaced by the Californian Hare on the Pacific coast.

Its southern limit is unknown to us, but it probably extends some distance beyond the city of Mexico.

GENERAL REMARKS.

Since publishing our article on *Lepus Townsendii* we have received some accounts of the habits of a Hare which we presume may prove to be that animal; they are singular, and may interest our readers. Captain THOMAS G. RHETT, of the United States army, who was stationed at Fort Laramie for more than two years, observed the Hares of that neighbourhood to make burrows in the ground like rabbits. They ran into these holes when alarmed, and when chased by his greyhounds generally escaped by diving into them. The captain frequently saw them sitting at the mouths of their

holes like prairie dogs, and shot them. Several that he thus killed had only their heads exposed outside of their burrow.

These holes or burrows are dug in a slanting direction, and not straight up and down like the badger holes. The females bring forth their young in them, and their habits must assimilate to those of the European rabbit. The captain states that they turn white in winter, but as he made no notes and brought no specimens, we cannot with certainty decide that they were the animal we named *L. Townsendii*. Should they prove to be the same, however, the name will have to be changed to *L. campestris*, a Hare of the plains which we had previously described, but subsequently thought was not that species, as it became white in winter, which we were told *L. Townsendii* did not. See our first volume, p. 30.



Audubon, John James and Bachman, John. 1854. "Lepus texianus, Texan Hare [Pl. CXXXIII, male]." *The quadrupeds of North America* 3, 156–159.

<https://doi.org/10.5962/p.322474>.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/108515>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.322474>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/322474>

Holding Institution

Duke University Libraries

Sponsored by

Duke University Libraries

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: Not provided. Contact Holding Institution to verify copyright status.

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.