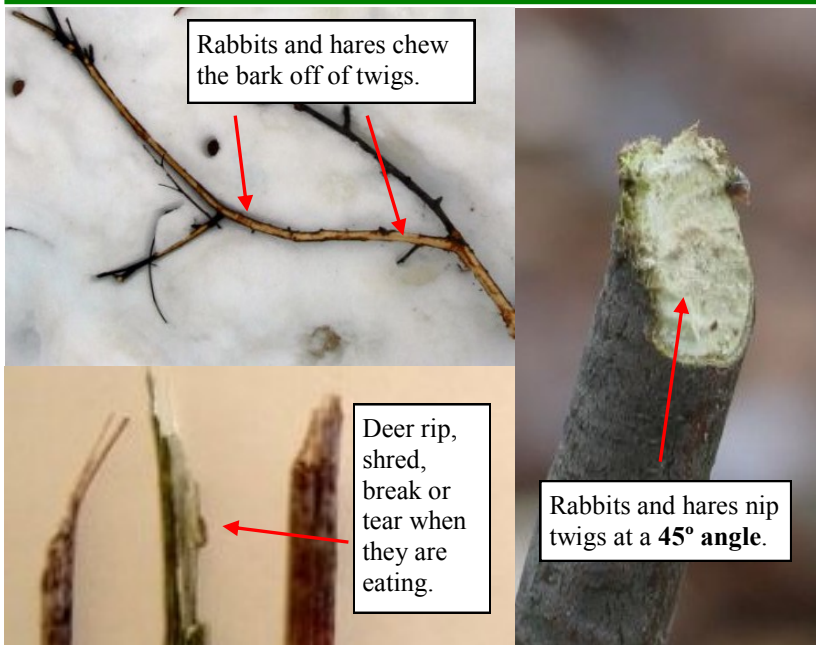


BROWSE COMPARISON



* Hares often browse on larger stems & conifers, but cottontails do not.
 * Deer tend to browse several feet off the ground (~ between human knee and hip height), however as browse becomes depleted they will browse closer to the ground. Also, keep in mind that fluctuating snow levels affect the “ground” height.

TIPS AND TRICKS

Try to examine and compare all possible evidence:

- **Tracks:** How many hind foot toes can you see? Squirrels have 5 & rabbits have 4. Look at the overall qualities of each track, & analyze multiple tracks nearby to give yourself a better idea of what you might be looking at. If the tracks lead to or from trees, they are probably from a squirrel.
- **Pellets:** How big are they? Round or oblong?
- **Browse:** Is it shredded (deer) or cleanly cut (rabbit)? If primarily pines or other evergreen trees are being browsed, it is likely a snowshoe hare.
- **Habitat type:** Are you relatively out in the open? What sort of shrubs are around you? Cottontails will try to stay near cover as much as possible, whereas squirrels will run out in the open or run from tree to tree, and hares may take more chances in relatively open, but wooded areas (especially conifer stands).

This guide was created by the Maine New England Cottontail Working Group, February 2012. For more information about this document or the New England cottontail, please contact:

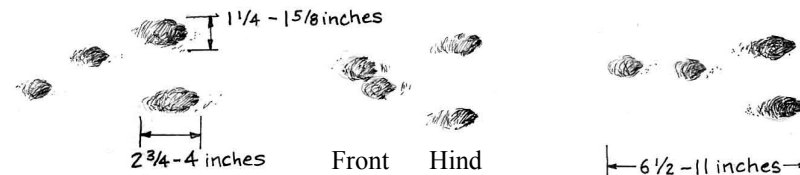
Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge
 321 Port Road
 Wells, ME 04090
 (207) 646-9226

TRACK COMPARISON

* Snow melt and ice can significantly alter the size, shape, and appearance of tracks.
 * Take multiple measurements from more than one set of tracks if necessary to confirm species

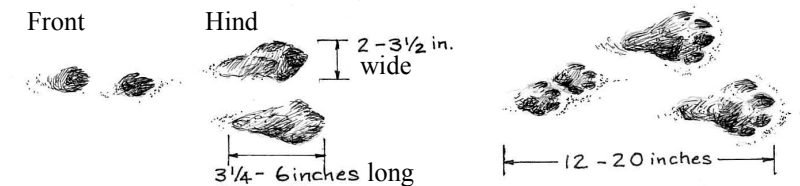
New England Cottontail

- Front feet offset (in typical bounding pattern).
- **Four** toes on hind feet - track looks pointy.
- Hind feet long, oval, 2 3/4 - 4” length, **smaller** than hare.



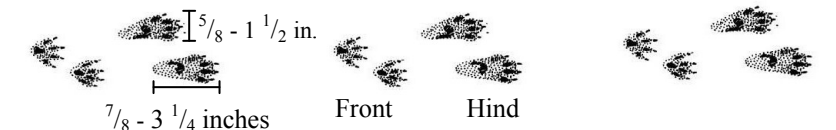
Snowshoe Hare

- Hind feet are a **triangular** (snowshoe) shape.
- Hind feet **wider** and **longer** than cottontail. May be up to 4 - 5” wide when toes are spread in ‘snowshoe’ form.
- **Four** toes on hind feet.



Squirrels

- Hind feet are same general shape as cottontail, but have **five** toes.
- Front feet usually nearly parallel (in typical bounding pattern). Almost always space between front tracks, whereas when rabbits put their front feet side-by-side the tracks nearly touch
- Tracks may be near or lead to cone or nut-producing trees.



PELLET COMPARISON

*Pellets may melt down into snow, making them a little harder to find.

Cottontail and Hare

Cottontail and hare pellets are difficult or impossible to tell apart.

- Small, and **spherical** in shape.
- $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{3}{8}$ " diameter.
- Light to dark brown color.
- Usually found near tracks.
- Dropped one by one, and may not be in a pile.



(Above) Close up of rabbit pellets.

If you find a pile of pellets, the rabbit most likely sat for a while in the same spot. Look for other signs e.g. nipped twigs, habitat type, other tracks.

Deer

- **Oval** in shape.
- $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{5}{8}$ " diameter.
- Dark color.
- Scattered in piles.
- May be clumped.
- Almost flat on one end, slightly rounded on the other end.
- Note that old deer pellets may start to look rounded like rabbit pellets. Use other nearby sign to confirm species if needed.



(Above) Close up of deer pellets.

PHOTO TIPS



Tracks

- Photograph a card with the date & location to organize photos
- Center and fill the track in the camera frame.
- Set camera to snow mode. If this is not available on your camera, overexpose the photo by 1-2 stops.
- Photograph a ruler next to the track as a frame of reference and make sure it is in focus.
- Keep the track between you and the light source.
- Photos should be taken in the morning or afternoon.
- Shadows define the details. On overcast days, try different angles or the flash to achieve the best photo.

Habitat

- Photograph a card with the date & GPS location to organize photos.
- Square the horizon in the top $\frac{1}{3}$ of the frame.
- Try to keep the sun behind you.
- Zoom out to capture as much habitat as possible.
- Have another person in the photo if possible for scale.
- The more pictures, the better!



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