

Mountain Hare

Lepus timidus

Mammal · Here all year · turns white in winter



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Smaller and more compact than the brown hare, with shorter ears that are black-tipped but not as long, and a tail that stays white above. The remarkable feature is the winter coat: from around November the grey-brown summer pelage moults to white or near-white, and reverses in spring. Mountain hares are animals of the Galloway hills and heather moorland rather than the lowlands around Dumfries itself.

BEHAVIOUR

Mountain hares graze heather, grasses and shrubs, and shelter in short burrows or scrapes on the hill, unlike the brown hare. The white winter coat is triggered by day length rather than by snow, which increasingly leaves hares conspicuously white against a dark, snowless hillside — one of the more visible local consequences of milder winters. They are often seen in loose groups on the open hill.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Rabbits and hares (Leporidae)
SIZE	Body 45–65 cm · smaller than a brown hare
UK STATUS	Protected in Scotland since 2021; Britain's only native hare

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