



Mountain hare

(*Lepus timidus*)

GB IUCN status Near Threatened

General information

Mountain hares are indigenous to Britain, unlike the other lagomorphs, the rabbit and the Brown hare, which were introduced by man. Mountain hares have greyer fur than brown hares, and their coat turns white in winter for camouflage against snow.

They are active mainly at night, and although considered to be browsers of woody plants such as heather and other dwarf shrubs and trees, they prefer to eat grasses when they are available during the summer months. During periods of snow cover they gather on leeward hill slopes, in groups of 20+, to shelter or feed where shallow snow permits scraping to reveal underlying heather. Mountain hares are preyed on by foxes, stoats, wild cats, golden eagles and buzzards.

Conservation Actions 'Potential Measures'

Support landowners to undertake optimal management of moorland, such as blanket bog restoration, to provide an increase in well-connected areas of suitable habitat for mountain hares. Investigate possible mitigation measures to reduce the impact of roads.

Habitat Requirements

In Britain mountain hares are associated with heather moorlands, restored peatland and blanket bog. Outside the UK mountain hares occupy boreal forest.

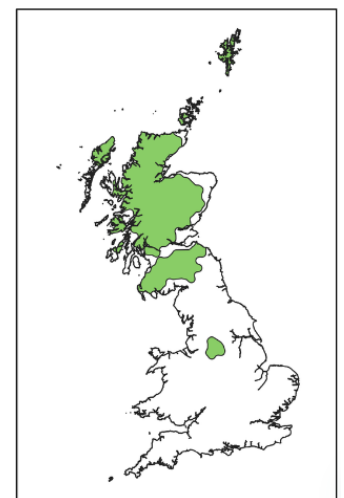
Species Pressures

In the Peak District, mountain hares exist in an isolated vulnerable population, with no potential for inward migration of other hares. Lack of suitable habitat means numbers are lower on some parts of the peak. Climate change can bring hotter summers, increasing fire risk; wetter autumns can create feeding and shelter challenges for young leverets. The busy road system may act as a barrier to dispersal and small-scale gene flow. Mountain hares are found above 500m elevation in Great Britain and warmer weather as a consequence of climate change is expected to shrink this range.

Distribution

Mountain hares are native to the Highlands of Scotland, but have been reintroduced to the Southern Uplands and the Peak District.

Mountain hare distribution (in green), taken from 'Britain's Mammals 2018: The Mammal Society's Guide to their Population and Conservation Status.'



 @ptes.org  @ptes_org  @ptes

www.ptes.org

Registered charity no. 274206

© iStockphoto.com | Wild & Free

people's
trust for
endangered
species