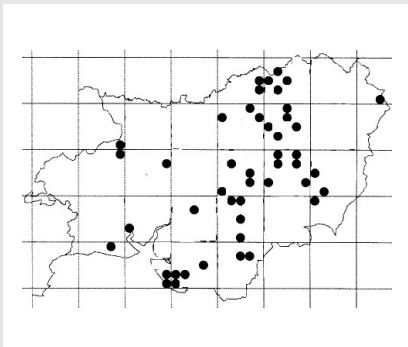


CARMARTHENSHIRE LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

BROWN HARE/ *LEPUS EUROPAEUS*



Conservation objectives:

- Maintain and expand existing brown hare populations in Carmarthenshire

What you can do to help:

- Report all signs of brown hare to the county mammal recorder n.matthew@ccw.gov.uk
- If you manage habitat where brown hare are known – maintain open grassland

Further information:

www.mammal.org.uk/hare
www.carmarthenshire.gov.uk

Some people once thought that a hare's paw, if carried in the right pocket, would warn off rheumatism.



Ecology

The brown hare is a widespread but declining species in Britain, which occurs mainly in the agricultural lowlands, although it can be seen up to altitudes of 500 m. It inhabits both arable and pasture land, although it appears to be most abundant in mixed arable systems.

Hares are generally nocturnal, often feeding in groups on grasses, cereals and root crops. During the day they tend to remain hidden in small scrapes (forms) at ground level. Male hares do not defend territories but will guard individual females during the breeding season, often leading to aggressive encounters.

Hares rely on their ability to run fast and long to escape predators. The fox is considered to be its main natural predator, although owls and other birds of prey will take a leveret.

Distribution in Carmarthenshire

The brown hare has undergone a marked decline and reduction in its distribution in Carmarthenshire since 1950. Records since 1990 indicate that the majority of populations now occur in hilly, less intensively farmed areas in the north and east of the county; most recent sightings appear to have come from the Cwmann–Rhandirmwyn–Talley area. Pembrey peninsular is also important.

Legal status

No specific protection.

What are the threats?

- * Loss of habitat diversity in the agricultural landscape.
- * Changes in cropping and planting regimes, such as a move from hay to silage, and autumn sowing of cereals.
- * Increased predation may have resulted in higher mortality of leverets.
- * A decline in arable farming in Carmarthenshire has almost certainly contributed to the local reduction in populations.

What is being done locally

- * Postcard survey being carried out by Carmarthenshire Biodiversity Partnership.
- * Brown hare records passed to national database by mammal recorder.
- * Agri-environment schemes are often compatible with brown hare conservation.

Where you may see brown hares

The Pembrey peninsula is now perhaps the single most important locality in the county. Congregations of hares are regularly sighted in the open dunes, in rides and glades within the forest itself, and also in the surrounding farmland.