

## FUR NOT FEATHERS

One correspondent has asked for some notes on the "rabbits" of Saskatchewan. Actually we have two hares and one, probably two, species of true rabbits.

These are:-

- (1) White-tailed Jack Rabbit. (*Lepus townsendii*) A large-bodied hare with long ears and powerful hind legs which enable it to make leaps from 12 to 20 feet in length. Turns pure white in winter except for black tips of the ears. Found all across the prairies from Manitoba to the Alberta foothills. Lives above ground and gives birth to young which are furred and well developed.
- (2) American Varying Hare. (*Lepus americanus*) The "bush" rabbit of the north "Snowshoe Rabbit". which shows such violent fluctuations in numbers. Also occurs all over the province wherever there is woodland or brush. Lives above ground, sheltering under fallen trees, brush piles, etc; young are furred at birth. Gets its name from the fact that it changes colour in winter (its ear tips dusky, not as black as in above); and from its broad hind feet covered with coarse hair which serve as "snowshoes".

THE COTTONTAIL RABBITS. True rabbits do not change colour in winter. Live in burrows underground, in communities. The young are naked and almost helpless at birth.

- (3) Northern Plains Cottontail. (*Sylvilagus nuttalli*) A species of the western Black Hills Cottontail. States, said to be increasing in southwestern Saskatchewan, has been reported from as far north as Dundurn. Easily recognized as it dashes for safety showing its white "cottontail".
- (4) Eastern Cottontail. (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) The race known as the Nebraska cottontail has spread rapidly through southern Manitoba in recent years and has been noted at Dauphin. Undoubtedly occurs in southeastern Saskatchewan. Records of the cottontail from the eastern border of the province will be welcome.

Hibernation Our notes in the last issue of the Blue Jay produced some interesting records. Judge L.T. McKim, Melfort, our Honorary President, writes - "A year ago Albert Crow of Walden brought me in a gopher taken from a straw stack. It was curled up into a perfect ball with front paws over its face and tail curled over the head. It was dead. Ralph Steuck of Abernethy has what I think is called a Jumping or Kangaroo Mouse. In the fall it rolled up into a ball and he at first thought it was dead, but discovered it was only hibernating. I did not think they would do that if kept in a warm place and fed. However, at last accounts it was fast asleep down his cellar."

And from Steve A. Mann, Skull Creek, - "In forty years I have come across about eight gophers rolled up in stacks as described in the Blue Jay - all in straw stacks. Two of them were in the same stack, one of them at ground level and the other about six feet above in the middle of the stack. Most of the others were near, or at, ground level. All were curled in a small ball with nose and feet together. We never thought of bringing them indoors to see if they would come to life, but I rather doubt if they were still alive as they seemed to be frozen solid."