



## swamp rabbit

*Sylvilagus aquaticus*

Kingdom:	Animalia
Division/Phylum:	Chordata
Class:	Mammalia
Order:	Lagomorpha
Family:	Leporidae

## FEATURES

The swamp rabbit is about 16 to 22 inches in length and weighs about four and three-fourths to five pounds. It is brown-black with tan feet. The underside of the body is white except for the cinnamon area between the forelegs. The hair is coarse. It has short, round ears. An orange eye ring is present.

## BEHAVIORS

The swamp rabbit may be found in the southern one-third of Illinois. It lives in cane thickets, swamps and bottomland forests. This mammal eats grasses, sedges, herbs and aquatic plants. The swamp rabbit is a coprophage (eats some of its own waste). It has two forms of droppings: brown ones, which have no nutrients; and green ones, which are composed of partially digested food and remain full of nutrients. The green ones are eaten to allow the rabbit to eat more food in a short time. Droppings are often deposited on stumps or logs. When chased, it will plunge into water if there is some available. It may swim at any time. Mating occurs from February through summer. The

gestation period is about 40 days. Shortly before the young are born, a nest is dug in the ground and lined with fur, leaves and grasses. The nest is usually located in grass or piles of dead branches. The average litter size is three.

## HABITATS

- bottomland forests
- coniferous forest
- southern Illinois lowlands
- upland deciduous forest

## ILLINOIS STATUS

- common
- endangered
- threatened
- native
- exotic

## ILLINOIS RANGE

Permanent resident: southern 1/3

Summer resident:

Migrant:

Winter resident:

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Illinois Department of Natural Resources. 1999.

Biodiversity of Illinois, Volume 2: Woodland Habitats CD-ROM.