



**Aktion
HUES**

The Hare in Luxembourg

**Where can it still be found?
Help us to protect it!**

Participative action and protective measures



**oekozenner
pafendall**



**mouvement
écologique**

Following the success of the «Action Hedgehog» and the «Action Dormice and hazel mice» the Mouvement Ecologique and the Oekozenner Pafendall are calling for the «Action Hare» in 2024. This concerns the hare («Feldhase» in German and «Lepus europaeus» in Latin) that is present in Luxembourg.

The goal of the «Action Hare»: Protecting the hare in Luxembourg!

Finding out where hares still exist

With your help, we would like to get a better picture of where in Luxembourg this iconic species with its long ears is still roaming. Play paparazzi with us in the service of nature, snap your observations and share them on «iNaturalist» or send them to us by email! With better data, existing hare populations can be protected, and the threats to these animals and their habitats can be better identified. This action furthermore aims to raise awareness about the protection of their habitat.



There are fewer and fewer hares...

In Luxembourg, the number of hares has been decreasing since the middle of the last century. This is reflected in the number of hares shot during hunting season: while 13,000 hares were shot in the early 1950s, there were only 300 in 2021/22 (source ANF 2023).

This represents a decrease of 98%!

These very low numbers are partly linked to the result of changes in the way hunting is practiced, while the change of hunting practices is linked to the decrease in hares itself, and so on. A national scientific monitoring of the hare population must be

carried out to obtain accurate and reliable figures. Spring weather conditions can also have a significant impact on the survival of young hares, called leverets. If spring is extremely wet, fewer hares survive. In more stable populations, these losses are better compensated.

However, the main cause of the hare decline is not to be found in the weather or in hunting, but in the changes in our landscape...

Habitat and Nutrition

What does a hare need?

Although it can occasionally be spotted in forests, the hare is a typical inhabitant of open landscapes, of agricultural lands. As an original inhabitant of steppes, it prefers warm, dry places. It requires a mosaic of arable fields, grasslands and woodland edges, and the so-called «structural landscape elements»: a corner lying fallow, strips of tall grass between fields or along the roads, hedges, etc. Here, it finds enough

places to hide safely and enough food.

On the hare's menu are herbs and plants (especially those rich in fats), and sometimes fruits and tree bark in winter. It prefers to feed at dusk and consumes up to one kilogram per day.



What is harmful for the hare?

Hares suffer from the lack of structures in our uniform landscape. By structures, we mean hedges, uncut strips of grass, fallows etc. Due to the lack of cover, both old and young hares are more exposed to their predators. Another problem for young hares is the early tilling of fields and early cuts (for silage) in meadows. Many young hares don't even survive the first weeks. Moreover, the vegetation on heavily fertilized plots is so dense that hares can only move along the tracks in the rows.

The more the crops are fertilized and treated with herbicides, the less herb variety there is. The hare enjoys a varied «dish of the day» of different herbs - unfortunately, in treated monocultures, this variety no longer exists. The former biodiversity of herbs and plants in hay meadows and fields has been greatly reduced by fertilizers and herbicides. When there are weeds in sprayed fields, they can be toxic to hares due to herbicide contamination.

Moreover, the number of herb-rich habitats



is decreasing, and if they still exist, they are quite isolated and far apart. Luxembourg is ranked number 1 in the EU for its fragmented landscape and the dense road network and heavy traffic prevent animals, such as the hare, from roaming freely. Fi-

nally, diseases can have a higher impact on hares already weakened by food shortages.

Peculiarities of the hare

About boxing and double fertilization

With the rising temperatures in February, the hares get into spring mood. Spring feelings drive the usually nocturnal animals to be active during the day... so chances are high in the coming weeks to spot them, as they often gather in groups, chasing each other, jumping around and literally

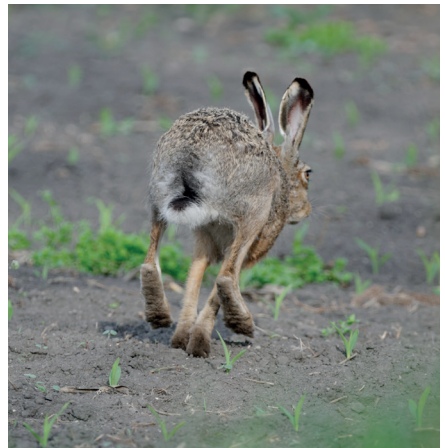


«boxing». Don't be fooled, these are not only the males, but females testing out who's the strongest by throwing out punches.

Thereupon, females make their choice and select their partner. But why restrict to only one: within a litter, several males can be involved as fathers. Moreover, the female can even be fertilized again while already being pregnant, resulting in a «double pregnancy» - a nature's adaptation to make the most out of favorable times. Once born, the leverets remain alone most of the day, with the female only coming to nurse them 1 to 2 times a day. After a month, the young ones fend for themselves. The female can have 2 to 4 litters of 2 to 4 leverets per year.

Vigilant, agile, and quick!

The hare is an intelligent and mainly nocturnal animal. It is a mammal and belongs to the «lagomorphs» order. To survive, it needs places to hide, as among its enemies are the fox, the eagle owl, several birds of prey, the wolf, and even humans. Thanks to its laterally positioned eyes, it has an almost «all-round» vision and carefully monitors what is happening around it. It is secretive and tries not to be seen - camouflaged by its fur, it lies completely flat on the ground and, at the last moment, it leaps and sprints away at 45 mph! It runs in a zigzag pattern and sometimes makes big leaps to evade its pursuers.



Hare or rabbit?

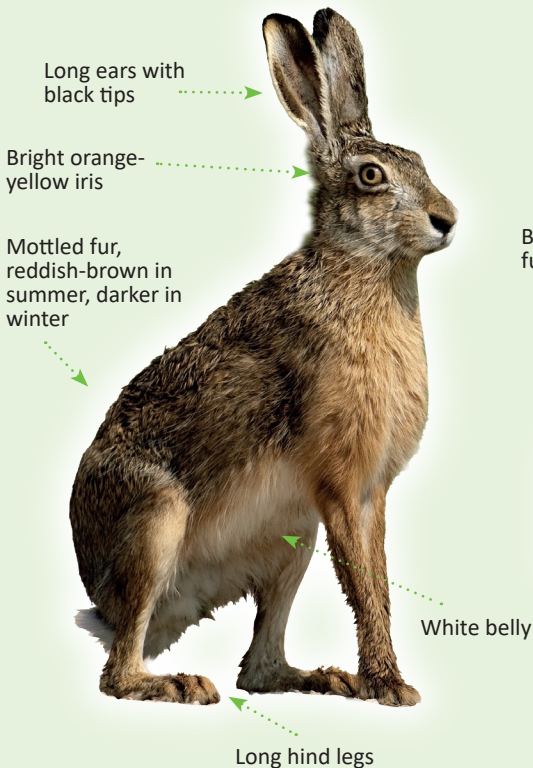
The hare is distinguished from the smaller rabbits by its height (up to 75 cm when sitting), its long hind legs, and its long black tipped ears. Its fur is reddish-brown in summer, while the rabbit, with its more compact, round stature, blends more into grey. The hare is a mostly solitary animal, it does not dig burrows but shelter in 'forms' (shallow depressions in the grass) from where it takes off at the last moment zigzagging to escape danger. Rabbits, being more sociable, generally stay closer to their burrow and do not cover distances as large as

hares, but they quickly disappear into their burrow in case of danger.

If you see rabbits, you can also report them gladly. They are just as much in distress as hares, also being not that common anymore. This is due to the fact that landscapes have changed and are exploited differently, but also due to diseases such as myxomatosis.

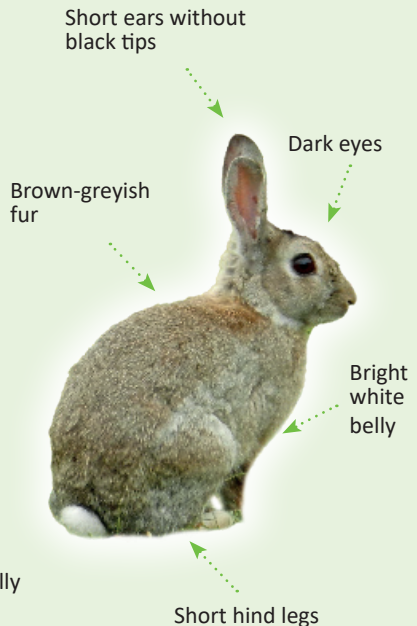
Hare

(Long, slender shape)



Rabbit

(Smaller, rounder shape)



We can all protect the hare together

By promoting sustainable agriculture and a structured, varied landscape

A mosaic landscape, divided into small parcels, exploited sustainably, without pesticides, less fertilizer and with a diversified crop rotation, where hedges, late mown meadows, fallow and flower strips have their place, benefit the hare. Large areas and fields should be equipped with fallow strips, that are mown late in the season or only sporadically over the years.

Fallows are now a mandatory element to receive European agricultural subsidies - unfortunately, they are often dropped as an obligation in the context of other crises (war in Ukraine, agricultural diesel).



Organic farming is already a big step in the right direction. However, it does not foresee a specific amount of these structural landscape elements either.

What are the concrete measures that can be implemented at various levels?

As municipality, you should:

- support the «**Natur genéissen**» project, which promotes direct marketing connections between the kitchens of daycare centers and farmers who meet certain nature conservation criteria on their land. The daycare centers of these municipalities, in return, commit to purchase certain amounts of “Natur genéissen” farmers’ products, as well as other organic or regional products, etc. More information here: www.projekte.oekozenner.lu/projets/natur-geneissen/

- **lease your agricultural land** in such a way that it has to be used in a sustainable and nature-friendly manner: no pesticides, reduced to no fertilizers, mandatory fallow strips a. o.

As farmer, you can:

- **Manage your land organically or in a nature friendly manner**, implement diverse crop rotations, fallow strips, field margins and flower strips. All these measures can

be financially supported through ecoschemes or national biodiversity programs.

- Before mowing to make hay or silage, check the parcel by foot or by drone to secure **hiding leverets (and fawns as well)**. **Large fields** should always be mowed from inside outwards, so that young hares, as nest-fleeters, have a chance to escape.

As hunter, you can:

- Refrain from shooting hares, even when they are running in the forest. It would be more important to reduce the population of cloven-hoofed game.





As citizen, you can:

- **Advocate to your municipality** for a nature friendly management of communal lands and fields, and the implementation of fallow strips or field margins. It is important for residents to show their support for such projects to their municipality, and for these expectations to be passed on to their municipality.
- Support organic and nature-friendly agriculture through your **personal consumption**. By purchasing organic flour, for example, you support the plant-rich arable habitat of the hare.
- Take precautions when **walking your dog and keep it on a leash** to avoid unnecessarily disturbing young hares (and other small animals like skylarks) in their habitat.
- **Advocate through your voting choices** for a nature-friendly European agricultural policy, so that farmers are rewarded for environmentally friendly farming practices.

As the Ministry of Agriculture, you should:

- Actively reward farms that have voluntarily maintained the mentioned **structural elements for more than 10 years!** For all farmers, **the payment of agricultural subsidies** should be mandatory linked to maintaining, creating or planting at least 3% of structural elements on their agricultural lands. This provision should not be **abolished** in times of crisis.

- Support the **«Natur genéissen»** project as an example of a successful combination of viable production and effective nature conservation;
- Further promote organic farming in Luxembourg and ensure, for example, that **organic food from Luxembourg** is available in all public canteens.

As the Ministry of Environment and Biodiversity, you should, among other things:

- Implement the **National Nature Conservation Plan** (PNPN3) more consistently. This plan sets clear goals for nature conservation in the open landscape, which must be achieved by 2030 and help protect the habitat of the hare. Unfortunately, the implementation is currently lagging behind in terms of speed. Here, the conservation actors on the ground should be more specifically supported in implementing measures.
- Additionally, measures must be taken jointly with the Ministry of Agriculture to promote **nature conservation on agricultural land** (as mentioned above).
- **Ban hunting on hares;**
- Implement a **scientific monitoring** system to properly document the development of the hare population;
- **Avoid further fragmentation** of the landscape.

Protecting hares also benefits many other animals!

When hares are helped by a more diverse and structured landscape, many other animal species, such as butterflies, nesting birds like the whinchat, the hedgehog and the grey partridge, also benefit from it!

They also suffer from a landscape devoid of features, monoculture fields, and lack of diversity.



Hunting hares despite the risk of extinction?

The question arises as to why hare hunting is still allowed (currently during the hunting season from October 1st to December 22nd), even though hare populations are so clearly declining? It is clear that hunting is not the cause of the decline, but when hare populations decrease significantly due to changes in the landscape, they are further affected by hunting. A moratorium on hare hunting should therefore be instituted for a few years.

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Wéi kënnt Dir en Hues mellen?

Beobachtungen ertaschécken - iNaturalist

De Mouvement Ecologique an den Oekozynter Pafendall wëlle mat Ärer Hëllef erausfannen, wou et nach iwwerall Huesen zu Lëtzebuerg gëtt. Esou kënne bestoend Populatioune besser geschützt an d'Uspréck, déi dës Déieren un hire Liewensraum stelle, besser identifizéiert ginn. Mat dëser Aktioun soll awer och op de Schutz vun hire Liewensraum opmierksam gemaach a sensibiliséiert ginn.

Wéi matmaachen?

Mellt all Är Beobachtunge wou a wéini Dir en Hues gesinn hutt! Dir kënnt dat op **zwei Aart a Weise** maachen:

1

Mat Ärem Smartphone via d'App iNaturalist* ODER iwwert den Internetsite vun iNaturalist.lu



Billen mat der **Uleedung**, wéi Dir Är Beobachtung iwwert d'App oder den Internet Site vun iNaturalist.lu melle kënnt, fannt Dir hei:



www.meco.lu/de/blog/document-center/aktioun-hues-maacht-mat/



NATUR ELO!

2

ODER andeem Dir eng E-mail mat de geneeën Donnéeën vun Ärer Beobachtung (Plaz mat Koordinaten, Datum) op natur@oeko.lu maacht oder beim Gréngen Telefon urufft: **439030-1**, dann droe mir et fir lech an.

Är Observatioune ginn analyséiert an droen dozou bäi eng Bestandsopnam vun den Huesen zu Lëtzebuerg ze maachen.

VERFOLLEGT DE PROJET!

Iwwert den iNaturalist-Projekt-Site „Aktioun Hues“ kënnt Dir live verfollegen, wou d'Huesen am Kader vun der Aktioun iwwerall gemellt ginn. Dir fannt awer och regelméisseg News an Auswäertungen zum Projet am Kéisecker-Info (der Memberzäitschreft vum Mouvement Ecologique) an op der Homepage www.meco.lu an naturelo.meco.lu.

OPGEPASST!

Den Hues ass e wëllt, fräilafend Déier, dat duerch d'Naturschutzgesetz geschützt ass. Dofir w.e.g. keen Déier upaken, afänken oder onnéideg hetzen (z.B. wann Dir eng Foto maacht).

Wann Dir sollt e blesséierten Hues fannen, mellt lech am Beschte bei der Opfangstatioun fir Wëlldéieren (Diddeleng) oder eng vun hiren Drop-off Plazen.

* iNaturalist ass e Citizen-science Projet an en online Netzwierk vun Naturalisten, interesséierte Leit aus dem Grand Public a Biologen, dat um Konzept vun crowd-sourcing vun Donnéeën zu der weltwäiter Biodiversitéit baséiert. Sait 2021 ass den natur musée zu Letzebuerg offizielle Partner vum weltwäiten iNaturalist Netzwierk, mam iNaturalist.LU Fotografierer Plazen- an Déierenarte ginn duerch eng Software automatesch erkannt, an dës Identifikatioune ginn dono awer och vun der iNaturalist-Community validéiert. Wann Är Observatioun bestätegt gouf, gëtt se iwwer GBIF (Global Biodiversity Information Facility) an der offizieller Datebank vum Naturmusée ofgespäichert!

ZESUMME MËI STAARK MEMBER GI BEIM MOUVEMENT ECOLOGIQUE



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Einzelmitglied

Mindestbeitrag 50 € (Jugendliche unter 18 Jahren, Studenten, Arbeitslose 20 €)

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ich möchte die Publikationen des Mouvement Ecologique in gedruckter Form erhalten

ich möchte keine Publikationen per Post, sondern konsultiere ggf. die Webseite

ich abonniere mich auf die regelmässige elektronische newsletter
(vergessen Sie bitte nicht Ihre email adresse anzugeben)

Ich möchte aktiv mitarbeiten: Regionale

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Ich gebe dem Mouvement Ecologique die Vollmacht über folgenden Dauerauftrag:

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jährlicher Dauerauftrag 50 € 75 € oder €

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