

FIGHTING FOR SURVIVAL

The White-Sided Jackrabbit



Photo: © Cesar Mendez

A RABBIT IN A RACE WITH EXTINCTION

The white-sided jackrabbit is found in a limited portion of North America, from southern New Mexico to Oaxaca, Mexico. In the United States its range is confined to an area of 46.3 square miles of high grasslands in two valleys in southern Hidalgo County, New Mexico. In 1976 the estimated population of white-sided jackrabbits totaled 340 individuals and surveys from 1990-1995 counted less than five white-sided jackrabbits per year. Without federal protection, we may lose the white-sided jackrabbit and its contributions to the web of life forever.

PROTECTING GRASSLANDS

The white-sided jackrabbit is an indicator of grassland health in the Chihuahuan Desert: as the jackrabbit declines, so does the grassland ecosystem. Southwestern desert grasslands are under attack from livestock grazing and consequent brush encroachment as well as climate change effects such as prolonged drought. If listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), the white-sided jackrabbit should be given habitat protections that will not only ensure its survival for future generations, but other co-existing grassland species as well.

KNOW YOUR RABBIT

- Food: In New Mexico, the diet of the white-sided jackrabbit is over 90% grass.
- Web of Life: Jackrabbit predators include coyotes, foxes, American badgers, skunks, and large hawks and owls.
- Language: The white-sided jackrabbit has three types of vocalizations, which are used to communicate fear or alarm, when a male protects a female from an invading male, and during sexual chase.
- Love: Unique to the white-sided jackrabbit is that most observations are of a male/female pair.

CLIMATE CHAOS

Drought caused by climate change can lead to brush encroachment of the desert grasslands on which this jackrabbit depends.



White-sided Jackrabbit Historic Range

