

COINÍN

RABBIT

Oryctolagus cuniculus

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As can be seen on the map, rabbits are widespread throughout this country. They live in large colonies or warrens and spend most of the time underground in tunnels called burrows, coming out at dawn and dusk to eat and exercise. They make their burrows among grasslands, woods, sand-dunes and cultivated fields. Because they eat only vegetable matter, rabbits can do great damage to agricultural crops with their chisel-like teeth or incisors. A rabbit is a timid animal and is always looking out for warnings of danger. Its eyes are very wide apart and it can see all around without turning its head. With such good eyesight, a keen sense of smell and sensitive long ears, a rabbit soon detects enemies such as stoats, foxes, badgers, dogs – and man! Male rabbits are called bucks and females

are called does. A doe usually has eight or more babies between January and June. Before the litter is born, she digs a hole in the ground and makes a cosy nest of leaves and ferns, lining it with fur plucked from her own chest. After the birth, the doe blocks the entrance to the breeding hole. The young rabbits are born naked, blind and helpless, but very soon fur appears on their pink bodies and their big bright eyes open. After a couple of weeks, they are able to run around and nibble the grass. It is believed that rabbits were introduced into Ireland by the Normans in the thirteenth century. Although they are common now, rabbits are not as numerous as they were in the 1950's. At that time, a terrible disease called myxomatosis struck and hundreds of thousands of rabbits died.



The little stars on this map represent the distribution of Rabbits throughout Ireland. Each square on the map is equivalent to 100 kilometres by 100 kilometres.

PROTECT OUR WILDLIFE – PLEASE DO NOT LITTER