

## *The Snowshoe Hare: An Autobiography*

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Hi there, my name is Frost On The Leaves When The Wind Blows Cold In The Winter, but you can call me Frosty for short. I always told my mother that name was just too long –



<http://www.alaska-in-pictures.com/snowshoe->

no one can remember it. But enough about the names. I'm a snow-shoe hare, in case you couldn't tell from this lovely photo-shoot. (You're supposed to laugh there – I actually dislike having my picture taken, even though I am a handsome fellow). Let's get a few things out of the way – I've been described as "a four-legged hamburger on the menu of most every mid-sized forest predator that walks or flies" (Fraley). I resent this. Okay, so maybe it's true. But to my face? No one likes to be called a hamburger. There, I just wanted to get that off my chest. So

let's have a talk, as long as you promise to keep an eye out for those predators. I don't multi-task well.

We might as well get out of the way what I know everyone thinks about when they hear "snowshoe hare." So, here I am showing off my best known feature – my big, fluffy back feet. Can you believe it? Here I am just packed with intelligence and handsomeness and all they can talk about is my feet! I



[http://www.museum.state.il.us/exhibits/larson/lepus\\_americanus.html](http://www.museum.state.il.us/exhibits/larson/lepus_americanus.html)

suppose my feet are impressive. They keep me on top of the snow, and can be up to six inches long. I am between 15 and 20 inches long, and I have nice short ears – much more sophisticated than most rabbits (Fraley).

(Nothing annoys me more than being called a rabbit, or even worse, a bunny! I am *not* a rabbit.) Unlike rabbits, my children are born are born with fur and with their eyes open. They can hop around in a few days, and let me tell you they are hard to keep up with! Especially when you have batches of 4-8, up to three times a year, (Eek!).

My other best known feature is my fur, and rightly so. Most people know of me as living in the snow and being completely white except for my dark ear tips. But I have to live in the summer too, and wearing



[http://tringa.org/mammal\\_photos.html](http://tringa.org/mammal_photos.html)

white then would be like shouting, “Hey there, coyote, free hamburger right over here!” Not smart. As it is, about half of us die each year, even with camouflage. (I am currently working on my rhetorical skills so maybe I can talk a predator out of eating me even if I can’t outrun



him. You never know.) So in the summer I turn brown – nifty trick, right? It takes me about ten weeks to grow a new coat (Eek!). Now you see me, now you don’t! Of course, where I live, I don’t generally get to spend much time in my summer coat.

As you can see from this helpful little map, I like it cold. Okay, so maybe I am a little

<http://www.hww.ca/hww2.asp?id=103>

bit of a fair weather hare – I like it just fine down here in Wisconsin. But I have relatives (distant cousins, I think) who live way up in Alaska. Of course, I say good riddance –

relatives, you know. They might have more snow, but I have fewer problems with lynx. I believe I also have an aunt in Colorado, or was it Tennessee? I've been thinking about visiting her – warmer temperatures and everything. Of course she does live in the Appalachians, which is part of my range, but I'd sure check out the lowlands if I went down there – catch those predators off guard.

I live somewhere on this map. I'm probably one of those little purple dots, I just

don't remember which one. According to this NatureMapping website, there have only been seventeen sightings of snowshoe hares in Wisconsin. I know there are more of us – maybe you can help me prove it. That dot below the green swathe – that's my brother. He's always liked living on the edge, so he thought he'd push the border a little. Either that or somebody saw a rabbit and mistook it for my brother. In the summer it happens. Although, if I remember correctly, that might have been the incident where there was an early snow melt and he got caught off guard (he never was the sharpest knife in the drawer) in his fancy white coat. Kind of hard to mistake a snowshoe hare for a rabbit when he looks like this. →



<http://r4r.ca/en/step-outside/nature-guides/page/mid-november>

<http://wmm.mapping-online.com/wisnatmap/viewmap.do>



In the summer I eat anything fresh and green – grass, clover, garden plants. But as you can see from this photo, my diet is more limited in the winter – like twigs and bark and pine needles (“Snowshoe Hare”). Although the pine needles aren’t that bad, and a hare’s gotta do what a hare’s gotta do. Our populations generally rise and fall over a ten year cycle depending on



<http://www.northernwilds.com/pages/Explore/animals/bunnies-with-big-feet.shtml>

food supply and predators (Fraley). Last time there was a population surge it got to where you couldn’t find a parking spot by the best patches of clover. I should have moved to the country – except I already live in the country, and I certainly wasn’t going to Alaska. So if this autobiography becomes a New York Times best seller (which it will, of course), and you *must* have my autograph or photo, just follow my tracks.



<http://naturalsciences.org/microsites/education/treks/yellowstone/2009/pages/006c%20-%20Snowshoe%20Hare%20track.html>

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