

# DESCRIPTION OF A NEW RABBIT FROM ISLANDS OFF THE COAST OF VIRGINIA.

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By EDGAR A. MEARNs,

*Associate in Zoology, U. S. National Museum.*

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On a recent visit to Smiths Island, Virginia, in company with Messrs. J. H. Riley and E. J. Brown, the writer obtained skins of a rabbit which proves to be new.

This cottontail is named in honor of Capt. George D. Hitchens, commanding the life-saving station at Smiths Island, who has long been a contributor to the National Museum collections. He informed me that cottontails have existed continuously on the island during the past fifty years. At one time a number of "Australian rabbits" were introduced, but speedily died out. This has given rise to the erroneous but more or less current belief that the Smiths Island cottontail is a hybrid. It is, in fact, a pure cottontail, showing no trace of admixture with the genus *Oryctolagus*.

*SYLVILAGUS FLORIDANUS HITCHENSI*, new subspecies.

HITCHENS'S COTTONTAIL.

*Sylvilagus floridanus mallurus* NELSON (part), North American Fauna, No. 29, August 31, 1909, pp. 166 and 168 (as to specimens enumerated from Fishermans and Smiths islands).

*Type specimen*.—Cat. No. 155577, U.S.N.M. Adult female from Smiths Island, Northampton County, Virginia, collected by Edgar A. Mearns, May 13, 1910.

*Characters*.—Size of *Sylvilagus floridanus mallurus* (Thomas) from Raleigh, North Carolina. Color paler, with the bright colors (black and rufous) of the upper parts obsolete, giving a pale sandy fulvous shade to these parts; but the backs of the hind legs are a slightly darker chestnut than in the mainland form. The skull is larger, heavier, broader interorbitally, with thickened rostrum and larger audital bullæ. All of the teeth are larger.

*Comparative cranial measurements*.—Average of four adults, each, of *Sylvilagus floridanus mallurus* and *Sylvilagus floridanus hitchensi*, the latter in parenthesis. Basilar length, 57.6 (61) mm.; length of nasals, 32.4 (32.4); breadth of rostrum above premolars, 20.7 (21.4); depth of rostrum in front of premolars, 15.7 (17.8); interorbital breadth, 19.1 (20.5); parietal breadth, 27.9 (28.9); diameter of audital bullæ, 11 (11.4); length of upper molar series, 13.3 (15.1); breadth across upper molar series, 21 (22.4).



*Remarks.*—Young individuals in juvenal and beginning postjuvenal pelage differ from corresponding young of the mainland form in about the same manner that adults do, and the cranial differences are similar.

The following average measurements of six male topotypes of *Sylvilagus floridanus mallurus*, taken at Raleigh, North Carolina, and measured in the flesh by H. H. and C. S. Brimley, are given for comparison with those in the appended table of specimens of *Sylvilagus floridanus hitchensi*: Total length (including tail vertebræ), 420 mm.; tail vertebræ, 56.7; hind foot, 91. Ear measurements of one of these specimens are noted as follows on the label: Ear from crown, 71; ear from notch, 58 (ear from notch averages 57 in the six dry skins).

*Record of specimens of Sylvilagus floridanus hitchensi.*

U.S.N.M. No.	Sex and age.	Total length.	Head and body.	Tail vertebræ.	Hind foot.	Ear from crown.	Ear from notch. <sup>a</sup>	Length of head.	Locality.	Date.	Collector.
83684	Female young.	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Smiths Island, Virginia.	June 9, 1897	William Palmer.
84585	Female young.	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Fishermans Island, Virginia.	May 28, 1898	Do.
84586	Female ad.	375	...	50	90	70	57	...	Smiths Island, Virginia.	May 26, 1898	Do.
60395	Female ad.	...	...	...	...	...	54	...	do.	May 25, 1894	Charles W. Richmond.
155577	Female ad.	...	407	70	97	72	56	87	do.	May 13, 1910	Edgar A. Mearns.
155578	Male ad.	...	370	55	95	75	55	88	do.	May 16, 1910	Do.
155579	— ad <sup>b</sup>	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	do.	May 17, 1910	Do.

<sup>a</sup> This measurement was taken from dried skins; other measurements given in this table were taken from fresh specimens by the collectors.

<sup>b</sup> Skull only; given me by Mr. J. H. Riley.

### EXPLANATION OF PLATES.

#### PLATE 37.

Figs. 1 and 2. *Sylvilagus floridanus mallurus* Thomas. Male ad., Raleigh, North Carolina, February 5, 1901. (Cat. No. 105241, U.S.N.M.) Female ad., Raleigh, North Carolina, January 17, 1901. (Cat. No. 105240, U.S.N.M.)

3 and 4. *Sylvilagus floridanus hitchensi*. Adult, Smiths Island, Virginia, May 17, 1910. (Cat. No. 155579, U.S.N.M.) Female ad., Smiths Island, Virginia, May 16, 1910. (Cat. No. 155577, U.S.N.M.)

#### PLATE 38.

Figs. 1 and 2. *Sylvilagus floridanus mallurus* Thomas. Male ad., Raleigh, North Carolina, February 5, 1901. (Cat. No. 105241, U.S.N.M.) Female ad., Raleigh, North Carolina, January 17, 1901. (Cat. No. 105240, U.S.N.M.)

3 and 4. *Sylvilagus floridanus hitchensi*. Adult, Smiths Island, Virginia, May 17, 1910. (Cat. No. 155579, U.S.N.M.) Female ad., Smiths Island, Virginia, May 16, 1910. (Cat. No. 155577, U.S.N.M.)



Mearns, Edgar Alexander. 1911. "Description of a new rabbit from islands off the coast of Virginia." *Proceedings of the United States National Museum* 39(1784), 227–228. <https://doi.org/10.5479/si.00963801.39-1784.227>.

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**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5479/si.00963801.39-1784.227>

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