Hare

**Conservation Status:** Least Concern

There are two hare species in Gorongosa: savanna hare (*Lepus microtis*) and scrub hare (*Lepus saxatilis*). The savanna hare is usually darker in color than other hares, with a grayish-brown body, reddish-brown flanks and limbs, and white underparts. Scrub hares have thick, soft fur that is brown to gray in color with a black flecking, which gives their coat a grizzled appearance on their upper parts, contrasting with their under parts, which are white. Their head is whitish with a buff color on the sides of the face and around the eyes. Most individuals have a distinct white patch on the forehead just above the eyes.

**Fun Facts**

1. Hares do not dig burrows like rabbits do.
2. Of the 53 species of hares and rabbits worldwide, 12 live in Africa.
3. The African savanna hare eats its own poop! They engage in coprophagy, meaning they eat their own dry fecal pellets to extract further nutrients from them.

**Habitat**

Savanna hares are found throughoutwooded savannas. Scrub hares are primarily found in scrub, tall grasslands, and savanna woodlands. They avoid forests and deserts.

**Diet**

Mostly green grass; also leaves, stems, dry grass, and bark.

**Predators**

Birds of prey, caracal, jackal, and humans

**Behavior**

Savanna hares are solitary, nocturnal animals. If they see a predator, they freeze and rely on camouflage to stay hidden. If a predator approaches, however, they quickly bolt and dash away in a zigzag pattern. They spend most of the day lying in depressions in the ground covered by brush or grass.

Scrub hares are nocturnal, starting to forage at dusk and continuing through the night. They travel alone unless a female is accompanied by courting males or her offspring. During the day, they generally lie in a shallow depression on the ground, concealed under bushes or grass. When threatened, scrub hares will remain motionless in an attempt to blend in with their background. However, if a predator advances or the hare continues to feel threatened, it will bolt suddenly, relying on its speed to escape. If caught, they emit a loud squealing sound and will kick with their back feet in an attempt to free themselves.

**Breeding**

Little is known definitively about the breeding behavior of savanna hares. They appear to reproduce throughout the year and give birth to multiple litters a year, with an average litter size of 1.6.

Scrub hares breed year-round. After a gestation period of 42 days, females will give birth to one to three “leverets” per litter. A single female can have as many as four litters per year.Mothers invest little time in parenting their young. The young are born fully haired, open eyed, and are essentially developed enough to take care of themselves.

**Size**

Length: 41-65 cm

**Weight**

1.5-4.5 kg

**Life Span:** 12 years

**Gestation Period:** about 42 days

**Average number of offspring:** 1-3