Species: Snowshoe Hare (*Lepus americanus*)
Global Rank: G5
State Rank: S3S4
State Wildlife Action Plan Priority: Maintenance Concern Species
Climate Change Vulnerability: Not Vulnerable/Presumed Stable
Confidence: High

Habitat:

The snowshoe hare is most common in mountainous sections of the northern half of Pennsylvania. In the northwestern portion of the state, it inhabits high ridges marked by mountain laurel and rhododendron. In the Poconos, the snowshoe hare favors mature forests with swamps and bogs at high elevations. In the Allegheny Mountains, the species is found on steep, heavily forested slopes of hemlock, rhododendron, and mountain laurel with a dense, brushy understory (Merritt 1987).

Current Threats:

The primary threats to this species are loss of habitat due to maturing forests and competition with large deer populations for food.

Main Factors Contributing to Vulnerability Rank:

Although the range of the snowshoe hare in Pennsylvania may be more limited to the cooler elevations found in the northern tier of the state and the species is adapted to winters with snow cover, the CCVI rank indicates that available evidence does not suggest that abundance and/or range extent within Pennsylvania will change substantially by 2050. The species is capable of dispersing long distances and has a low dependence on processes likely to be altered by climate change. However, the range shift of other competing species such as Appalachian cottontail due to climate change effects could potentially negatively impact this species.

References:

Merritt, J.E. 1987. Guide to the mammals of Pennsylvania. University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, PA.