

## Can scientists save the declining New England cottontail from extinction?

Scientists with the NH Agricultural Experiment Station are working to restore New Hampshire and Maine's only native rabbit after new research based on genetic monitoring has found that in the last decade, cottontail populations in northern New England have become more isolated and seen a 50 percent contraction of their range.

The endangered New England cottontail is now at risk of becoming extinct in the region, according to NH Agricultural Experiment Station researchers at the University of New Hampshire College of Life Sciences and Agriculture who believe that restoring habitats is the key to saving the species.

"The New England cottontail is a species of great conservation concern in the Northeast. This is our only native rabbit and is an integral component of the native New England wildlife. Maintaining biodiversity gives resilience to our landscape and ecosystems," said NHAES researcher Adrienne Kovach, research associate professor of natural resources at UNH.

Researchers used genetics to study the changes in New England cottontail populations and their dispersal patterns. To obtain the DNA of the cottontails in this study, researchers collected the fecal pellets of 157 New England cottontails in southern Maine and seacoast New Hampshire during the winters of 2007-2008 and 2008-2009. Researchers believe this is the most exhaustive sampling effort in the area to date and likely documented nearly all currently occupied New England cottontail patches in Maine and seacoast New Hampshire.

**Read the full, original story: [Researchers work to save endangered New England cottontail](#)**