

PATAGONIAN MARA

updated March 2017



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| Range | Argentine pampas and Patagonia |
| Habitat | Open grasslands and stony wastelands |
| Diet (wild) | Grasses, roots, and stems |
| Diet (captivity) | Monogastric pellets, alfalfa hay, treat of apples, carrots |
| Description | Height: 12 inches; length: 2–3 feet; weight: 17–20 pounds. Brown heads and bodies, dark (almost black) rumps with a white fringe around the base, and white bellies. Long rabbit-like ears and short, nearly hairless tail which is held close to the body. The nails on the hind feet are hoof-like. |
| Lifespan | 10–15 years |
| Reproduction | Two litters may be produced in a given year with 2–5 per litter. Babies are born well-developed and can start grazing within 24 hours. Young remain with their mother until they are nine months old. Males and females are monogamous, but virtually all direct care of the young comes from the female. Males rarely interact with small pups, and interactions with large pups is limited to sitting or foraging nearby. However, males spend the majority of their time watching for predators, which significantly lowers risk faced by his offspring and mate. Furthermore, females are sexually receptive only for a few hours twice a year, so a male must stay with his female to ensure he is around when she is in estrous. Mating occurs in June or July. During courtship, the male will squirt urine at the female (as do porcupines, rabbits, and hares). A female comes into heat again about five hours after giving birth. |
| Behavior | Patagonian maras live in groups of 10–30 individuals. In times of danger, they flee at high speeds, springing four-legged off the ground. Patagonian maras are diurnal and during the heat of the day, they bathe. They clean their bodies by licking and combing with their teeth. Patagonian maras clean their faces with their forefeet just as cats would. At night, they retire to burrows to sleep. |
| Our animals | 3 males. Born: 2012 and 2014 |
| Cool stuff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Also known as the Patagonian cavy, Patagonian hare or dillaby. • Maras can amble, hop in a rabbit-like fashion, gallop, or bounce on all fours. They have been known to leap up to 6 feet (1.8 meters). • Forelegs are significantly longer than in most other rodents, and both the hind and fore feet are small with hoof-like claws. • Maras mate for life. • Habitat change, most likely caused by the introduction of domestic sheep, is a major problem facing this species. • Maras use a creche system, where one pair of adults keeps watch of all the young. If they spot danger, the young rush below ground into a burrow, and the adults are left to run for it. • All rodents share one characteristic: Their dentition is highly specialized for gnawing. Rodents have a single pair of upper and a single pair of lower incisors, and no rodent has canine teeth. Rodent incisors grow continuously (about as fast as hair), and gnawing on food keeps the teeth from over-growing. |

Phylum
ChordataClass
MammaliaOrder
RodentiaFamily
CaviidaeGenus
Dolichotisspecies
D. patagonum