

Consequently I examined skulls of the hare, but no light could thus be thrown on the peculiarities of the skulls of the larger rabbits. It is, however, an interesting fact, as illustrating the law that varieties of one species often assume the characters of other species of the same genus, that I found, on comparing the skulls of ten species of hares in the British Museum, that they differed from each other chiefly in the very same points in which domestic rabbits vary,—namely, in general proportions, in the form and size of the subra-orbital plates, in the form of the free end of the malar bone, and in the line of suture separating the occipital and frontal bones. Moreover two eminently variable characters in the domestic rabbit, namely, the outline of the occipital foramen and the shape of the “raised platform” of the occiput, were likewise variable in two instances in the same species of hare.

*Vertebræ.*—The number is uniform in all the skeletons which I have examined, with two exceptions, namely, in one of the small feral Porto Santo rabbits and in one of the largest lop-eared kinds; both of these had as usual seven cervical, twelve dorsal with ribs, but, instead of seven lumbar, both had eight lumbar vertebræ. This is remarkable, as Gervais gives seven as the number for the whole genus *Lepus*. The caudal vertebræ apparently differ by two or three, but I did not attend to them, and they are difficult to count with certainty.

In the first cervical vertebra, or atlas, the anterior margin of the neural arch varies a little in wild specimens, being either nearly smooth, or furnished with a small supra-median atlantoid process;

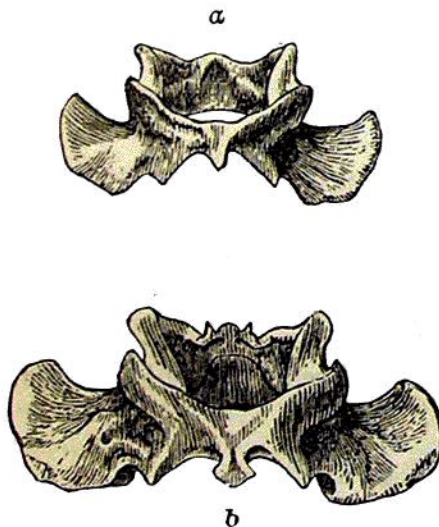


Fig. 12.—Atlas Vertebræ, of natural size; inferior surface viewed obliquely. Upper figure, Wild Rabbit. Lower figure, Hare-coloured, large, Lop-eared Rabbit. *a*, supra-median, atlantoid process; *b*, infra-median process.

I have figured a specimen with the largest process (*a*) which I have seen; but it will be observed how inferior this is in size and different in shape to that in a large lop-eared rabbit. In the latter, the infra-median process (*b*) is also proportionally much thicker and longer. The alæ are a little squarer in outline.

*Third cervical vertebra.*—In the wild rabbit (fig. 13, A *a*) this vertebra, viewed on the inferior surface, has a transverse process, which is directed obliquely backwards, and consists of a single pointed bar; in the fourth vertebra this process is slightly forked in the middle. In the large lop-eared rabbits this process (B *a*) is forked in the third vertebra, as in the fourth of the wild rabbit. But the third cervical vertebræ of the wild and lop-eared (A *b*, B *b*)

rabbits differ more conspicuously when their anterior articular