

Striped Skunk

(Mephitis mephitis)



DID YOU KNOW:

Skunks are even-tempered and will defend themselves only when cornered or attacked. Even when humans are nearby, skunks will generally ignore them.

EATING HABITS:

Skunks are omnivorous - they eat most everything. In fall and winter, they eat both plants and animals; in the summer they mainly dine on insects. Skunks love both bees and honey. They also eat mice, rats, moles, shrews, ground squirrels, rabbits and chipmunks.

THE YOUNG:

Skunk moms have a single litter with four to six babies in May or June. When they are born, young skunks are hairless, but you can see the beginning of the characteristic black and white



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markings. When the babies are about two months old, Mom brings them out of the den at dusk to hunt for food. At three months of age, the kits are almost full grown and completely independent.

HABITAT (HOME):

Skunks live in underground dens located under wood and rock piles. Sometimes they dig their own homes but most of the time they use the deserted burrows of other animals like ground squirrels and ground hogs.

DEFENSIVE HABITS:

Skunks have the best-known defense - but they give fair warning! It will stomp its feet, make short charges, and then twist its hind end around so that it is facing the same direction as its snout. If this doesn't convince the enemy to back off, the skunk will spray!



UNUSUAL FACTS:

- Skunks don't hibernate. Like raccoons, they acquire a layer of fat in the fall and spend more time in their dens (they insulate the entrances with grass and leaves). On nice days, they venture out to see what's going on in the world.
- Skunks roll caterpillars on the ground to remove the hairs before eating.
- Great Horned Owls are major predators on skunks - which proves that owls have little sense of smell.
- Skunk prints look a bit like cat prints, but with five toes. Because skunks can not retract their claws like cats, so each paw pad has a claw mark in front.

