

UNDERSTANDING SKUNKS!



Skunks provide an important ecological role to the areas that they inhabit. They are typically found in: forested areas, grasslands, brush, open prairies, and developed areas; generally living within 2 miles of a water source. You are more likely to smell a skunk, than see one. Occasional skunk sightings in a neighborhood are not a cause for alarm.

ANIMAL ID:

Length:

Head to Body:

13-18 inches

Tail: 7-10 inches

Weight:

In Illinois,
average 3-10 lbs.

Males: ~6 lbs.

Females: ~4.5 lbs.



Front



Rear

FUN FACTS:

- Skunks have few predators: foxes, coyotes, large owls, domestic dogs.
- **Life span:** live 3-4 years in the wild.
- Weather conditions, such as mild winters, can contribute to an increase in skunk population.
- A skunk's scent glands develop at ~3-weeks-old.
 - With the ability to spray with accuracy at 3 to 4-months-old.



Skunks do not hibernate:

- During times of extreme cold, they will lower their body temperature & seek shelter inside their dens.
- Skunks may sleep for extended periods during the winter.

BEHAVIOR

Nocturnal:

- Skunks are seen most often at dusk & dawn.
 - However, they sometimes look for food by day; particularly in the spring, when they are providing for their young.
 - Unless they are showing abnormal behaviors, do not be concerned if you see a skunk in the daytime.



FORAGING:

Skunks are omnivores, eating both plant & animal material:

Insects:

- Bees
- Grasshoppers
- Beetles
- Crickets
- Insect larvae
- Grubs & Worms
- Caterpillars



Reptiles:

- Snake eggs

Birds:

- Nestlings
- Bird eggs



Small Mammals:

- Mice
- Voles
- Rats
- Shrews
- Young Ground squirrels
- Young rabbits
- Animal carcasses



Amphibians

Fruits & Berries

Nuts



Green Vegetation:

- Grasses

Garden Crops:

- Roots
- Vegetables

Scavenge On:

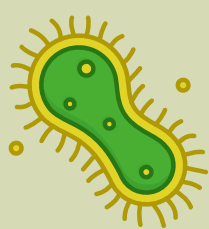
- Garbage
- Pet Food
- Bird Seed



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ILLNESS/DISEASE:



If you observe these behaviors, do not approach the skunk yourself. Report the animal to your local police department or wildlife rehabilitator.

Signs:

- Loss of fear of people
 - Uncharacteristic tameness
- Uncoordinated movements
 - Disorientation
 - Staggering
- Limb paralysis
- Circling
- Boldness
 - Unprovoked aggression
- Seizures

REPRODUCTION:

Mating Period:
February --> March



2 & 3-Weeks-Old:

- 2-weeks-old:
 - Newborns have developed fur.
- 3.5-weeks-old:
 - Newborns eyes open.



7-Weeks-Old:

- Young begin to venture out on hunting expeditions with their mom.



2-Months-Old

- Mother leads her young out at dusk to forage & hunt.



3-Months-Old

- Skunks are almost full-grown & completely independent.
- In the fall, young skunks disperse to find their own territories.



WARNING SIGNS TO HEED:



Scent Glands:

- Produce a musk of thiol/butyl mercaptan.
 - A strong, sulfur odor.

To Do:

- Move away slowly & quietly.
- Keep pets restrained & inside at night.

Reasoning:

- Skunks will spray when: surprised, cornered, harmed, or they need to protect young.

If a skunk feels threatened, it will respond by:

- Agitated foot stamping, a raised tail, hissing & short forward charges.
- Twisting its body into a U-shape:
 - Its head & tail aimed at the attacker.
- If the threat does not back away, the skunk will spray its attacker.
 - Can spray from 20 feet.