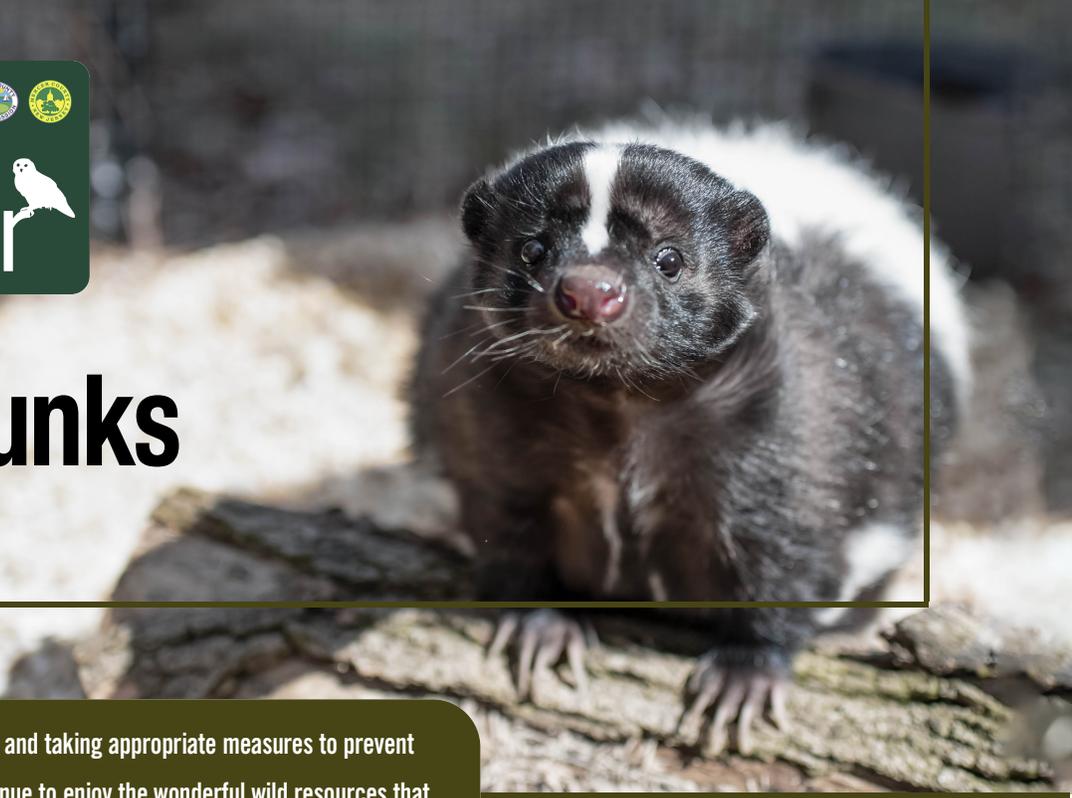




Striped Skunks

(Mephitis mephitis)



Understanding the habits and habitats of wildlife, and taking appropriate measures to prevent unwanted encounters, will help everyone to continue to enjoy the wonderful wild resources that still exist in New Jersey.

Getting to Know Skunks

Skunks are one of the most misunderstood wild animals. People do not realize that the skunk is a very docile, benign animal. However, their severe near-sightedness often gets them in trouble. A skunk's only defense is a noxious odor created by a sulfuric acid emitted from the anal glands. But skunks have a limited supply of spray and they cannot replenish very quickly, so they do not waste their defensive spray. Instead, they stamp their front feet as a warning if another creature gets too close, giving ample opportunity for the threat to back off.

Skunks have a hearty appetite for grubs, frogs, insects, mice, and baby rats. People soon find that their rodent problems disappear after skunks take up residence.

Safety Concerns

Although skunks may contract their own strain of rabies, since 1980 only one human death has been attributed to the skunk strain of rabies in the U.S. Skunks are nocturnal; however, it is not unusual to see them foraging during the day, particularly in the spring when they have young and may be extra hungry.

If you observe a sick, abnormal-acting skunk (for example, disorientation, paralysis, circling, unprovoked aggression, screeching, self-mutilation, or uncharacteristic tameness) in areas where rabies occurs, take proper precautions by calling your local animal control officer.

If you smell skunk spray in your house or garage, try the non-toxic deodorizer Odors Away™, which you can find at a hardware or home store. Add a few drops to a bowl and place in the room with the odor.

If you smell skunk spray on your pet, clothing, or yourself, try the “Magical Skunk Deodorizer Recipe”.

Magical Skunk Deodorizer Recipe

(To remove skunk odor from people, pets, and fabrics)

- 1 quart 3% hydrogen peroxide
- 1/4 cup baking soda
- 1 tsp. of liquid dish or laundry soap

Combine ingredients, then dip a rag in the solution and rub down affected areas. Rinse. Discard unused portions.

Warning: Hydrogen peroxide may discolor fabrics or give a dark-furred animal “rust-colored highlights.”

Evicting Skunks

- From your garage or shed: Open the garage or shed door before dusk and sprinkle a 2-foot band of flour under it so you can see a track of exiting footprints. Close the door after you are sure the skunk is gone.
- From a window well: Skunks are poor climbers. If the skunk is trapped in a window well less than two feet deep, place a piece of wood at a 45-degree angle to serve as a plank. Tack a towel or chicken wire onto the board for traction. For deeper wells, place cheese or canned cat food in the far corner of an animal carrier (or plastic rectangular garbage can tipped on its side) and slowly lower it into the window well. The skunk will be enticed by the food and should walk right in. Slowly raise the carrier or garbage can to ground level, elevator style, keeping your hands on the outside of the container to avoid being bitten. Remember, skunks have terrible eyesight and will not spray you if you move slowly. Cover the window well with mesh to prevent this from happening again.

About Mercer County Wildlife Center

The Mercer County Wildlife Center is a state and federally licensed facility that cares for injured, ill and displaced wildlife. The Center provides these animals with the medical treatment and a temporary refuge before releasing them back into an appropriate wild habitat.

For more information regarding the work we do and the animals who share our environment, including a series of printable brochures that provide tips for coexisting peacefully with those animals, visit us online at:

www.mercercounty.org/departments/mercer-county-park-commission/wildlife-center

For information on protecting bee hives and livestock, contact the Division of Fish and Wildlife Wildlife Control Unit at (908) 735-8793.

Traps?

Trapping will not solve the problem. If you have a skunk in your yard, you have a good skunk habitat. If you eliminate one, another will quickly move into its place. Relocating a skunk may cause its death or—if trapped between May and August—the death of the young that may be left behind.

In addition, it is against the law in New Jersey to trap and relocate wildlife. It is better to learn to accept skunks that inhabit your yard and use the measures outlined in this fact sheet to minimize your contact with them.



- From under a deck or shed: Skunks who take up residence beneath a deck or shed to raise their young will usually leave when the young are old enough to go with them. The simplest solution is to wait for them to leave on their own, then seal off their entry hole with hardware cloth. To make the space less attractive to a skunk, place lights and a blaring radio in the space.
- From a cat door into your house: Try to isolate the skunk in one room (use screens or boards to gently coax the skunk back out the way it came in). Lock the door at night or get the magnetic kind that only opens when signaled by a collar on your cat's neck.
- From your pool: Put a pool skimmer or broom underneath the skunk and guide it to the edge of the pool.
- From digging holes in your lawn: Skunks dig for grubs that surface after a heavy rain. As soon as the soil dries, the grubs will descend and the skunks will stop digging for them. Wait it out.

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Dan Benson, *County Executive*

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Wildlife Center Friends is a 501(C)(3) non-profit organization formed to support the activities of the Mercer County Wildlife Center. • www.wildlifecenterfriends.org