



HUMAN-SKUNK CONFLICTS

Skunks are normally crepuscular animals (active at dawn and dusk) so the potential for human-skunk interaction is low. Skunks can cause considerable damage to lawns while digging for grubs and other insects.

Dogs are often what trigger a spraying incident with a skunk. Keeping your dog on leash and under control will minimize the chances for an unpleasant encounter. While skunks have the potential to carry rabies, there have been no cases of rabies found in skunks in BC.

Spray from a skunk, while foul smelling, is not a vector for transmitting disease. Skunks may transmit distemper to dogs so it is important to have your dog checked by a vet if it receives a bite or a scratch from a skunk.

Children should be taught not to approach any wildlife, including skunks; serious bites and scratches may result from an encounter with a skunk.



BRITISH COLUMBIA
CONSERVATION FOUNDATION

The BC Conservation Foundation is a not-for-profit, registered charity that has been working in BC since 1969.

www.bccf.com



To report wildlife in conflict contact the Conservation Officer Service at

1.877.952.7277

WildSafeBC is funded through the Province of British Columbia and in partnership with communities and organizations throughout BC.



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STRIPED SKUNK



British Columbia Conservation Foundation





MANAGE YOUR ATTRACTANTS

Skunks can cause considerable damage to lawns and if they spray around your property, life can be unpleasant for quite some time.

- 1. Keep all garbage securely stored** until the day of collection.
- 2. Feed pets indoors**, or if fed outdoors, bring in any feed that is not immediately eaten by your pets.
- 3. Take birdfeeders down until winter.** While striped skunks are not skilled climbers, they will eat spilled seed.
- 4. Keep pet doors locked at night.** Skunks may enter homes through pet doors if they feel they can get a meal on the other side of a pet door.
- 5. Prevent skunks from denning under your house** or outbuildings by sealing up any holes or potential entrances. This is best done before March, or after August, to avoid separating family units that may already be inside.
- 6. Make your yard uninviting** to skunks through the use of motion-activated sprinklers and lights. While this won't deter a motivated skunk, it may be enough to move the animal along if it is its first visit to your property.
- 7. Protect beehives** with physical and/or electric fencing.



Skunks are omnivores and skilled diggers. A lawn with a fresh set of small holes dug in it may indicate skunks hunting for larvae and beetles that live underground.

Skunks are readily identified by their striking black and white colouring. They measure 50 to 72 cm from nose to tail and weigh between 2 to 3.5 kg. Females tend to be approximately 10% smaller than males.

Skunks are opportunistic omnivores, feeding on an extremely varied diet; grubs, beetles and other insects are a large part of their diet during the summer months.

Skunks breed in later winter to early spring. Females give birth to litters of 4 to 7 young called 'kits' in early May. The kits are blind and nearly hairless. They take about three weeks to gain their sight and another five weeks before they are ready to leave the den. Young skunks disperse from the family unit in the fall and become sexually mature at one year of age.

Skunks have few regular predators except for hawks and owls, and their populations can grow quickly if good food and weather permit. While coyotes, foxes, wolves and the wild felines will attack a skunk if desperate - they are not typically targeted owing to the skunk's powerful defensive spray.

Typically skunks are short-lived, managing only two to three years in the wild but can live for up to ten years in captivity.

! WHERE'S THE SKUNK?

If you'd like to document your sighting and contribute to the distribution of information for skunks, submit a report to [iNaturalist](https://www.inaturalist.org).



SKUNK FACTS:

- There are two types of skunks in BC: striped skunks, found throughout most of the province (except for Vancouver Island, Haida Gwaii and many coastal islands) and the spotted skunk which is limited to the lower mainland.
- Skunks were once thought to belong in the weasel family but are now classified in their own - Mephitidae.
- Skunks are known for their vivid black-and-white coat and their strong musk, which is capable of being sprayed up to 6 m as a defence mechanism.
- Spotted skunks may do a handstand as a form of intimidation but they do not spray in this position.
- Skunks retreat to their dens during the winter months but are not true hibernators.
- Skunks may share dens for over-wintering and as many as twenty skunks have been reported to share one den.
- Skunks prefer dens already excavated by other animals, or under existing crevices beneath porches or buildings.
- Skunks are crepuscular, meaning they are most active around dawn and dusk, and tend to sleep away the daylight hours.
- Striped skunks are not skilled climbers, but spotted skunks are.

! SKUNK SAFETY

The greatest threat from a skunk is being sprayed by its very potent musk. While eastern skunks have tested positive for rabies, there has never been a confirmed case of skunk-transmitted rabies recorded in BC.

Keep dogs on a leash and do not allow them to provoke a skunk. Skunks are most active at dusk and dawn so ensure skunks are not present if you let your dog out at night. Skunks spray as a means of defence only, so the best way to avoid getting sprayed is to avoid scaring a skunk. Skunks often will warn of an impending spray by hissing, stamping their feet, rising up on their front feet and arching their back in a U shape.



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