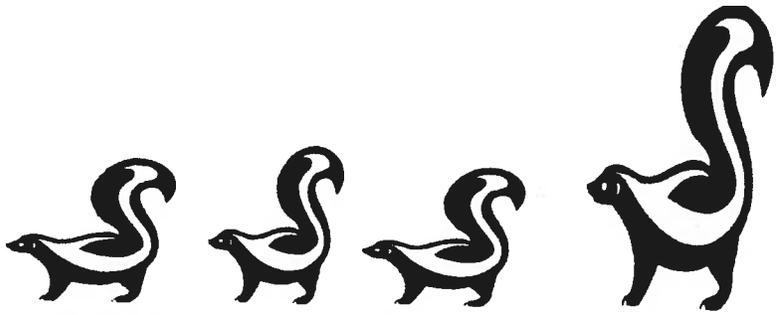


SKUNKS IN YOUR BACKYARD?



MANAGING SKUNK PROBLEMS

SKUNK BIOLOGY

Skunks are nocturnal animals, preferring to hunt at night for insects, small rodents, carrion, poultry, eggs, nestling birds, fruit, vegetable matter, pet food, and garbage. The skunk itself is food for birds of prey. Youngsters may forage or play during the day. Skunks do not hibernate, but may remain inactive for weeks during the winter. The males are solitary while females may den together. Breeding season occurs in January, February, and March. Litters are born 9 weeks after conception, with an average of 4-8 young.

The strong musk characteristic of skunks is expelled from two scent glands near the anus. They can spray up to 13 feet. If feet stomping or tail arching does not scare off an intruder, confrontations with pets and humans may result in discharge of the nauseating musk. During breeding season skunks frequently spray each other.

The habitat for skunks is in open country, woods, and open prairie, especially near ponds and rivers. They may use abandoned burrows or dig their own. As humans have encroached on their territory, skunks have adopted by taking shelter under homes, decks, patios, garages, sheds, woodpiles, or abandoned buildings.

TRAPPING / RELOCATION IS **NOT** THE ANSWER:

- California Law states trapped adult healthy skunks must be euthanized OR released in the immediate area. (Under SB 1645 "any person providing trapping services for profit must procure a trapping license required by Fish & Game Code, Section 4005. All traps shall bear only the current registered trap number or numbers of the person using, or in possession of those traps.")
- The trapping experience is stressful for animals. Their face and paws may become injured trying to escape from the cage. Exposure to weather or dehydration may be life threatening.
- Trapping may grab the mother, leaving the babies behind to die.
- Even if the skunk is removed, others are likely to move in unless the underlying problem is addressed.
- Urban wildlife surviving with an abundance of food may not know how to forage for food in a foreign environment.
- A habitat supports only as many of one species as it can handle. Adding new animals often upsets the delicate balance. When a skunk is removed from its home, another moves in.

OVER



“EXCLUSION” PREVENTING SKUNK PROBLEMS CRITTER PROOFING

The most effective, economical, and humane technique for discouraging skunks from invading residential properties is to remove the food, water, and favorable habitat.

Do not intentionally feed wildlife. They will become dependent on the food and lose their ability to forage naturally.

Do not leave or feed domestic pet food outside. Store the food in animal proof containers.

Remove pet water dishes each night. Ponds can be eliminated as a water source by lowering water levels to about 8 inches below the edge and by altering the landscape to reduce access. Wire meshes or heavy plastic screen can also be suspended a few inches over the pond surface.

Skunks have sensitive noses, so they can be repelled by scattering mothballs under the house or halfway bury a bottle filled with bleach and a rag in the dirt. The fumes should make them leave. Sprinkle a layer of flour around the area; check the direction of paw prints; and block the hole when there are no footprints for 3 days. Remember skunks are good burrowers and anything used to block entry points should extend 10 inches underground. Slotted metal vent covers are preferable to screen wire in keeping skunks from entering houses through foundation vents. Pest services can install one-way doors over habitat entrances. Many things can be attached to a motion sensor device to trigger sprinklers (Scarecrow Brand Sprinkler), noise maker, or strobe / blinking light

Trim and clear any brush and dense shrubbery from around your property. Cover fruit trees and gardens with nets. Remove fruit as it ripens and pick up fallen fruit daily. Harvest gardens frequently. Clear or cover compost piles; avoid composting human food.

Tightly screen all access holes into and under buildings.

Keep garbage containers tightly covered and secure them from falling or being tipped over.

Keep BBQ grills clean, covered, and stored in secure place.

If skunks insist on digging for worms and grubs, eliminate this source of food by treating the soil with an insecticide labeled for use on gardens.

Skunk odor can be removed from clothing, furniture, etc by neutralizing with a strong detergent and rinsing with liberal use of vinegar. Airing smelly objects on a hot sunny day will help. To deodorize in or under buildings, use a garden sprayer (with a fine mist setting) filled with a mixture of 1 quart peroxide, 4 oz. bicarbonate soda, and 2 T. Joy Dishwashing Liquid.