
Getting to Know Skunks



Skunks are one of the most misunderstood wild animals. People don't 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 "fired" from the anal glands. But skunks have a limited supply of ammunition and they can't "reload" very quickly, so they don't 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.

What's Inside?

Inside this pamphlet you'll find some tips for coexisting with skunks, including one that's especially useful—the magical skunk deodorizer recipe!

Our Mission

The goal of the Mercer County Wildlife Center is to protect the future of native wildlife species through education, rehabilitation, and release.

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.



Want to Learn More?

A big "thank you" to The Fund for Animals for providing the information in this pamphlet. For more details about skunks, including repellent recipes and instructions for creating barriers, visit The Fund for Animals web site at www.fund.org and link to their Coexisting with Wildlife Fact Sheet #6, Solving Skunk Problems.

Mercer County Wildlife Center



Coexisting with Skunks



Skunk spray has given the wrong impression about these gentle, non-aggressive creatures.

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Coexisting with Skunks

Odor Remedies

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 recipe in “Magical Skunk Deodorizer Recipe” below.

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 2 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.

- 🦨 **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 ammonia-soaked rags, lights, and a blaring radio in the space.

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.”

- 🦨 **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.

What About Humane Traps?

Trapping won’t 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’s against the law in New Jersey to trap and relocate wildlife.

It’s better to learn to accept skunks that inhabit your yard and use the measures outlined in this pamphlet to minimize your contact with them.

