

A Fragrant Tale

This is the story of a much maligned little fellow, known to most people as the ‘skunk’, although to some of us he’ll always be ‘Pepe Le Pew’. Why, today, even the very term, “skunk,” may mean a rogue and evil-doer when applied to someone. But does that cute little critter with the bold white stripes down its ebony body *really* deserve such vilification? Well...

Skunks are legendary for their powerful predator-deterrent—a hard-to-remove, horrible-smelling spray. A skunk's spray is an oily liquid produced by glands under its large tail. To employ this scent bomb, a skunk turns around and blasts its foe with a foul mist that can travel as far as ten feet.

Skunk spray causes no real damage to its victims, but it sure makes them uncomfortable. It can linger for many days and defy attempts to remove it. As a defensive technique, the spray is very effective. Predators typically give skunks a wide berth unless little other food is available.

There are many different kinds of skunks. They vary in size (most are house cat-sized) and appear in a variety of striped, spotted, and swirled patterns—but all are a vivid black-and-white that makes them easily identifiable and may alert predators to their pungent potential.

Skunks usually nest in burrows constructed by other animals, but they also live in hollow logs or even abandoned buildings. In colder climates, some skunks may sleep in these nests for several weeks of the chilliest season. Each female gives birth to between two and ten young each year.

Skunks are opportunistic eaters with a varied diet. They are nocturnal foragers who eat fruit and plants, insects, larvae, worms, eggs, reptiles, small mammals, and even fish. Nearly all skunks live in the Americas, except for the Asian stink badgers that have recently been added to the skunk family. [<http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/skunk/>]



Skunks often attack beehive because they eat honeybees. Skunks are small animals. They reach 8-19 inches in size and weigh up to 14 pounds. Before it sprays the victim, skunk will turn its back, lift its tail, start hissing and stumping with its feet. Those are the warning signs that precede spraying. Their worst enemies are coyotes, bobcats and owls. Male skunk is called buck, female - doe, and baby skunk - kit. Skunks can survive a snake bite. They have poor eyesight, but they have excellent sense of smell and hearing. They can run only 10 miles per hour. [http://www.softschools.com/facts/animals/skunk_facts/12/]

Skunks make good pets when properly deodorized. Take your skunk to the vet and have the scent gland removed under a local anesthetic- it’s quick and painless apparently. Skunks are intelligent and loyal and love being cuddled by kids. They can eat almost anything from yoghurt to old vegetable scraps though they do need a clean bowl of water to drink from. [<http://www.roberttwigger.com/lost-city-explorers-club/2012/3/15/eating-skunk-sloth-and-swan.html>]

Ya see?! Why not run out and get one today!