

## Skunk Profile



Hello! My name is Martin. I'm a skunk. My body is covered in black fur except for a thick white stripe of fur on my back and tail. But some of the 11 species of skunks have white spots and brown fur. Chances are you'll only see me if you're out at night- I'm nocturnal- I sleep during the daytime and wake in the evening.

There are some tiny skunks species weighing only 100 grams (about the weight of an orange) as well as some large ones weighing up to 4.5 kg. We can be found all over the world, from Canada to central South America, as well as Indonesia and the Philippines. We typically make our home in grasslands, deserts, woodlands and rocky mountain terrain. I like to make my home in a den that I've dug up with my claws. I can share my den with several other skunks, especially during the cold months when we huddle together for warmth. Sometimes I even share the den with a mother skunk and her babies! Mother skunks give birth to a litter of 2 to 10 babies after only 2-3 months in the mom's belly. The babies need protection because they are born without fur and their eyes are sealed

## Skunk Family Tree

Kingdom: Animalia  
Phylum: Chordata  
Subphylum: Vertebrata  
Class: Mammalia  
Order: Carnivora  
Family: Mephitidae  
Genus: Mephitis  
Species: *Mephitis mephitis* (Striped Skunk)

shut for a few days. I left my mom 2 months after I was born to explore the world on my own as a nocturnal omnivore (which means someone who eats both meat and vegetables).

I quickly learned to dig for delicious meals of small animals like mice, birds, and snakes, but I do enjoy eating insects and vegetation too.

There are many skunks around but we do have to worry about our health and safety. You see, our natural predators in the wild are coyotes, foxes, pumas, civets, American badgers, and lynx as well as eagles and owls. But humans are our biggest threat- they don't like our smell. And because skunks may carry rabies, humans try to get rid of us to control the rabies disease. Often, skunks are run over by cars as they attempt to cross highways.

Skunks are nifty because we have the ability to protect ourselves when we are in trouble by spraying an awful spray that burns the eyes. When I'm feeling threatened, I stand on my front paws, my back paws in the air and spray stinky fluid from my backside- it shoots a meter away. That keeps me safe!