

striped skunk *Mephitis mephitis*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Mammalia

Order: Carnivora

Family: Mephitidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The striped skunk has a head-body length of 13 to 18 inches and a tail of seven to 10 inches in length. It weighs from six to 10 pounds. Its body, belly and feet are black. The white stripe on the back divides into two, smaller stripes. A small white stripe is present on its nose and forehead. It has long back feet. This skunk has a fluffy, black tail with white on it.

BEHAVIORS

The striped skunk may be found statewide in Illinois. It lives in pastures with grassy fencerows, weedy roadsides or open woods. The striped skunk eats amphibians, birds, carrion, garbage, grasses, insects, fruits, small mammals, reptiles, roots and vegetables. It feeds and is active mostly during the night. The skunk is known for its bad-smelling scent that is used to spray any animal it considers to be a threat. When initially disturbed, the skunk will arch its back, raise its tail to show the scent glands and stomp the ground. It only releases its foul scent after this warning. The spray may travel over 10 feet. Mating occurs in February or March. After a gestation period of two to two and one-half months, the one to nine young are born. Young are raised under ground in a den, which is usually taken over from another mammal.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests; rivers and streams

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests; coniferous forests; southern Illinois lowlands; upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none

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