

Skunk

Skunks are important in controlling insects and rodents. There are four species found in Colorado, but the striped skunk is the only one likely to be encountered in the City and County of Broomfield. Striped skunks are black except for a white stripe on the forehead and a wide white area at the nape of the neck that divides into a "V" along the back.

Habitat:

Easily adapting to many different habitats - woods, brush, grasslands - striped skunks are found throughout Colorado at elevations up to 10,000 feet.

Diet:

Skunks are omnivorous, eating insects, earthworms, small rodents, birds, eggs, reptiles, and amphibians. They also eat berries, roots, leaves, grasses, fungi, nuts and garbage. They are one of the primary predators of honeybees, since they have thick fur for protection from stings.

Behavior:

Skunks are nocturnal and reclusive. Their home ranges are about two to three square miles, but may increase during the breeding season. They usually live in burrows abandoned by other animals, hollow logs, or under buildings and have a high tolerance for humans.

Reproduction:

Skunks usually breed once a year in February or March, with two to ten young born in early May. At about two months the young follow their mother outside the den, becoming independent a couple of weeks later.

Size and Life Span:

Striped skunks weigh 4 - 10 pounds and may live up to five years in the wild.

Possible Conflicts:

Although the pungent spray of a skunk may be the most disagreeable conflict you experience, these cat-sized animals may dig in unwanted areas; get into trash; den under your house, porch, or shed; or fall into a window well. They may raid backyard chicken coops or beehives. Skunks can carry rabies, so be especially cautious if one is encountered during the day. A lack of fear of humans is unusual behavior for wild animals. Immediately report a weak, staggering, or trembling skunk to Broomfield Animal Services, 303.438.6400 or to Colorado Parks and Wildlife.

What to Do:

Skunks cannot be relocated—anywhere!

For a skunk living under a structure it is best to evict it before March or after August, when breeding season is over and the babies are gone. Then, install fencing that extends 1 - 2 feet below ground to seal openings. For a skunk in a window well, carefully lower a board into the well and let the skunk climb up the board and off to safety.

To evict a skunk, carefully spray Hot Pepper Repellent into the den hole but not too far, since you don't want the skunk to spray you. The recipe is available at urbanwildliferescue.org/humane/skunks.htm. Or, toss in ammonia soaked rags, tying a string to them so they can be pulled out in a few days and re-soaked. To make certain the animal has gone, sprinkle flour at the entrance, then check for tracks after dark.

Seal trashcans, clean BBQ grills immediately, do not leave pet foods outdoors, and remove woodpiles. Provide a secure coop and proper fencing to protect chickens. Consult beekeeping experts for ways to protect hives.

Tracks of the striped skunk



For More Information:

Broomfield Wildlife Masters, 303-464-5554

Wildlife Observation:

Look for wildlife. Remember to watch from a distance and don't get too close.

Listen for wildlife. Even if you can't see wildlife, you may hear them.

Learn about wildlife. Talk to a wildlife master or naturalist, borrow a book about wildlife.

Love and Respect the Outdoors!

The more we know about wildlife, the less likely we are to harm or fear wildlife.



City and County of Broomfield
Open Space and Trails
303.464.5803
www.broomfield.org/openspace

