

## Striped skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*)



### **Taxonomy:**

Family Mephitidae (formerly placed in Mustelidae). There are 13 subspecies including *Mephitis mephitis major* which occurs locally.

### **Description:**

Easily recognized by its black color and conspicuous pair of white stripes extending from the head to shaggy tail.

Total length: 575-800mm; Tail: 173-340mm; Hind foot: 75-83mm; Weight: 1.2- 5.3 kg.



### **Distribution:**

Southern Canada through the US and northern Mexico except the most arid portions of the Sonoran Desert. Common along the Wasatch Front.

### **Ecology and diet:**

Striped skunks occur in a wide variety of habitats but are probably most common near water. Although nocturnal, they often are seen at dusk and are easily detected by their lingering musky odor. Skunks are omnivorous, consuming insects, small mammals, birds, fruit, and other plant material. They live in above-ground dens during the summer and den below-ground during the winter.

### **Life History:**

Reproduction occurs in late summer. Females bear a single litter of up to 10 kits. Gestation length is 59-77 days. Age at sexual maturity for females is about 10-12 months old. Maximum lifespan is about 4-5 years.

**References:** Wade-Smith and Verts 1982; Zeveloff 1988