



mpjonesjd

## Spray

Skunks don't want to spray you or your dog. Their spray is their primary defense against predators, and they need to save it for real threats. Skunks have excellent hearing and sense of smell, but poor vision. Give them space and announce your presence. Before you let a dog out at night, turn on your lights, make noise, and give skunks a few minutes to move on.



Fabio Meffer

## Safety

Skunks can carry rabies and other diseases. Keep pets current with rabies vaccinations. Do not handle skunks, dead or alive. If you see one that looks ill, contact your local animal control department. If you are bitten by a skunk, seek medical attention immediately. Remove food sources to discourage skunks from denning around your home. For site-specific prevention advice, or for help removing a skunk that has established a den on your property, contact your county's vector control district.



Karel Back

## Skunk Wash Recipe

If you or your pet are sprayed by a skunk, tomato juice will not remove the smell. This mixture will remove the odor. Double or triple the recipe for medium or larger dogs:

- | Ingredients                              | Supplies                 |
|--|--------------------------|
| • 1 quart of 3 percent hydrogen peroxide | • 1 pair rubber gloves   |
| • 1/4 cup baking soda                    | • A bucket, pot, or bowl |
| • 1 teaspoon liquid soap                 | • Disposable towel       |

Wearing gloves, mix the ingredients well then massage into affected fur. Keep the solution away from eyes, nose, and mouth. Rinse and repeat as needed. Do not store leftover solution. Instead, dilute the excess solution with water and rinse it down the drain. Chemical reactions can occur in a sealed container.

2950 Peralta Oaks Court, Oakland, CA 94605  
1-888-EBPARKS or 1-888-327-2757 (TRS 711)  
ebparks.org

## Visitor Centers

- Ardenwood Historic Farm**, Fremont  
510-544-2797, awvisit@ebparks.org
- Big Break Regional Shoreline**, Oakland  
Big Break Visitor Center at the Delta  
510-544-3050, bigbreakvisit@ebparks.org
- Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve**, Antioch  
510-544-2750, bdvisit@ebparks.org
- Coyote Hills Regional Park**, Fremont  
510-544-3220, chvisit@ebparks.org
- Crown Memorial State Beach**, Alameda  
Doug Siden Visitor Center at Crab Cove  
510-544-3187, ccove@ebparks.org
- Del Valle Regional Park**, Livermore  
510-544-3146, dvvisit@ebparks.org
- Garin/Dry Creek Pioneer Regional Parks**, Hayward  
510-544-3220 (Coyote Hills), chvisit@ebparks.org  
Open summer Saturdays
- Sunol-Ohlone Regional Wilderness**, Sunol  
510-544-3249, svisit@ebparks.org  
Open weekends
- Tilden Regional Park**, Berkeley  
Botanic Garden: 510-544-3169, bgarden@ebparks.org  
Tilden Nature Area/Environmental Education Center  
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On the cover: Striped skunks  
Photo: gnagel



# Living with Skunks in the East Bay Regional Park District

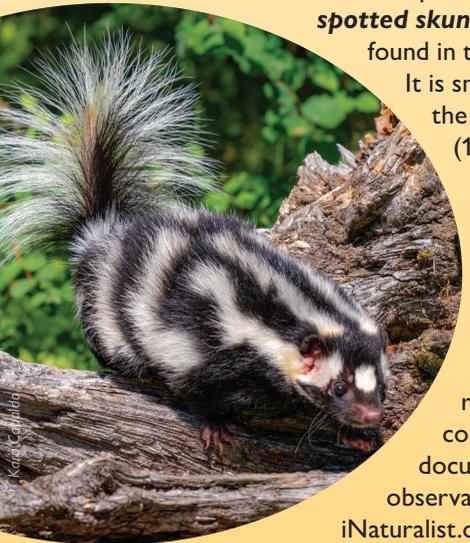
## Living with Skunks

**T**here are two species of skunks that live in the Bay Area, the striped skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*) and the spotted skunk (*Spilogale gracilis*). The **striped skunk**, which is the most common, is the size of a house cat (18 inches long) with a bushy black tail, a thin white stripe down the center of the face, and two broad white stripes running along the back that meet on the shoulders and head. The striped skunk's scientific name (*mephitis*) means "a noxious exhalation from the ground."

The other local species is the **spotted skunk**, rarely found in the East Bay. It is smaller than the striped skunk (12 inches long) and, as its name implies, is covered with white spots. If you do see this rare species, consider documenting your observation on [iNaturalist.org](https://www.inaturalist.org).



Chloe and Trevor



Karen Campbell

## Skunks in the Wild

Skunks have obvious and aromatic adaptations that protect them and allow them to thrive. They eat many things including insects, worms, rodents, reptiles, frogs, mushrooms, fruit, and pet food. Skunks help control pests including yellowjackets and cockroaches.



Josie N.

They have few natural enemies and fewer than 5 percent of skunk deaths are caused by predation. Great horned owls, better known for their eyesight than sense of smell, will hunt and eat skunks. Perhaps the deadliest predator is the automobile since skunks do not know that approaching cars are dangerous and will often not move out of the way.



Ken Conning

Females typically give birth from four to six kits in April and May. Within months, the kits will join her on evening rounds. Skunks den in or near the ground.

## Skunks in Your Yard

Skunks have adapted to urban and suburban living. They are mostly nocturnal but may be seen looking for food during daylight hours, especially late afternoon. They are timid creatures if left alone.

A skunk's black-and-white coloring is a warning to stay away and gets them noticed at night. They usually give warnings before using their spray. When frightened, they may turn their back and lift their tail, or even do a handstand with their hind feet



Weber

and tail raised. They may arch their back, hiss, growl, and stomp their feet. Spraying is their last defense. They can spray multiple times, have excellent aim, and can hit a target from 10-12 feet away.

### To reduce close encounters:

- Do not feed skunks, intentionally or unintentionally.
- Keep pet food and water bowls indoors.
- Keep garbage cans tightly secured.
- Seal crawl spaces, basements, and porches.
- Do not leave fruit on the ground.
- Collect bird seed that falls on the ground.
- Never approach or attempt to pet, hold, or capture a skunk.

## Under Your House

If skunks are living under a structure or porch, do not seal the space until they have left. The den entrance may be marked with shaggy hairs and a faint "skunk" odor. They use their den year-round and keep it clean, often throwing litter and debris out at the entrance.

Make the space unwelcoming by installing a bright light or playing music loudly in the den. Sprinkle flour on the ground around the entrance, or secure thin paper around the entryway, so you will see footprints or broken paper when skunks leave. After they have left, seal the space with galvanized hardware cloth or mesh. If the entrance is at ground-level, extend and bury mesh at least 6 inches deep. Skunks are excellent diggers. A pest control professional can help you secure possible entry points around your house.

State law prohibits trapping and relocation of skunks, so if you request the skunk be trapped and removed, please be aware it is likely to be euthanized.



Adrian Wojcik



Frank Fichtmiller