



### **The Striped Skunk *Mephitis mephitis***

Many recognize the unpleasant odor of this black and white cat-sized mammal. While there are Hooded, Hog-nosed and Spotted Skunks in Wisconsin, the Striped Skunk is the most common and is the one found frequently in Taylor County. It has short legs with long toenails that help it dig. Its black fur usually has two wide white stripes that run along its side and a long, thin, white stripe that starts on its head and goes all the way to the tip of its bushy tail although there can be variations in its color pattern. The skunk has been trapped for its fur but today that fur is no longer considered valuable.

Skunks hunt for grubs, wasps, or other insects in the ground. In the morning you can see holes where they have been digging. Their diet can include small rodents, fish, dead animals, garbage, birds' and amphibian eggs, fruits, nuts, berries and even leaves. Once in a while, it will eat eggs and chickens or raid beehives, but most of the time what it eats is beneficial to people.

Skunks are nocturnal. They are most active at night. Early in the morning, you might see skunks going home to their dens to sleep.

- Use the following useful website to learn more about skunks as mammals, and carnivores:

[http://www4.uwsp.edu/biology/facilities/vertebrates/mammals\\_of\\_wisconsin\\_database.htm](http://www4.uwsp.edu/biology/facilities/vertebrates/mammals_of_wisconsin_database.htm)

- Use the patterns for paper bag skunk puppets included in this site to provide opportunities for students to share the information they find about skunks with others. Let them write their own puppet scripts using what they have learned.

- Use issues of Ranger Rick in which the raccoon and his friends, including Odie the skunk, are personified. Contrast this with other articles in the same magazine that are written in an expository or narrative manner, but with no talking animals. As children use puppets let them clearly distinguish between realistic and fictionalized portrayal of animals.
- Have the skunk puppet compare itself with other members of the weasel family.
- Make a time line about the activities of a skunk during a twenty-four hour day. Compare its activities with those of other animals. Have various animal puppets compare and contrast what they do during one day and night.
- Let a skunk puppet tell about places in which it lives. (Under lumber piles, in dens it digs or in burrows that have been used by woodchucks or other animals, or under buildings.)
- Have a skunk puppet show how it stamps with its front feet and often clicks or snarls to warn its enemies before it turns its back, raises its tail and sprays.
- Read these cinquains about skunks written by Loretta Kuse. Try writing some of your own poetry.

### Skunk

Pussy  
Provides perfume  
Few puffs pew!  
Flee from fine fumes!  
Skunk

Stink  
Stank, stunk  
Spray spreading smell  
Stinking stench spreading well  
Stench

Protection  
Private pistol  
Proudly parading tail  
Delay de-smell, de-tail dispenses  
Defenses

Mammal  
Making mist  
Marching, surely, safely  
No fear of foes  
Skunk



### **Patterns for Paper Bag Skunk Puppets**

Add feet and tail to the paper bag if desired.  
Use bags of different sizes for large or small hands.

Skunk



