



# COEXIST WITH Skunks

Striped skunk (Photo: USFWS)

Sightings of Striped Skunks are increasing, as they expand their range into the coastal plain of North Carolina. Seeing a striped skunk is not cause for concern — most skunks are not rabid and will not spray you if left alone. In fact, striped skunks are beneficial, as they can help control rodent and snake populations around your house!



Striped skunk (Photo: [Wikimedia](#))

## Striped Skunk Quick Facts:

### When do skunks spray?

If a person or animal frightens a skunk, the skunk will most likely face the person, straighten its legs and arch its back, put its tail straight up, and bristle the tail hair to give the appearance of being larger. It may also click its teeth and stamp its feet on the ground. If the person/animal continues to advance, the skunk may then spray a musk secretion from scent sacs located in its hindquarters. If you come across a skunk, leave the animal alone and allow it to move out of the area on its own.

### What do skunks eat?

80% of a skunk's diet consists of insects, worms, small rodents, bird eggs, and reptiles. They also eat berries, acorns, and other vegetable matter. Skunks leave evidence of their feeding by creating cone-shaped holes in the soil when they dig for grubs.

### Where do skunks live?

Skunks live in wooded areas that have a mixture of brush, open fields, and rocky outcrops. They tend to select timbered areas and pastures with good water sources. Skunks create dens by digging into slopes of hills and spend most of the day in their den. But, skunks can also use crawlspaces underneath houses as den sites and sleeping areas.

### If I see a skunk out during the day is something wrong?

No. Seeing a skunk out during the daytime does not automatically mean it is rabid or sick. Skunks are mostly active at night and early morning but sometimes they do come out during the day to forage for food, especially in suburban areas. The chances of encountering a rabid skunk are very low.

### Will the Wildlife Resources Commission trap and relocate skunks?

No. The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission provides technical guidance to people dealing with striped skunks. Because striped skunks are a rabies vector animal, they cannot be trapped and relocated under any circumstances. All trapped striped skunks must be euthanized or released on the property where they were captured.

### Can I trap a skunk on my own?

Yes. If the trapping season is open, you can trap and euthanize an animal yourself following N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission regulations. If the trapping season is not open, and the animal is causing damage, obtain a depredation permit and trap and euthanize the skunk. Visit [ncwildlife.org/trapping](http://ncwildlife.org/trapping) to learn more about trapping seasons and trapping regulations.

Wildlife

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More information, visit: [ncwildlife.org/stripedskunk](http://ncwildlife.org/stripedskunk)



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## Preventing Conflicts with Skunks

### To prevent problems with skunks:

- **Secure your garbage.** Skunks are more likely to come around the house when there is a food source nearby. Make sure to secure all trash in tightfitting containers and do not discard food scraps or grease outside. Clean up food residue on outdoor grills and store grills in a shed or garage between uses.
- **Feed pets indoors.** Feeding pets outdoors attracts skunks and other animals to the area. If feeding pets indoors is not possible, restrict outdoor pet feeding to a certain time of day and remove all traces of food in between.
- **Keep bird feeders clean.** Bird seed can attract many animals. Use bird feeders designed to keep bird seed off the ground and remove feeders if skunks or other animals are regularly seen in your yard.
- **Eliminate hiding places.** Close off crawl spaces and openings underneath porches, decks, and sheds. Skunks will use these areas for resting and to raise their young. Chicken wire placed into the ground can be used to keep skunks from digging under structures. Close shed and garage doors at night.

- **Eliminate grubs from your yard.** Grubs are a favorite food source for skunks. Using a grubicide on your lawn is probably the most effective non-lethal (to the skunk) means of deterring them.
- **Protect your pet from being sprayed.** Turn on flood lights to check your yard at night for skunks before allowing your pet outside.
- **Educate your neighbors.** Your efforts to prevent skunk conflicts will be less effective if some neighbors are still providing food.



Kevin Collins

### If you think you have a problem with a skunk:

- **Implement the non-lethal steps** described above.
- **If trapping season is closed and property damage has occurred,** hire a Wildlife Damage Control Agent. A list of agents can be found at [ncwildlife.org/have-a-problem](http://ncwildlife.org/have-a-problem). Or, obtain a depredation permit from the Wildlife Commission and trap and euthanize the striped skunk.
- If trapping season is open, trap and euthanize the animal yourself following Wildlife Commission regulations found at [ncwildlife.org/trapping](http://ncwildlife.org/trapping) or hire a licensed trapper. A list of trappers is available at [ncwildlife.org/have-a-problem](http://ncwildlife.org/have-a-problem).
- **Striped skunks can be hunted year-round.** However, check to see if local ordinances restrict the discharge of firearms and visit [ncwildlife.org/hunting](http://ncwildlife.org/hunting) for hunting regulations and restrictions.

### Recipe for eliminating skunk odor:

If you or your pet are sprayed by a skunk, this solution can be used to eliminate skunk odor:

- 1 quart of 3% peroxide
- ¼ cup baking soda
- 1 table spoon liquid dish detergent

Mix and spray on affected area. Do not premix or store solution because it is volatile.