

# Living With Wildlife: SKUNKS



***Skunks are not found on the San Juan Islands but are present on the adjacent mainland. If you detect a musky, skunk smell while in the San Juans, it is most likely being produced by a fox.***

Skunks are effective diggers and opportunistic eaters. They eat everything from meats to fruits, veggies and bugs, and often scavenge garbage. They have underground dens year-round for daytime resting, hiding, and birthing/rearing of young. They give birth in late April and May. At around 2 months, mom leads the young out at night to forage and hunt. At 3 months, the young have become independent.

## ISSUE - SEEN IN YARD

*Note: Skunks can cover a large area while foraging and will visit several yards in the course of a single night. They eat a number of pests, making them beneficial to have around. Skunks will only spray if they feel threatened.*

### Suggestions:

- Keep dogs indoors or on leashes at night to prevent them from chasing skunks.
- Don't leave pet food or human food scraps in your yard.
- Put compost in a secure container.
- Secure garbage cans.
- Remove brush piles and rock piles where skunks might seek shelter.

## ISSUE - PERSON OR PET IS SPRAYED

- Wash with cold water as soon as possible to remove the irritation and some of the smell.
- Wash with carbolic soap, tomato juice, or diluted vinegar.

### Homemade remedy:

- 1 quart of 3% hydrogen peroxide solution
- ¼ cup baking soda
- 1-2 teaspoons of liquid dish soap

Mix in a large container. Apply the entire mixture, working it into a lather, while it is still bubbling. Leave on for 30 minutes. Then take a long, hot shower. Repeat as needed.

## ISSUE - DIGGING UNDER SLAB OR FOUNDATION

- Lay large, flat stones or patio pavers on the surface of the soil next to the slab.
- Hammer 2-foot lengths of 3/8-inch rebar in the ground along the slab's base, spaced every few inches.

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## ISSUE - DIGGING UP NEWLY PLANTED LAWNS OR GARDENS LOOKING FOR WORMS AND GRUBS

- Sprinkle cayenne pepper or a granular repellent (like Repel) around the area. *\*\*Use with caution if you have pets\*\**
- Put up a temporary fence until plants are well developed.



## ISSUE - TRAPPED IN BUILDING

- Close off access to other rooms, open exterior doors, and leave to allow the skunk to find the exit.
- If necessary, slowly encourage the skunk to move in the preferred direction by holding a large towel in front of you. If the skunk appears agitated (e.g., stamping back feet or turning back and raising tail), retreat immediately.

## ISSUE - UNDER DECK

- The skunk may be taking temporary refuge. Leave it, and it may leave after dark.
- If the skunk is trying to live under the deck and **does not** have young, use bright lights or a radio set to a talk radio station to encourage them to move on.
- Close off potential entries under porches, houses, sheds using  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch hardware cloth, boards, or other sturdy materials. To prevent skunks digging through loose soil under the barrier, sink the bottom edge at least 8 inches into the ground and make a 90-degree turn to the outside for another 10-15 inches.

## ISSUE - BREAKING INTO CHICKEN ENCLOSURE

- Surround the area with secure fencing. The fence should extend 8 inches into the ground, then make a 90-degree turn to the outside of the fence for another 10-15 inches. This will help prevent skunks from digging under the wire.
- Reinforce the bottom of the chicken coop with metal flashing or wire sunk into the ground, as described above, so skunks can't dig under the bottom edge.
- Install 2 electrified wires, 6 and 10 inches above the ground, around the perimeter of the coop.