

# Hooded skunk

The **hooded skunk** (*Mephitis macroura*) is a species of mammal in the family Mephitidae. *Mephītis* in Latin means "foul odor", μακρός (*makrós*) in Greek translates to "long" and οὐρά (*ourá*) translates to "tail".

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## Morphology

It can be distinguished from the similar striped skunk (*M. mephitis*) by its longer tail and longer, much softer coat of fur, and larger tympanic bullae.<sup>[2]</sup> A ruff of white fur around its neck gives the animal its common name. Three color phases are known and in all three, a thin white medial stripe is present between the eyes: black-backed with two lateral white stripes, white-backed with one dorsal white stripe, or entirely black with a few white hairs in the tail.<sup>[3][4]</sup>

## Ecology

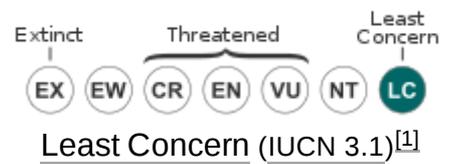
The hooded skunk ranges from the Southwestern United States to Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and northwest Costa Rica.<sup>[1]</sup> It is more abundant in Mexico. These skunks are found to be more than 50% smaller in size in southern Mexico than in the Southwestern United States.<sup>[5]</sup> It is found in grasslands, deserts, and in the foothills of mountains, avoiding high elevations. It tends to live near a water source, such as a river. The females tend to be 15% smaller in size than the males<sup>[6]</sup> and their breeding season is between February and March.<sup>[4]</sup> The litter size ranges from three to eight.<sup>[7]</sup>

## Diet

### Hooded skunk



### Conservation status



### Scientific classification

Kingdom:	<u>Animalia</u>
Phylum:	<u>Chordata</u>
Class:	<u>Mammalia</u>
Order:	<u>Carnivora</u>
Family:	<u>Mephitidae</u>
Genus:	<u><i>Mephitis</i></u>
Species:	<b><i>M. macroura</i></b>

### Binomial name

***Mephitis macroura***

Lichtenstein, 1832

The diet of the hooded skunk consists mostly of vegetation, especially prickly pear (*Opuntia* spp.), but it will readily consume insects, small vertebrates, and bird eggs <sup>[4]</sup> as well. No cases of rabies are reported,<sup>[8][9]</sup> but they host a range of parasites, including nematodes, roundworms, and fleas.<sup>[4]</sup>



## Behavior

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Hooded skunks are solitary, but they might interact at a feeding ground without showing any signs of aggression.<sup>[10]</sup> They shelter in a burrow or a nest of thick plant cover during the day and are active at night. Like *M. mephitis*, for self-defense, they spray volatile components from their anal glands.<sup>[11]</sup>

## Characteristics

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Hooded skunks are currently not endangered. They are very abundant in Mexico and can live in human suburban areas mostly on pastures and cultivated fields.<sup>[12]</sup> Their fur has low economic value.<sup>[7]</sup> However, their fat<sup>[11]</sup> and scent glands<sup>[10]</sup> can be used in local folk medicine. In some parts of their range, their flesh is considered a delicacy.<sup>[13]</sup> Other common names for the hooded skunk include: *mofeta rayada* (Spanish), *mouffette à capuchon* (French), *pay* (Maya), southern skunk, white-sided skunk, and *zorillo*.<sup>[14]</sup>

## References

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## External links

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- Smithsonian Institution - North American Mammals: *Mephitis macroura* ([http://www.mnh.si.edu/mna/image\\_info.cfm?species\\_id=155](http://www.mnh.si.edu/mna/image_info.cfm?species_id=155))
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