



# Hooded skunk

The **hooded skunk** (*Mephitis macroura*) is a species of mammal in the family Mephitidae. *Mephitis* in Latin means "foul odor" and *macr* in Greek translates to "large" and *oura* 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 southern Mexico, but is most abundant in Mexico. These skunks are found to be 50% or less 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

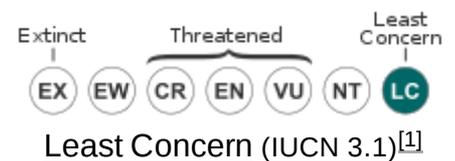
The diet of the hooded skunk consists mostly of vegetation, especially prickly pear (*Opuntia* spp.), but it will readily consume insects, small vertebrates, and bird eggs.<sup>[4]</sup> as well. No cases of rabies are

### Hooded skunk



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### Conservation status



### Scientific classification

Kingdom: Animalia  
Phylum: Chordata  
Class: Mammalia  
Order: Carnivora  
Family: Mephitidae  
Genus: Mephitis  
Species: ***M. macroura***

### Binomial name

***Mephitis macroura***

Lichtenstein 1832

vertebrates, and bird eggs — 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 for medicinal purposes. 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), *moufette à capuchon* (French), *pay* (Maya), southern skunk, white-sided skunk, and *zorillo*.<sup>[14]</sup>



## 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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