

THE TAIL OF LITTLE SKUNK Activities for Educators, Students, and Parents:

***Exploration Project/Class Discussion: Amazing Skunks!**

The Tail of Little Skunk can be used as a springboard for learning about skunks.

What do you know about skunks?

What can we learn about skunks?

Defending themselves: All animals need to be able to protect themselves. A skunk's defense is a powerful, smelly spray called musk. It's oily and can burn your eyes, cause a rash, or even make you sick to your stomach!

Would you believe that once the odor is removed, the musk is used as a base for perfume? It is!

When baby skunks, called kits, are just three weeks old, they can begin to practice spraying. When they are a few months old they can spray just like an adult skunk.

Be aware of Skunks' Warnings: Skunks are really peaceful creatures. They much prefer to go on their way than to spray. They will only spray if they believe they are threatened, but they always give a warning.

The Spotted Skunk's warning is a handstand! He puts his weight on his front feet and raises his hindquarters into the air.

The Striped Skunk arches its back, raises its tail, stamps its front feet, and shuffles backward.

***Exploration Project/Art project: Herbivore, carnivore, or both?**

Discussion Questions:

What do herbivores eat? Plants.

What do carnivores eat? Other animals.

Skunks are omnivores. They eat both animals and plants. Skunks will eat insects, mice, snakes, worms, birds' eggs, nuts, fruit, and plants. They especially enjoy grasshoppers and ground beetles.

What does Little Skunk's friend Deer eat? Blue Jay? Fish?

Draw a picture of Little Skunk or one of his friends eating something they like.

***Exploration Project/Art Project: Types of skunks**

The type of skunk we are most familiar with is the Striped Skunk. That's the type of skunk Little Skunk is. But there are other types of skunks.

Divide the class into four groups. Assign a particular type of skunk to each group and help them find information about their type of skunk. Try to find pictures of each type of skunk. Have the children in each group draw and color their skunk.

- 1) Striped Skunk has two stripes
- 2) Spotted Skunk has white spots and stripes
- 3) Hognose Skunk (also called Rooter Skunk) has a pig-like snout
- 4) Hooded Skunk has a very long black tail

***Animal Tracks**

You can tell what animal has passed in the forest or past your school or home by their tracks. To see what's walking around your area:

- 1) With the permission and help of an adult, scrape out a dirt area about four feet by four feet.
- 2) Remove the weeds and big rocks.
- 3) Loosen the soil, and then smooth it with a board.
- 4) Sprinkle the ground with water. (You can sprinkle flour in the area, if you wish. This can help you see the tracks more easily.)
- 5) Place small bits of bread in the center.
- 6) In the morning, see who's been walking past! What type of track would Deer make? Blue Jay? Little Skunk?

***Walk like the animals**

Animals walk in different ways. The way they walk helps determine what their tracks look like. Practice walking like these animals. (Hint: Mammals have four feet to walk with, but you only have two, so practice these walks with just your two feet!)

Deer: A deer is a Straight-line Walker. He places his hind foot almost exactly into the print made by the front foot. Walk like a Deer. Walk like a Straight-line Walker.

Rabbits: A rabbit is a Hopper. If you saw his tracks, there would be two small footprints and two large footprints. They land on both front feet, then swing their hind feet ahead of their front ones. Walk like a hopping Rabbit.

Skunks: A skunk is a Shuffler. Their tracks don't cover each other. The width of the tracks is far apart. They shuffle back and forth as they walk along. Their small front feet are pigeon-toed. Walk like a Skunk