

Nature Notes

From your friends at Saint John's Arboretum

For the
week of
Aug. 17th to
Aug. 21st

WHAT IS THAT SMELL!?!?



Photo Courtesy of Erwin C. Nielsen/Painet Inc.

MEET *Mephitis mephitis*

Every Minnesota resident sooner or later gets a whiff of the **striped skunk's** calling card. The striped skunk lives throughout the state, but is most common along the western border and least common in the northeast.

THAT POWERFUL ODOR

- While only the size of an average house cat, skunks have few problems with predators willing to tangle with their obnoxious odor. Great horned owls are one of very few skunk predators.
- Skunk spray is composed of seven major volatile components divided into two groups: thiols and acetate derivatives of thiols. Sound complex? Check out the illustration to the right.

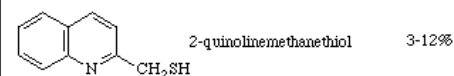
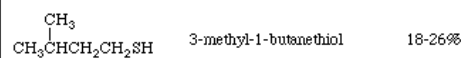
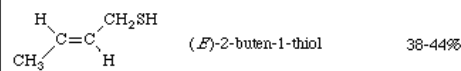
HOW DO YOU GET RID OF THAT STINK!?!?!?

- Contradictory to many beliefs, tomato juice does *not* eliminate that skunky smell! The thiols have to be oxidized through a chemical reaction that does not happen with tomato juice.
- Hydrogen peroxide and baking soda are mild enough to be used to eliminate the smell, although **BE WARNED** your pet may come clean with a new color of hair!

<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/mammals/skunks/index.html>

<http://www.humboldt.edu/~wfw2/chemofskunkspray.html>

Thiols In Skunk Spray (*Mephitis mephitis*)



<http://www.humboldt.edu/~wfw2/skchem1.gif>

Q: Have you heard the Skunk Joke?
A: You don't want to; it really stinks!

Q: How many skunks does it take to make a big stink?
A: A *phew*!

Q: What did the religious skunk say?
A: Let us *spray*.

Q: What did the judge say when the skunk walked into the courtroom?
A: *Odor* in the court!

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Upcoming Events:

Timberdash 5K Race Saturday, September 19, 10:30 a.m.—Noon

Join the Arboretum at this year's annual Timberdash 5K race! Come for a fun filled morning race through the trails of the Arboretum. Preregistration before Thursday, September 17th is only \$5. Register the day of the race for \$10. Registration includes snacks at the finish and an Arboretum bandana. Sign up on our website, or just click on the link below:

http://www.csbsju.edu/arboretum/arb_highlights/fall/Timberdash.htm

Involvement Welcome Fest '09 Tuesday, September 1, 5:00pm-7:00pm.

The Saint John's Arboretum will be a part of this free event to help students of CSB/SJU get involved. Each fall Student Activities hosts a fair for students to discover campus clubs, organizations, and the resources in our community. Over 1,000 students participate in this event—see you there!

Minnesota Natural History Lecture Series

Third Tuesday of the Month, September—May, 6:30—8 p.m.

Free—Arboretum members and students of all ages

\$5—Non-members/non-students

Fossils of Minnesota: Organisms Older than the Speaker Tuesday, September 15

Dr. Larry Davis, CSB/SJU professor of geology

Meet at the pendulum of the New Science Center of Saint John's University for the first lecture topic of the season.

If you would like to be on the volunteer e-mail list for the Arboretum, please e-mail arboretum@csbsju.edu.

We'll be in touch...

Your friends at the Arboretum

It's your backyard, so get out and play!

***Nature Notes is a weekly publication designed to keep you informed about exciting events offered by the Arboretum!

Saint John's Arboretum

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