

Plains Spotted Skunk Distribution and Threats

Summary Statement: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is assessing if the plains spotted skunk should be federally protected. We would like to know if you have ever encountered plains spotted skunks in your rehabilitation work and, if so, why the animals were brought to you (e.g., car strike, dog attack, orphaned young), so that we can learn more about the distribution of the subspecies and the threats they face. For more information, please review the detailed request for information below. Thank you!

Request for Information: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is currently evaluating the status of the plains spotted skunk (*Spilogale putorius interrupta*), in an effort to determine whether the subspecies is warranted for listing as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). To inform the listing decision, the USFWS is working with Texas A&M Natural Resources Institute (NRI) to conduct a Species Status Assessment (SSA), which will be the biological underpinning of the USFWS's forthcoming decision on whether the plains spotted skunk may warrant protection under the ESA.

In order to conduct this SSA, Texas A&M NRI and USFWS are currently mapping the distribution/range of plains spotted skunks and are evaluating potential threats to the subspecies. **We are asking wildlife rehabilitators in Arkansas, Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, Wisconsin, or Wyoming to share any of the following plains spotted skunk information that you may have to assist in this process:**

1. County-level location from which plains spotted skunk patient(s) originated. This is the locality that the animal was found, not the address of the finder or the wildlife rehabilitator providing care.
2. Reason for admittance (e.g., hit by car, dog attack, orphaned young, canine distemper).
3. Any condition notes related to the patient while in your care.
4. For patients that were released or relocated, county-level release location and year of release.

Please refer to the image below to ensure that the records you are sharing with us are for plains spotted skunks. The plains spotted skunk is a subspecies of eastern spotted skunk. They are smaller and more slender than striped skunks, have multiple white stripes across their body, and have one patch of white fur on their forehead and in front of each ear. The range of plains spotted skunks overlaps with that of western spotted skunks in Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Oklahoma, and Texas. In comparison to the western spotted skunk, the plains spotted skunk has less white coloration overall, a smaller white forehead path, and less white on its tail tip (1/4 or less of the tail length).

We'll accept information in any digital form (e.g., excel files, datasheets, word doc.s) and can sign a data sharing agreement whenever requested. Please send any plains spotted skunk information to Bonnie Gulas-Wroblewski (bonnie.gulas@ag.tamu.edu), cc'ing USFWS lead biologist Vona Kuczynska (plainsspottedskunk@fws.gov). We greatly appreciate your interest in and assistance with this SSA! Please don't hesitate to contact Bonnie with any questions or concerns you have regarding our request, the SSA process, and/or plains spotted skunks in general. **Thank you again!**



Western Spotted Skunk
(*Spilogale gracilis*)

1. Large extent of white fur on body
2. Large white patch on forehead
3. White tail tip is more than 1/4 length of tail



Plains Spotted Skunk
(*Spilogale putorius interrupta*)

1. Reduced white coloration on body
2. Small white patch on forehead
3. White tail tip is absent or less than 1/4 length of tail
4. Multiple white markings across body, including a white patch on forehead and in front of both ears



Striped Skunk
(*Mephitis mephitis*)

1. Generally two white stripes along dorsal extent
2. Usually thin white line of fur from nose to forehead
3. Patches of white fur absent in front of ears