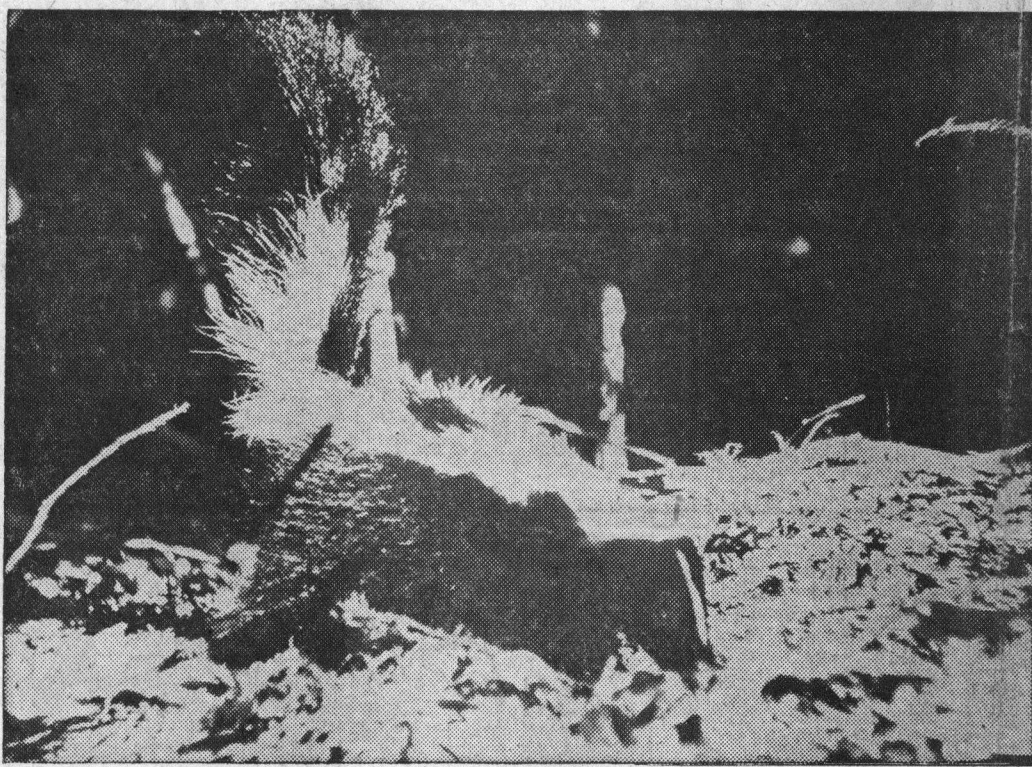


## Skunk Is 'Pretty' Animal



### *Along The Trail* by ken legg

As a naturalist now, I observe and study plants or animals only because I am curious about their ways of life. All I wish to collect is a stock of information, or maybe a photograph. But, there was a time, as a kid, when I had other practical uses for certain animals. My present use is just as real as that one years ago. Then, I was interested in a skunk because I wanted the dollars that his skin would bring.

So, I learned his ways, the better to catch him, and set my traps in holes in the ground, under rock cliffs or under abandoned buildings. I killed him and sold his skin to another trapper on the mountain, and got \$5 if he happened to be an all-black one.

The resource was being utilized. A skunk in one of my traps was an expendable item. Now, because of something that I have seen of learned or thought, I no longer like to think about trapping an animal and stealing his coat. There are other ways I can earn a living—I'm not that hard up.

In the intervening years since I was in the fifth grade, I have had two encounters with skunks which stand out in my memory.

for supper, for the skunk feeds on these small creatures, as well as upon fruit, eggs and the flesh of larger animals.

There are four kinds of skunks in North America, but the two most commonly known are the striped skunk and the spotted skunk. The striped has a wider range than the spotted but both are familiar.

When we think of this animal, the first thing that comes to mind is their odor-producing habit. This has led them to be called polecats, a name which is erroneous.

Their ability to produce an offensive odor is their means of defense against enemies. Two sac-like glands under the skin at the base of the tail contain the evil-smelling oil. Contrary to popular belief, skunks do not throw this oil with their tails although the tail is lifted to avoid diverting the squirted stream.

Skunks are found throughout North America except in the Arctic, but they prefer open country or low growth to forest areas. They thrive amongst, and even seem to have a liking for humans and their habitations and often take up quarters under barns and other out build-

The skunk is portrayed by Author-Photographer Ken Legg as a pretty animal which never bothers anything or anybody unless it is molested, but the consensus of most people is that the skunk never will be able to win many popularity contests.

### SCHS Students Do Well At UC

Thirteen Santa Cruz high school graduates who entered the University of California at Berkeley in the fall of 1955 maintained above average grades, Principal Lee T. Sims announced Friday afternoon.

They came through with a 1.5 average. Other high school entrants from throughout the state recorded a 1.41 mark. The students are Dorothy Beardsley, Donald Binsacca, Allan Cornick, John DeBenedetti, Esther Frizza, Bruce Hansen, Gerold Mungai, Kenneth Olsen, Weston Pringle, Christine Roen, Michael Kuffel, Lawrence Stickles and Frank Southey.

Sims explained that the three-year average of the former Santa Cruz high students was 1.6, above the state average of 1.4 for other UC students throughout the state.

The principal pointed out that Santa Cruz high students have always been above average at UC.

coat. There are other ways I can earn a living—I'm not that hard up.

In the intervening years since I was in the fifth grade, I have had two encounters with skunks which stand out in my memory. One was on a drizzly, dreary day in West Virginia when I was out walking.

The birds were not abroad and I seemed to be alone, walking down the fence line, through fallen, brown leaves. It was one of those times when one feels completely solitary; the day is so bad that nothing, "nor nobody", is out, a day when you can think without interruption.

Becoming aware of another animal is sometimes startling, but this time it was a quiet affair. Only the faintest rustle made me look ahead, down the fence line, and as I did I saw a skunk proceeding along the same route and at about the same speed. I hastened my step a little, but cautiously so, and soon came close behind him and followed without his knowledge.

I remember that he seemed to be such a peaceful and unsuspecting creature. He seemed alone in his world, too. His gait was snail-like, aimless, yet somehow of importance. I thought of him as utterly stupid in a pretty sort of way.

It was so valuable finding him here in this rain drenched world that I felt a shame because of all his brethren that I had slain. I imagine he had a thought or two, also, in his tiny head, but I suspect it concerned prospects of a food item under the leaves he was overturning.

Only two times in all of my many wanderings in the fields and woods have I ever come upon skunks, unnoticed. But then, he seems to be such a stupid fellow that I can hardly see how anyone could encounter him in any other way. I remember an evening, half-day, half-dark, in a field near Antioch when I met another that reacted the same as my West Virginia friend. Muzzle down, he plodded on along his seemingly unconcerned way, the picture of an animal minding no one's business but his own. Probably he was looking for some insect

the Arctic, but they prefer open country or low growth to forest areas. They thrive amongst, and even seem to have a liking for humans and their habitations and often take up quarters under barns and other out buildings.

Grass-lined nests are made in holes which they dig themselves or which have been dug by woodchucks. They do some hunting for food in the afternoon but are most active at night. In colder climates skunks go underground and sleep, living on an accumulation of stored fat. Warm days, when the ground thaws or it rains, bring them out.

The striped skunk is basically black with varying amounts of white on the back. Hair of the smaller, spotted skunk is more silky than the harsh fur of his striped relative. The white areas are not well defined but are more or less scattered into spotty or patchy arrangements, thus leading to the common name of spotted skunk.

Skunks are pretty animals. If unmolested they do not use their defense mechanism but go along their plodding way, never bothering anything or anybody.

the Suez canal brought 76 million pounds of tea and 16 million pounds of black pepper from the Orient to the United States.

