

NATURE

media information



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NATURE RAISES ITS NOSE TO ASK IS THAT SKUNK?

New Film From THIRTEEN Premieres This January On PBS

It's a familiar but mysterious creature in woods and neighborhoods all across America. Its infamous weapon is one of the most awful scents in all of nature. Now, intrepid researchers and cameramen track skunks day and night across California, New Mexico, Ohio, even Martha's Vineyard, uncovering how they hunt, forage, mate, and raise amazingly cute baby skunks – all the things they're up to when they're not spraying the local dog. And yes, the remarkable secrets of that stink will be revealed!

THIRTEEN's *Nature: Is That Skunk?* premieres nationally Sunday, January 25 at 8 p.m. (ET) on PBS (check local listings).

“There's more to skunks than meets the nose,” says Fred Kaufman, executive producer of THIRTEEN's *Nature* series. “The truth is they are actually sensitive, communal creatures with little interest in interacting with anyone.”

The one man born for the job of unraveling the potent mystery is evolutionary biologist Jerry Dragoo of the University of New Mexico. As an undergraduate, about twenty-five years ago, his assignment was to trap and analyze skunks. Dragoo sat by the cage patiently with one of his captured creatures, when suddenly he felt a drizzle, like rain. His subject had both ends pointed at

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him, yet there was no telltale smell. That was, until Dragoo returned to class a couple of days later and was kicked out of the building. It turns out that Dragoo's skunk was indeed "fully loaded," but its researcher had virtually no sense of smell!

Much like Dragoo, skunks are in a class by themselves. Often mistaken as relatives of the weasel, DNA studies have shown they're from their own unique family branch of carnivores dubbed *Mephitidae*, after a word meaning "stink." While people are most familiar with the striped skunk, three other species live in North America – the hog nosed, hooded and spotted skunks. Dragoo has studied them all.

Nature: Is that Skunk? is a production of John Rubin Productions, Inc. and THIRTEEN in association with WNET.ORG for PBS. Fred Kaufman is Executive Producer; William Grant is Executive-in-Charge. Major corporate support for *Nature* is provided by Canon U.S.A., Inc. and SC Johnson. Additional support is provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the nation's public television stations. Available in HD. Academy Award-winning actor F. Murray Abraham narrates.

Nature has won more than 450 honors from the television industry, the international wildlife film communities, and environmental organizations – including 10 Emmys, three Peabodys and the first award given to a television program by the Sierra Club. Most recently, the series won a Peabody Award for *Silence of the Bees*.

Nature video podcasts, available on iTunes and at *Nature Online* (www.pbs.org/nature), range from two to 10 minutes in length and feature behind-the-scenes interviews with filmmakers and producers, program excerpts, and outtakes.

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