

CURRENT DISTRIBUTIONAL STATUS OF THE STRIPED SKUNK, *MEPHITIS MEPHITIS*, IN BAJA CALIFORNIA, MEXICO

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ABSTRACT.—We provide information on recent records of the 2 subspecies of striped skunk occurring in the north-eastern (*Mephitis mephitis estor*) and northwestern (*M. m. holzneri*) region of Baja California, Mexico. Most of the recent records for these subspecies come from valleys and suburban zones.

RESUMEN.—Aportamos registros recientes para las dos subspecies del zorrillo rayado *Mephitis mephitis* que ocurren en el noreste (*M. m. estor*) y noroeste (*M. m. holzneri*) de Baja California, México. La mayoría de los registros recientes de estas subspecies provienen de los valles y zonas suburbanas.

The striped skunk, *Mephitis mephitis* Schreber, 1776, is a medium-sized mustelid ranging in total length from 520 to 770 mm and in weight from 1.8 to 4.5 kg (Feldhamer et al. 2003). It has a triangular head, and the pelage is entirely black with a bifurcate white dorsal stripe that runs from the nose to the tail (Wade-Smith and Verts 1982). The striped skunk is widely distributed in North America and occurs throughout southern Canada, the United States, and northern Mexico (Wade-Smith and Verts 1982, Álvarez-Castañeda 2000), primarily at elevations below 1800 m above sea level (Grinnell et al. 1937, Reid and Helgen 2008), but records extend as high as 4200 m (Nelson 1930). The species is found commonly in woodlands, brushlands, open fields, rocky outcrops, and riparian habitats (Baker 1956, Wade-Smith and Verts 1982) and can be abundant in agricultural fields (Hamilton and Whitaker 1979). It is opportunistically omnivorous but feeds primarily on insects (Verts 1967, Reid and Helgen 2008).

At least 13 subspecies of *Mephitis mephitis* have been recognized (Hall 1981, Feldhamer et al. 2003), of which 3 are known to occur in Mexico: *M. m. estor* in northeastern Baja California, Sonora, Chihuahua, and Durango;

M. m. holzneri in northwestern Baja California (Huey 1964, Alvarez-Castañeda 2000); and *M. m. varians* in Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon, and Tamaulipas (Hall 1981). The distributions of the 2 subspecies reported for Baja California, however, have not been well documented or updated recently. *Mephitis mephitis estor* has been reported from only one locality in northeastern Baja California (Pozo de Vicente) on the basis of a single specimen (cf. Alvarez-Castañeda 2000). Since then, no records of the subspecies for Baja California have been published. *Mephitis mephitis holzneri* was described by Mearns (1897) from a specimen collected at San Isidro Ranch, Lower California (Baja California), near the United States–Mexico border. Huey (1964) commented that the southernmost known occurrence of subspecies *holzneri* is along the Santo Domingo River just north of San Quintín. Also, Alvarez-Castañeda (2000) pointed out that this subspecies has not actually been collected in Baja California, as the identification of the San Isidro Ranch (= San Ysidro) as located in the territory under Mexican jurisdiction was erroneous.

The 2 subspecies known in Baja California are distinguishable in cranial measurements

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