

LEVELED BOOK • N

# Nature Stinks!



**Multi  
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H•K•N**

Written by Kira Freed

[www.readinga-z.com](http://www.readinga-z.com)

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## Focus Question

How does being stinky help plants and animals?



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## Stinky Nature

If you've ever smelled a skunk, you know it is not a nice **odor**. In fact, it's terrible!

Did you know that both plants and animals can smell bad? **Stinky** plants usually smell bad to attract insects that help them **reproduce**.



Animals give off odors to attract mates and keep other animals away. Whether plant or animal, nature's smelliest living things use odors to help them survive.

Skunks are famous for their disgusting odor, but some animals smell even worse!

## Stinky Furry Animals

Skunks are probably the most famous smelly animals. They use their odor to keep enemies away. When an enemy gets near, a skunk growls and stomps its feet. If that doesn't scare the enemy away, look out! The skunk lifts its tail and sprays a terrible-smelling **liquid**. The liquid shoots out from the area near the base of its tail.



In addition to spraying, a striped polecat may also bark and fluff up its tail to scare enemies.

Striped polecats may smell even worse than their skunk cousins. A striped polecat's spray can cause burning pain.





A lesser anteater has rough fur. The fur pushes ants away when an anteater attacks an anthill.

Skunks and striped polecats aren't the only stinky furry animals. The lesser anteater is four times stinkier than a skunk! It, too, shoots a smelly liquid from the area near the base of its tail.

Then there's the opossum. An opossum will pretend to be dead—called “playing possum”—if an enemy is near. It stays still and releases stinky green slime.



Opossums are cousins of kangaroos and other pouched animals.



Wolverines, the largest weasels on land, can smell the animals they hunt hidden under twenty feet of snow.

A smelly liquid marks the spot where a wolverine has been. A wolverine, or “nasty cat,” also pees on saved food before hiding it. The smell helps the wolverine find the food later and keeps other animals from eating it.



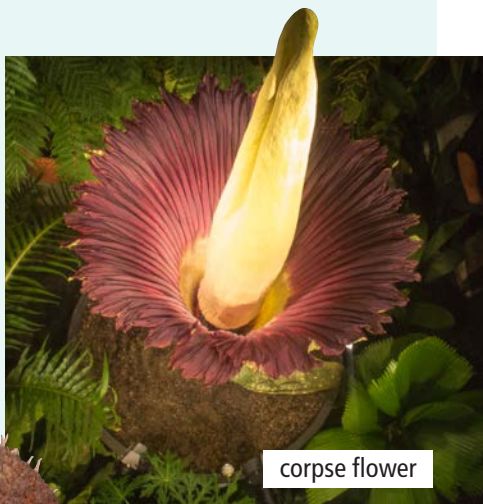
Musk oxen have two layers of hair to keep them safe from the cold. They shed the undercoat when winter ends.

The release of **scent** can be a warning as well. Male musk oxen fight each other to mate with females. Males use their stinky urine to tell other males to keep away. The urine sticks to their long belly hair and makes them smell terrible.



## Stinky Plants

The corpse flower is the world's smelliest flower. This plant smells like rotting flesh. The plant's disgusting smell brings flies and beetles that eat rotting animals. These insect visitors don't find the food they're looking for, but they pick up pollen. When the insects visit other corpse flowers, they spread the pollen and help corpse flowers reproduce. These flowers also make their own heat and steam to help their odor spread far and wide.



corpse flower



stinking root parasite

The stinking root parasite doesn't smell like rotting flesh—it smells like poop! This African plant's unpleasant smell comes from inside its flowers. The smell brings dung beetles, which pollinate it. (*Dung* is another word for poop. Dung beetles love dung!)



Hoatzins do not fly often, even though they can.

## **Stinky Birds**

The hoatzin (wat-SEEN) is the real name for the “stinkbird.” This bird mainly eats leaves. The food breaks down in the bird’s crop (the area under its throat) before reaching its stomach. This way of eating makes the hoatzin smell awful.

Vultures are used to bad odors. After all, their diet consists of the stinky flesh of dead animals. When an enemy is near, vultures throw up! The stuff they vomit is extra nasty. It contains **rotten** meat and stomach acid strong enough to cause burns.



A vulture's strong stomach acid keeps it healthy when it eats rotten meat.



Bombardier beetles make two chemicals inside their body. When the chemicals mix, they explode!

## Stinky Bugs

Some bugs also use odor to stay safe. The bombardier beetle can't fly to escape its enemies, so it has a strong weapon. It can release a hot cloud of stinky, deadly spray. It's hot enough to kill many enemies and burn humans.





Many types of millipedes give off a smelly liquid when touched. This liquid can make skin burn or itch.

What millipedes lack in speed,  
they make up for in stink.

Millipedes can't move fast, so  
they need a different way to stay  
safe. If an enemy comes near, they  
curl up and give off a stinky liquid.  
Some millipedes even shoot the  
smelly stuff.

## Other Stinky Animals

The common musk turtle has another name—stinkpot! It smells bad when other animals disturb it. A stinky yellow liquid comes out of the back of its body.



The common musk turtle can live for forty to sixty years.



A female mink frog may lay 500 to 4,000 eggs at one time.

The mink frog uses scent to keep enemies away as well. Its stink has been compared to rotten onions. It gives off this

nasty smell to stay safe from other animals.

## Protecting the Nest

The green woodhoopoe lives in Africa south of the Sahara Desert. The female uses odor to protect her nest. She sprays a dark, stinky liquid to keep enemies away.



## Good and Stinky

Being stinky helps many plants and animals stay alive. For plants, the odor brings insects that help them reproduce. For animals, the odor often helps keep enemies away. It can also help an animal eat food or get mates. Stinky steam, spray, vomit, slime, and urine are some of nature's smelly ways of helping living things survive.

## Glossary

<b>liquid</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	something that is capable of flowing and changing shape while keeping its size (p. 5)
<b>odor</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the scent or smell of something (p. 4)
<b>reproduce</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	to make offspring that are similar to the original living thing (p. 4)
<b>rotten</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	very bad or unpleasant (p. 11)
<b>scent</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a smell, especially a pleasant one (p. 8)
<b>stinky</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	having a strong or bad smell (p. 4)



## Words to Know

liquid

rotten

odor

scent

reproduce

stinky

Front cover: The corpse flower's first bloom doesn't happen for at least seven years. The flower only stays open for a day or two.

Title page: Brown stinkbugs, originally from Asia, were first discovered in the United States in the 1990s. They spray a smelly liquid when disturbed.

Page 3: The Tasmanian devil smells just fine when it's calm. However, when in danger, it produces a strong odor from glands near the base of its tail.

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*A Reading A-Z Level N Leveled Book*

*Word Count: 582*



## Connections

### Writing and Art

Which animal from this book do you find most interesting? Why? Draw a picture and write several sentences about it.

### Science

Compare and contrast two animals from this book. Make a list of how these animals are alike and how they are different. Share your list with a partner.

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