GENUS MEPHITIS.—Cuv.

DENTAL FORMULA.

$$\text{Incisive } \frac{6}{6}; \text{ Canine } \frac{1-1}{1-1}; \text{ Molar } \frac{4-4}{5-5} = 34.$$

Canine teeth, very strong, conical; two small anterior cheek-teeth, or false molars, above, and three below, on each side. The superior tuberculous teeth, very large, as broad as they are long; inferior molars having two tubercles on the inner side.

Head, short; nose, somewhat projecting; snout, in most of the species blunt.

Feet, with five toes; toes of the fore-feet, armed with long, curved nails, indicating the habit of burrowing in the earth; heel very little raised in walking.

Hairs on the body, usually long, and on the tail, very long.

The anal glands secrete a liquor which is excessively fetid. The various species of this genus burrow in the ground, or dwell in fissures of rocks, living on poultry, bird's eggs, small quadrupeds, and insects. They move slowly, and seldom attempt to run from man, unless they chance to be near their burrows. They are to a considerable extent gregarious; large families being occasionally found in the same hole.

In the recent work of Dr. LICHTENSTEIN, (Ueber die Gattung Mephitis, Berlin, 1838,) seventeen species of this genus are enumerated, one of which is found at the Cape of Good Hope, two in the United States of America, and the remainder in Mexico and South America.

The generic name Mephitis, is derived from the Latin word *Mephitis*, a strong odour.

Audubon, John James and Bachman, John. 1851. "Genus Mephitis." *The quadrupeds of North America* 1, 316–316. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.322435>.

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