

## Keeping Cats Indoors!

Scientists estimate that free-roaming domestic cats kill hundreds of millions of birds, and three times as many other small wildlife each year in the U.S. Cats are able to reproduce quickly and are efficient, non-native predators.

Ground nesting and feeding birds, as well as nestlings and fledgling birds of many species, are particularly at risk. In the U.S., cats kill endangered species such as the Piping Plover, California Least Tern, and San Clemente Loggerhead Shrike. Cats also kill native small mammals key to maintaining ecosystems and a vital food source for raptors such as Great Horned Owls, Red-Tailed Hawks, and American Kestrels.

There are over 77 million pet cats in the U.S. Additionally, millions of stray and feral cats roam cities, suburbs, farmlands and natural areas. Stray and feral cats are victims of human irresponsibility through abandonment and failure to spay or neuter pets. These cats lead short, miserable lives.

American Bird Conservancy's Cats Indoors! Campaign seeks to educate cat owners and the public that cats and wildlife benefit when cats are kept indoors. Some commonly held myths about cats and birds include:

**Well-fed Cats Do Kill Birds.** Well-fed cats kill birds and other wildlife because the hunting instinct is independent of the urge to eat.

**Cats With Bells on Their Collars Do Kill Birds** - studies have shown that bells on collars are not effective in preventing cats from killing birds or other wildlife.

**Most Birds That May Escape Don't Survive** - cats carry many types of bacteria and viruses in their mouths, some of which can be transmitted to their victims. Even if treated immediately, only about 20% of these survive the ordeal.

**Cat Colonies Are a Problem for Birds and Other Wildlife** - groups often form around a food source, and cat populations can grow very quickly, have significant impacts on wildlife populations, and cause significant health risks to other cats, wildlife, and humans.

The only way to prevent domestic cat predation on wildlife is for owners to keep their cats indoors, on a harness and leash, or in a covered outdoor enclosure. For more information about the Cats Indoors! Campaign, see [www.abcbirds.org/cats](http://www.abcbirds.org/cats).

## Free Roaming Stray and Feral Cats

The overpopulation of free-roaming cats is a human-caused tragedy that affects the health and welfare of cats and our native wildlife. Outdoor cats, even well-fed ones, kill hundreds of millions of wild birds and other animals each year in the U.S., including

endangered species. Birds that nest or feed on the ground are especially vulnerable to cat attacks.

Programs that promote Trap, Neuter, and Release (TNR) of stray and feral cats into “managed” colonies are not humane to the cats or the wildlife they kill, and they do not solve the cat overpopulation problem. Free-roaming cats are in constant danger from being hit by cars, contracting diseases and parasites, or being attacked by other animals or people. Cats can transmit diseases to humans such as rabies, toxoplasmosis, and cat scratch fever. In the U.S., cats are the top carrier of rabies in domestic animals.

Not all the cats in TNR programs can be trapped and the cat food attracts more cats. Colonies often become dumping grounds for unwanted pets, thus continuing the inhumane cycle. In addition, the cat food attracts rats, raccoon, opossum, skunk, fox, and coyote--all predators of birds and carriers of diseases, such as rabies, which can be transmitted to humans.

People concerned about these cats should work to find homes for the unwanted pets and educate pet owners about keeping their cats indoors. Through the Cats Indoors! Campaign, American Bird Conservancy, and its many partners, encourage people to keep their cats indoors, train them to go outside on a harness and leash, or build outdoor cat enclosures. Cats should be spayed or neutered before they can produce an unwanted litter, and should never be abandoned because it is illegal in many states and cruel to cats, birds, and other wildlife.

For more information, see [www.abcbirds.org/cats](http://www.abcbirds.org/cats).