

CATS AND BIRDS

THE DILEMMA

Many cat owners value giving their cats unsupervised outdoor time for a variety of reasons. However, hazards of this, both to cats and local ecosystems, are often underestimated.

- Outdoor cats face dangers such as traffic and getting lost. In fact, thousands of cats are killed by cars every year in Canada.
- Even non-aggressive cats may be attacked or drawn into fights with other cats and risk severe injury or spread of disease. Cats are also the primary carrier of rabies among domestic animals.
- Unsupervised pets are viewed as food by some wildlife who live within city limits, such as Coyotes and Great Horned Owls. Wild animals don't distinguish between pets and their wild prey, and the cities are as much their home as ours.

EFFECTS ON WILDLIFE

Cats are cherished and valued companions, but birds are valuable for both the environment and the economy. Birds play a major role in insect control and bird watching is a multi-million dollar industry.

- Some bird populations have declined >90% between 2001 and 2017, including right here in Edmonton. There are many natural and anthropogenic factors affecting this decline (habitat loss and window collision) but predation by cats is the leading cause of songbird deaths.
- Domesticated, well-fed cats still pose a danger to songbird populations because their hunting action is instinctive. Neurologically, their desire to hunt and sense of hunger are not connected.

QUICK FACTS

According to catsandbirds.ca,

- Twice as many cats are put into shelters as dogs, with only 10% returning home.
- In 2017, research indicates around 1,300 dead cats were collected off of Toronto streets.



Photo: Matthew Sakiestewa Gilbert

- Environment Canada research estimates 130-433 million birds die annually as a result of people.
- It is thought that cats are the cause of approximately 75% of bird deaths.

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KEEP YOUR CAT HAPPY AND HEALTHY

Indoor cats live longer, healthier lives than outdoor cats. If you have a pet cat, there are a few things you can do to protect their well-being:

- Spay or neuter your cat and keep them indoors. Especially during bird migration and breeding seasons.
- If you let your cat outside, consider training them on a leash or harness, or keeping them in a “catio” (an enclosed patio for cats).
- Make or buy a cat tree or kitty condo, creating an indoor space next to a window where your cat can enjoy watching the outdoors and sunshine.
- Switch out toys and play with your cat regularly to keep them interested and entertained.

IF YOU HAVE UNWANTED CATS IN YOUR YARD

While cats are allowed on public land and their owners property, they are not allowed on other private land without permission.

- Talk to your neighbor cat owner about care practices and local regulations. Information about dangers to their pets, and regulations surrounding them, may be appreciated.
- Deter cats from your yard utilizing sound, water and other deterrents. Rent a deter kit from the Animal Care & Control Centre (ACCC) in Edmonton. You can also borrow a cat trap, and admit them to the city.
- As a last resort, make a bylaw complaint, which may result in the owner receiving a fine.

WHAT IS BEING DONE IN EDMONTON

There are approximately 65,000 homeless cats in Edmonton.

Edmonton offers reduced fees for licensing cats that are spayed or neutered, and cats must be licensed if they are allowed to be outdoors unsupervised.

Nature Albertas Keep Cats Safe & Save bird lives Initiative is raising awareness of these issues in Edmonton and throughout Alberta.



Photo: Gerald Romanchuk

WHAT CAN YOU DO

Help make your community a safer place for cats and birds by joining the movement through Nature Alberta. Take the pledge and learn more at www.catsandbirds.ca.