

Red Deer River Naturalists Statement Regarding Domestic Cats February 25, 2021

Scientists with the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have recently declared that cat predation is the most serious of all human-caused bird mortalities worldwide. More birds die from house cat predation than from all other human impacts combined (e.g., window collisions, buildings, communication towers, vehicle collisions and pesticide poisoning).

Unlike natural predator-prey interactions, where the species have co-evolved, feral and free-ranging domestic cats are a new and additive mortality. Domestic cats are very adept at killing adult, nestling and fledgling birds (especially ground-dwelling species), as well as a wide range of reptiles, amphibians and small mammals.

It is estimated that 100 to 350 million birds are killed annually in Canada by five to 10 million outdoor cats. Unfortunately, native birds make up the majority of cat prey species.

Research has shown that bells and declawing are ineffective, and that cats kill whether or not they are hungry, because their hunting instinct is always active. Birds rescued after being caught by a cat are still likely to die since the resulting skin punctures allow the transfer of harmful bacteria.

Studies conclude that both cats and wildlife will be protected if cats are kept indoors, or outdoors on a tether or in a cat run. Not only will these practices save local wildlife, but they also allow cats to live longer, happier and healthier lives.

In consideration of the foregoing, the Red Deer River Naturalists Society urges the City of Red Deer and cat owners to adopt appropriate measures to control free-roaming house cats.

References:

American Bird Conservancy, *Outdoor Cats: Single Greatest Source Of Human-Caused Mortality For Birds And Mammals, Says New Study* [Available: <https://abcbirds.org/article/outdoor-cats-single-greatest-source-of-human-caused-mortality-for-birds-and-mammals-says-new-study/>]

Blancher, Peter, (2013) *Estimated Number of Birds Killed by House Cats (Felis catus) in Canada*, *Avian Conservation and Ecology* 8(2): 3. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5751/ACE-00557-080203> [Available: <http://www.ace-eco.org/vol8/iss2/art3/>]

Cats Indoors Program of the American Bird Conservancy [Available: <http://abcbirds.org/cats-indoors/>]

Loss, Scott R. *et al*, (2013) *The impact of free-ranging domestic cats on wildlife of the United States*, *NATURE COMMUNICATIONS* 4:1396 | DOI: 10.1038/ncomms2380 | www.nature.com/naturecommunications. [available: https://abcbirds.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Loss_et_al_2013-Impacts_Outdoor_Cats.pdf]

Pearman, Myrna. 2015. *Backyard Bird Feeding: An Alberta Guide*. Ellis Bird Farm.