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The Trouble with Cats

They're soft and cuddly. They're America's favorite pets. They're also natural-born killers.

by Deborah Hufford

There's trouble in paradise, at times, usually, the paddled paws and mischievous tails, and brings terror to our peaceful felines and lapdogs. This sometimes tragic results out as in the quick, sudden. These so-called strays are played out in haunting remnants across the country, instead, around the world.

Cat-astrophe for Birds

The cumulative effect of domestic cat attacks on birds has contributed catastrophically to the decimation of several Asian species, especially those of our most beloved songbirds in North America. Numerous studies and various sources from the American Bird Conservancy, the Humane Society of the United States agree that cats kill hundreds of millions of birds annually in the U.S. Experts say worldwide avian mortality caused by cats could easily be in the billions.

According to Bird Conservation magazine, in New Zealand eight species of birds have become extinct and 40 species have been eliminated, largely due to cat predation.

In North America, cats most often kill common songbirds, such as the Northern Cardinal, Song Sparrow and Dark-eyed Junco. But there have been documented lists of endangered species, as well, California Least Tern, Piping Plover, Western Snowy Plover, California Kincaidplover and Light-colored Gullperch.

For Whom the Bell Tolls

There are cat owners who claim their beloved cats are well-fed, relatives don't kill wildlife. But studies confirm that they do indeed.

Yet cats can't be blamed for what comes instinctually to them. Millions of cat owners, including many farmers, World readers and staff, dearly love their cats. Their mischievous, curious and playful behavior—so endearing to cat-lovers—is born largely out of their evolutionary make-up as hunters. To watch even the most gentle house cat as the neat

of the hunt is frustrating, so the projected mortality, the feline that the average spend. Indeed, the feline is Catnip, indoors, 70 percent for our feathered friends.

Observing a cat to vomit from stress, perhaps or within a hour cannot only be cruel to the cat, but is often fatal. The Humane Society estimates that millions of cats die annually—killed over by cars, mangled by dogs, poisoned, trapped or lost to disease.

Domestic cats often live 12-15 years, whereas cats allowed outdoors live only an average of ten to five years. Exposure to pesticides, rodenticides, antifreeze and other poisons are major causes of premature death, as are a number of fatal diseases, such as distemper, feline leukemia virus and feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV), for which there is no vaccine.



Common Ground

We cannot ignore Nature's order so that the lion lies down with the lamb, the domestic cat with the wild bird. But, the chasm between the opposing worlds of cat and bird has been bridged through a unique collaboration of perhaps unlikely allies.

The American Bird Conservancy (ABC) has teamed up with The Humane Society of the United States and the American Humane Society in the "Cats Indooed" animal campaign to protect both birds and cats. The campaign, now in its third year, has designated May 12 as "National Keep Your Cat Indoors Day."

The organization seeks to educate and encourage cat and bird lovers to protect the animals they so dearly love and provides solutions in video and handouts. The campaign also is building a national poster contest for children to help raise awareness.

For more information on the ABC's "Cats Indooed: The Campaign for Safer Birds and Cats" campaign and what you can do to protect both, visit "Birding Basics," on page 22-24.

The Trouble with Cats

They're soft and cuddly. They're America's favorite pets. They're also natural-born killers.

By Deborah Hufford

Bird lovers and cat lovers are finding common ground and solutions to the violence against the creatures they love—feathered and furry.

There's trouble in paradise. It comes stealthily on padded paws and unsheathed claws and brings terror to our peaceable backyard kingdoms. The sometimes tragic results cut us to the quick, sicken us. These violent scenes are played out in stunning frequency across the country, indeed, around the world.

Cat-astrophe for Birds

The cumulative effect of domestic cat attacks on birds has contributed catastrophically to the decimation of certain avian species, especially some of our most beloved songbirds in North America. Numerous studies and various sources from the American Bird Conservancy to the Humane Society of the United States agree that cats kill hundreds of millions of birds annually in the U.S. Experts say worldwide avian mortality caused by cats could easily be in the billions.

According to *Bird Conservation* magazine, in New Zealand eight species of birds have become extinct and 40 species have been eliminated, largely due to cat predation.

In North America, cats most often kill common songbirds, such as the Northern Cardinal, Song Sparrow and Dark-eyed Junco. But there have been documented kills of endangered species, as well: California Least Tern, Piping Plover, Western Snowy Plover, California Gnatcatcher and Light-footed Clapper Rail.

For Whom the Bell Tolls

There are cat owners who claim that belled cats or well-fed felines don't kill wildlife. But studies confirm that they do indeed.

Yet cats can't be blamed for what comes instinctually to them. Millions of cat owners, including many *Bird-er's World* readers and staff, dearly love their cats. Their graceful feline beauty and playful behavior — so endearing to cat-lovers — is born largely out of their evolutionary make-up as hunters. To watch even the most gentle house cat in the heat

of the hunt *is* transfixing — the crouched intensity, the languid tail, the explosive speed. Indoors, this behavior is fascinating; outdoors, it's often fatal for our feathered friends.

Allowing a cat to roam free unsupervised or without a leash cannot only be cruel to the cat, but is often fatal. The Humane Society estimates that millions of cats die annually — run over by cars, mauled by dogs, poisoned, trapped or lost to disease.

Indoor cats often live 12-15 years, whereas cats allowed outdoors live only an average of two to five years. Exposure to pesticides, rodenticides, antifreeze and other poisons are major causes of feline death, as are a number of fatal diseases, such as distemper, feline leukemia, rabies and feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV), for which there is no vaccine.

Common Ground

We cannot rewrite Nature's script so that the lion lies down with the lamb, the domestic cat with the wild bird. But, the chasm between the opposing worlds of cat and bird *has* been bridged through a unique collaboration of perhaps unlikely allies.

The American Bird Conservancy (ABC) has teamed up with The Humane Society of the United States and the American Humane Society in the "Cats Indoors!" national campaign to protect both birds and cats. The campaign, now in its third year, has designated May 12 as "National Keep Your Cat Indoors Day."

The campaign seeks to educate and encourage cat and bird lovers to protect the animals they so dearly love and provides solutions by which cats and birds can co-exist peaceably and happily. The campaign also is holding a national poster contest for children to help raise awareness.

For more information on the ABC's "Cats Indoors! The Campaign for Safer Birds and Cats" campaign and what you can do to protect both, turn to "Birding Briefs," on page 22. 🐾

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