

*Buzzin' Around with the Hillsborough Garden Club*

*Outdoor Cats Endanger Birds and Other Wildlife*

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Predation by domestic cats is the number-one direct, human-caused threat to birds in the United States and Canada. In the US alone, outdoor cats kill approximately 2.4 billion birds every year. Although this number may seem unbelievable, it represents the combined impact of tens of millions of cats that are allowed to roam outdoors.

Although many of our cats are affectionate pets, they can hunt as effectively as wild predators. Domestic house cats are highly skilled hunters and outdoor cats living near or adjacent to natural areas are likely to prey on many of our nature neighbors. A domestic cat's drive to hunt is strong and even your well-fed cat will prey on local birds, small mammals, and reptiles if given the chance. With more than 70 million pet cats and over 60 million stray cats in the United States,

scientists estimate that cats are responsible for killing billions of wild animals each year, such as birds, reptiles, and small mammals such as rabbits, mice, voles or squirrels. Unsuspecting birds that benefit our gardens and natural areas by pollinating plants, spreading seeds, and controlling insects are often at risk of becoming prey of the predator-driven instinct of outdoor cats. California researchers studying the effects of cats in parks found that there were 50% fewer birds in a park with 25 cats compared to a park with no cats.

## Outside Dangers

Outdoor cats threaten birds and other wildlife and disrupt ecosystems, according to the

American Bird Conservancy. Outdoor cats are a recognized threat to

biodiversity and have contributed to the extinction of 63 species of

birds, mammals, and reptiles in the wild. According to a National

Audubon Society article, studies show that even well-fed cats will hunt

and kill outdoors and the mere presence of a cat in an outdoor area will

reduce successful bird nesting and chick health.

## Protect Our Pets and Our Birds

It is a dangerous world outside for your beloved pet. If your cat is roaming around the neighborhood he is at risk of being injured or killed by wild predators, domestic dogs, hit by a car, fighting with other cats, ingesting poisoning (from eating poisoned rodents), or contracting diseases. Pet cats allowed outside face many threats. Outdoor cats also become a nuisance to other people and their property as they roam the neighborhood. Many areas and cities have regulations disallowing cats to run loose. Keeping cats indoors is the best way to keep them safe.

Birds pollinate plants, spread seeds and control insects. Our birds are important to our

ecosystem and cats are an invasive species in the ecosystem. In addition to facts, numbers, and

scientific studies, common sense tells us that pet cats allowed to roam loose outside

are destructive to bird populations, can be pests, and also are exposed to dangerous outside

conditions. The solution to help solve these problems and to save our birds? Please keep your pet cat indoors.