

**AN INTEGRATED
APPROACH TO
BIRD CONSERVATION AND
CAT WELFARE**

**A GUIDE
FOR MUNICIPALITIES**



August 2018

Nature Canada is the oldest national nature conservation charity in Canada. Our mission is to protect and conserve wildlife and habitats in Canada by engaging people and advocating on behalf of nature. Learn more at www.naturecanada.ca.

Nature Canada works with partners across Canada to Keep Cats Safe & Save Bird Lives, including national partners Humane Canada, Bird Studies Canada, FLAP Canada and Earth Rangers. The program addresses cat predation of birds – a major cause of bird mortality in Canada’s urban and rural landscapes – in a positive and collaborative way. We believe that all animals are important, and humans we must protect both cats and birds.

Cats are at risk when they go outdoors unsupervised. Through improving our treatment of cats we, as a society, also limit their impact on the environment in general, and birds in particular. Visit our website at catsandbirds.ca to learn more and access municipal and public resources, or contact us at info@catsandbirds.ca for support for your community’s initiative to Keep Cats Safe & Save Bird Lives.

Nature Canada drew on the knowledge and resources of its partners to develop this document and is grateful for the contributions of the Stewardship Centre for British Columbia, the BC SPCA, and Humane Canada.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3
The Role of Municipalities	3
Best Practices for Municipalities Summary	4
Cat Bylaw & Policy Recommendations	
I. Restricting Pet Cats from Roaming at Large	5
II. Mandatory Spay/Neuter Bylaws	6
III. Low-cost Spay/Neuter Fund	7
IV. Cat Licensing and Identification	8
V. Limiting Pet Store Sales of Cats	9
VI. Homeless and Feral Cats	9
VII. Protection of Designated Areas of Environmental Significance	11
VII. Responsible Cat Ownership Education	12
Conclusion	13
References	14
Appendix 1: The Bird Crisis	15
Appendix 2: The Cat Crisis	16
Appendix 3: Sample Messaging	17
Appendix 4: Available Resources	19

INTRODUCTION

Keep Cats Safe & Save Bird Lives is a coalition of cat-care and nature organizations led by Nature Canada in collaboration with our national partners Birds Studies Canada, FLAP Canada, Humane Canada, Earth Rangers and more than 50 other national, regional and local partners. We developed this resource to help local governments navigate the interlocking issues of bird conservation and cat welfare. Several cat-care organizations have model animal bylaws and, while many aspects of those models are consistent with the need to conserve wildlife, they are primarily concerned with domestic animals. The recommendations presented here represent an effort to balance the needs of domestic animals and wildlife. (Animal welfare organizations also recommend other bylaws, including standards of care, which are consistent with those included here, but have no direct impact on birds.)

Included are recommendations for bylaws and policies regarding pet cats roaming at large, spay/neuter, identification, licensing, limitations on pet store sales, feral cat management, and public education programs. For more information and resources, contact Nature Canada's Keep Cats Safe & Save Bird Lives program at info@catsandbirds.ca.

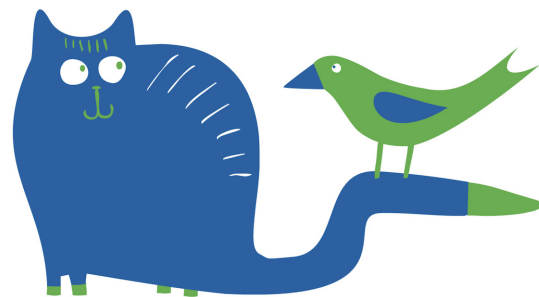
THE ROLE OF MUNICIPALITIES

Increasingly, both pet owners and municipalities recognize the importance of keeping pet cats from roaming for the benefit of the cats themselves, the overall cat overpopulation issue, wildlife, the environment, and their communities. (For an overview of the bird crisis, please see Appendix 1. For an overview of the cat overpopulation crisis, and the welfare issues for outdoor cats, please see Appendix 2.) But Humane Canada's *Cats in Canada 2017* report notes that only 38% of municipalities surveyed perceive there to be a cat overpopulation problem in their communities, versus 100% of rescues, SPCAs and humane societies (Humane Canada, 2017).

Pet cats allowed to roam at large can contribute to the feral cat population if not spayed or neutered and/or be mistaken for unowned cats and picked up by members of the public or animal control officers. Allowing them to roam can result in complaints about yowling or defecating in gardens. Ideally, roaming pet cats would not be taken to shelters at all, but simply returned home to their owners, but that is only feasible if the cats are wearing identification.

Community impacts of allowing cats to roam include, not only conflict between neighbours, but also public health risks. Cat feces in gardens, children's play areas and parks can increase the risk of diseases and parasites in the community. (*Toxoplasma gondii* is a parasite carried by cats that can be transmitted to humans, mainly through contact with cat feces. While it has no effect on most people, it can affect those with weak immune systems and newborn infants, which is why pregnant women are advised to avoid cleaning kitty litter boxes.)

Most Canadian communities have dog control bylaws, but cats are often permitted to roam because of a perception that they are independent or that it's natural for them. Not only is the practice dangerous for the cats – cars are a leading cause of



death for cats, especially young cats (Olsen, 2010) – it ignores the fact that domestic cats are not a natural part of ecosystems in North America. When prey and predator evolve alongside each other, each develops adaptive mechanisms, and when the population of prey drops, the population of the predator drops due to the reduction in their food supply. This is not true of companion animals, who are ‘subsidized’ by the care of their owners and were only introduced in North America in the last 500 years. As pets, cats are part of human society, and pets and wildlife need to be kept separate, for the benefit of both.

Two recent surveys indicate that between 59% and 72% of cat owners prevent their cats from roaming unsupervised, keeping them entirely indoors or allowing supervised time outdoors (Nature Canada, 2016; Humane Canada, 2017). A smaller percentage of the public is unaware of or downplays the impact of cats on wildlife and the nuisance factor of cats roaming outdoors, as well as overestimating a cat’s ability to deal with outdoor dangers. Many cities in Canada have now adopted responsible pet ownership bylaws – including Montreal, Mississauga, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Regina, Saskatoon, and Calgary – and many smaller communities, from Creston, BC, to the County of Kings, NS, have successfully implemented many of the recommendations below. Given the impacts on both cats and birds, it is imperative that we, as a society, improve the rate of responsible pet ownership practices and reduce the impact of cats on birds and other wildlife.

BEST PRACTICES SUMMARY

Cat population dynamics are complex, involving interactions between pet cats, stray cats, and feral cats. It is essential that any municipal effort to control the cat population includes strategies for all three segments. We recommend a collaborative community approach to developing a robust strategy to improve the welfare of cats, birds and other wildlife. Gathering the stakeholders – both nature and cat-care organizations – supports the development of consensus as to the best path forward, promotes helpful relationships between stakeholders and the exchange of crucial information, and allows for consistent messaging from everyone involved. Public education about the benefits of responsible cat ownership – for the cats, the owners, wildlife, and the community in general – is an essential element of any successful program to decrease the negative impacts of cats on wildlife and improve the welfare of the cats themselves.

Best Municipal Practices include:

- a plan to achieve change in their community, formulated in collaboration with cat-care and nature organizations, and including strategies for pet, stray, and feral cats
- a public education campaign about the benefits of responsible cat ownership for cats, wildlife and the community
- animals adopted from shelters are spayed or neutered prior to adoption (or if the animal is too young, a voucher is provided)
- retail stores being restricted from selling animals and instead facilitate adoptions from recognized animal rescues, shelters, SPCAs, or humane societies.
- Bylaws, including:
 - an accessible spay/neuter program
 - mandatory licensing /permanent identification
 - a no-roam bylaw (exempting loosely owned and feral cats)

- enforcement and compliance promotion based on education and promise to return lost pets
- identification and protection of natural areas that are significant to birds and wildlife and relocation of any feral cat colonies currently within or very close to those areas
- a feral cat-care strategy developed in concert with local organizations, with the goal of reducing the feral cat population and support for implementing the strategy
- public education to encourage spaying or neutering loosely owned and feral cats who people are feeding outside of formal feral cat-care programs

The gold standard for humane and progressive cat management in Canada – indeed, in most of the world – is found in Calgary, Alberta. These are the main features of Calgary’s model as they pertain to cats:

- a no-roam bylaw
- mandatory licensing for cats without permanent identification
- all animals adopted from shelters are spayed or neutered
- licensing fees and fines cover the cost of enforcement and sheltering
- strong public communications program about responsible pet ownership, and the benefits and importance of compliance (for individual cats, the overall cat population, and for the community);
- a school program to educate youth about responsible pet care
- encouraging compliance: the promise to return lost pets (licensing ensures your pet gets a ride home if they get lost) and a rewards program for license holders (discounts at local retailers)
- a proactive community relations / enforcement approach, helping neighbours resolve animal-related conflicts
- an accessible spay/neuter program
- a feral cat-care plan and program coordinated with a non-profit organization, with the goal of reducing the feral cat population.

Calgary took a staged approach, first introducing public education, then licensing, then the no-roam bylaw. For a more detailed case study of the Calgary model, including sample communications materials, please see: <http://catsandbirds.ca/blog/the-calgary-model/>

Below is an outline of our recommendations. Nature Canada is available to provide assistance to any Canadian municipality seeking to improve its approach. (Contact us at info@catsandbirds.ca.)

CAT BYLAW AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

(I) RESTRICTING PET CATS FROM ROAMING AT LARGE

Humane Canada and most other cat-care organizations strongly recommend that owners keep their cats from roaming at large, primarily for the well-being of the cats themselves. It’s important to note that bylaws that restrict owners from letting their cats roam at large do not altogether restrict cats from being outdoors. They simply require cat owners to adhere to the same standards of care as dog owners: to supervise their pets while they are outdoors. The owner can keep their cat on their own property (by using a cat fence or outdoor enclosure / “catio”), supervising their cat outdoors, or walking their cat using a leash.

“Nuisance” cat bylaws – bylaws which only oblige owners to prevent their cats from causing nuisance to neighbours – can be ineffective because the owner is often not aware of their cat’s behaviour. Similarly,

bylaws that simply restrict cats to the owner's property, but do not require owners to supervise their cats outdoors, are problematic because the cats may stray off property without the owner's knowledge.

No roaming at large bylaws help control pet cats, keeping them safe and preventing them from hunting birds and other wildlife. They also help control the population of stray cats by decreasing the number of lost pets. When owners are prevented from letting their cats roam unsupervised, any cat seen outdoors without an owner is more easily identified as stray or feral and can be cared for by a shelter or a feral cat-care organization, as appropriate. Additionally, if pet cats are allowed to roam but are not spayed or neutered, they may reproduce, adding to the cat overpopulation problem.

[Sample bylaw: Creston Bylaw 1704: section 4](#)

Every person who owns, harbours or possesses a cat shall ensure that the cat is not running at large. No cat shall be allowed off the premises of its owner except on a leash or contained within a carrier designed for the transportation of animals.

"At large, run at large, or running at large" means being elsewhere than on the premises of the owner of the cat, including public or other private property and not being under the care and control of the owner, either by being securely leashed, tethered or penned, or confined within a building or other enclosure.

[Sample bylaw: Hamilton Bylaw No. 12-031, Part 7](#)

PART 7.0 – Prohibiting Animals at Large, etc.

7.1 For the purposes of section 7.3, "animal" includes livestock or a horse.

7.2 For the purposes of subsection 7.3(b), "premises" does not include any part of:

- (a) non-residential or residential premises that serve as common areas for occupiers or owners; or
- (b) non-residential premises that are open to the public.

7.3 No owner of a dog, cat or other animal shall permit that the dog, cat or other animal to be at large, except when the dog, cat or other animal is: (a) on premises owned or occupied by the owner; or (b) on premises owned or occupied by a person who has given prior consent.

Notes:

- Public education is required to increase awareness of the benefits of preventing cats from roaming for the sake of cats, wildlife, and the community and to counter public resistance due to beliefs that it's natural for pet cats to roam or that they belong in nature.
- Indoor cats must be provided with adequate enrichment and exercise to keep them stimulated and to prevent obesity.
- Combining a no-roam bylaw with cat licensing and/or identification bylaw aids in the identification of the owners of roaming cats.
- Indoor cat owners and neighbours bothered by roaming cats are likely to support the bylaw.
- This kind of bylaw is most often enforced on a complaint basis, with an initial warning to the cat owner that they will face fines if they fail to comply.

II. MANDATORY SPAY/NEUTER BYLAWS

Cats breed prolifically, and municipalities can help improve spay/neuter rates for pet cats through public education and bylaws, effectively decreasing the ability of pets to contribute to cat overpopulation.

Spaying or neutering cats reduces nuisance behaviours, including spraying, fighting, and the noise associated with mating, and also reduces the instances of several diseases (BC SPCA, 2018).

Policies can stipulate that owners ensure pet cats over the age of six months are sterilized.

Municipalities can also ensure that any shelter they operate is subject to the same obligation. Any regulations governing shelters need to permit shelters to offer spay/neuter vouchers for any cat under 6 months, in order to lessen barriers to rehoming kittens.

Excessive cat populations have many negative costs to the community at large and the contribution made by unaltered owned cats, with outdoor access, to the cat overpopulation issue is significant. – BC SPCA, 2016

i) Sample mandatory spay/neuter by owner bylaw: Laval Reglement numero L-12430, 2017

Any dog or cat kept within the City must be sterilized. This article does not apply in the following cases:

1. when this procedure is contraindicated, according to the written opinion of a veterinary surgeon;
2. when the dog or cat is less than 6 months old or when sterilization is to be delayed according to the written opinion of a veterinarian;
3. when the dog or cat is used for breeding by a licensed breeder.

Notes:

- Cats can become fertile prior to six months of age, so a six-month maximum may not eliminate all unwanted pregnancies.
- There are economic barriers to sterilizing pets for low-income residents, so municipalities need to provide resources that support low cost spay/neuter services (see next section).
- Enforcement is often concentrated on lost pets rather than spay/neuter compliance due to the difficulty of assessing sterilization status on sight.

III. LOW-COST SPAY/NEUTER FUND

In addition to the spay/neuter regulations above, it is recommended that municipalities also increase access to spay/neuter by establishing a low-cost or subsidized spay/neuter fund. Some municipalities allocate pet licence fees to a dedicated fund that subsidizes veterinary fees at spay/neuter cat clinics. Some form relationships with local veterinarians to provide services at discounted rates. Larger cities with in-house veterinary services at their animal shelters may also offer discounted spay/neuter services to residents. Smaller municipalities may allocate these funds to animal welfare organizations that sponsor low-cost spay/neuter clinics.

Notes:

- Under this approach, spay/neuter surgeries are accessible to more pet owners, improving the welfare of their cats and limiting the contributions that pets make to the feral cat population.
- If low-cost spay/neuter regulations are combined with a licensing bylaw, revenues from licensing can support the fund.
- Low-cost spay/neuter funds can also be utilized by animal shelters and rescues.

IV. CAT LICENSING AND IDENTIFICATION

Mandatory licences and/or identification, through collar tags, microchips or tattooing, help in returning lost cats to their homes. Returning cats to their homes more quickly also reduces opportunities for predation of wildlife. Additionally, cat licensing builds more responsible pet ownership behaviour and, because licences allow for more effective management of pet cats and stray cats, they also help birds. As such, they are a recommended element of any municipal cat management strategy.

By improving return-to-owner rates, licensing and identification bylaws have beneficial effects for pet cats, local shelters, and the community. If there is also a no-roam bylaw in place, returning a lost pet to the owner can provide an opportunity for bylaw officials to educate the owner about the impact of letting their cat roam as well as impose fines or other penalties. In the absence of mandatory spay/neuter regulations, municipalities are encouraged to provide discounts on licence fees if the pet is sterilized.

While some cat owners may object to mandatory licensing because their cats stay indoors and therefore can't get lost, one study found that 41% of people looking for their lost cat considered them to be "indoor only" pets (Lord, 2007). The same study found that lost, neutered cats were more likely to be recovered, meaning that lost, sexually-intact cats are more likely to contribute to cat overpopulation. Licensing and identification bylaws may be introduced separately or together, and several municipalities exempt the licensing fee for cats with permanent identification.

[Sample Mandatory Identification Bylaw: City of Surrey Animal Control Bylaw 13844](#)

It shall be unlawful for any person to be an owner of a cat that is actually or apparently over six months of age unless the person maintains an identification worn by the cat.

"Identification" means: (1) a collar or tag worn by a cat which includes the current name, address and telephone number of the owner (2) a traceable tattoo; and (3) a traceable microchip.

[Sample Licence Bylaw: City of Toronto Bylaw 349-19](#)

Registration; licence tags. Every owner of a cat shall:

- A. Have registered the cat with the Executive Director, paid a licence fee in the amount specified in Chapter 441, Fees and Charges, and acquired a licence tag, including the payment of a licence fee in the amount specified in Chapter 441, Fees and Charges, for the cat.
- B. Until ceasing to be the owner of the cat, renew a licence for the cat prior to the expiration of each licence issued for the cat.
- C. Keep the cat licence tag securely fixed at all times on the cat for which the licence tag is issued.

Notes:

- Visible identification allows residents to identify the owners of a lost or nuisance-causing cat, but this kind of identification can become detached. Permanent identification (such as microchips and tattoos) can't become detached, but microchips require special equipment to read, and both require owners to keep their contact information up to date.
- Licensing systems can be integrated with microchip databases, such as the BC Pet Registry's integrated system.
- Licensing improves shelters' return-to-owner rates and generates revenue that can be directed to animal management.

- Discounted licensing fees for sterilized cats will encourage owners to spay or neuter their animals.
- Licensing works best when compliance is incentivized via discount programs and the promise to return lost cats.

V. LIMITING PET STORE SALES OF CATS

Restricting pet stores from selling cats will help to solve the cat overpopulation problem in a number of ways. Toronto, Ottawa, and Vancouver are among the many Canadian cities that have enacted legislation governing the sale of cats (and dogs and, in some cases, rabbits) in pet stores. This helps to prevent impulse buying, which can lead to the later surrender of the animal to a shelter, or worse, abandonment. The responsible sale or adoption of an animal involves substantial interaction between the potential owner and the shelter or responsible breeder, usually including a screening process, as well as education about welfare needs. Pet stores may also be a sales outlet for large-scale commercial cat breeders (which are typically unethical). Given the cat overpopulation problem, there is no need for large-scale breeding of cats.

We do not recommend restricting the sale of cats and dogs from responsible breeders, who are not “pet stores” or “large-scale commercial breeders”. For a definition of “responsible breeder”, please see https://www.humanecanada.ca/companion_animals_position.

Sample Bylaw: Toronto Licensing Bylaw 545, section 260

§ 545-260.1. Retailers to obtain animals from specified sources [Added 2011-09-22 by By-law 1163-2011]

Every retailer, including any person or business that sells more than 10 dogs per year, must obtain animals from one of the following sources only:

- A. municipal animal shelters;
- B. registered humane societies;
- C. registered shelters or rescue groups; or
- D. from people who have surrendered their pets to them at no charge.

§ 545-260.2. Pet shops to obtain animals from specified sources. [By-law 182-2013]

Every keeper of a pet shop must obtain cats and dogs from only the following sources:

- A. municipal animal shelters;
- B. registered humane societies;
- C. registered shelters; and
- D. rescue groups.

Notes:

- This approach discourages irresponsible breeders and impulse buying.
- At the time of adoption, shelters generally provide better screening processes for new owners than pet stores, as well as welfare education.
- This improves adoption rates at shelters.

VI. HOMELESS AND FERAL CATS

There is widespread consensus amongst humane societies, SPCAs and rescues that Canada has a cat overpopulation crisis, yet only 38% of Canadian municipalities perceive there to be a cat overpopulation

problem (Humane Canada, 2017). Talking to local cat-care organizations is a good way to determine whether your community has an issue.

Pet and feral cat populations interact (through both reproduction and straying), and any plan to address cat and bird welfare must include a strategy for feral cats. The bylaws above help reduce the influx of new cats to the stray and feral populations, but they do not directly address any existing population of feral cats. In the absence of a feral cat program, rapid population growth is inevitable.

Not all homeless cats are feral: some are strays, who are friendly to human contact. It's an important distinction because feral cats are often unsuitable for adoption, but strays typically are. Every effort should be made to distinguish between the two, since homeless stray cats can likely be directed to local shelters or rescues to be rehomed.

Feral cat management is a contentious issue, and there is no perfect solution that provides for care of the cats and immediate protection of birds and wildlife, though employing methods to reduce the population of feral cats is generally accepted as an important objective. Euthanasia is not recommended as an approach to feral cat population control. It is not acceptable in animal welfare circles (unless done for medical reasons) and is generally opposed by the public. While feral cat programs such as trap, neuter, vaccinate, release do not provide any immediate protection for birds and wildlife, they more easily attract community, volunteer and charitable support and, if done properly, they decrease the feral cat population, which will help protect birds in the long run.

Sometimes the issues around feral cat care can cause conflict between nature conservation and animal welfare advocates. Our recommendation for successfully navigating that potential conflict is to gather the stakeholders together with an agenda to develop consensus on the best path forward. Face-to-face communications offer an opportunity to garner support for the strategy and create consensus around a concerted community effort based on common ground – a love for animals.

Beyond ensuring that bylaws do not preclude feral cat care programs – feral cat care providers should not be considered “owners” under responsible pet ownership bylaws, and therefore not subject to roaming at large, licensing or identification requirements – municipalities can address feral cat populations by:

- working with local organizations to develop a co-ordinated feral cat strategy involving vaccination, spay/neuter, care, re-homing of sociable cats, and monitoring of population size;
- ensuring that any strategy is designed for *both* cat welfare *and* reduction of the population, and includes elements designed to identify stray cats and return them to their owners or re-home them;
- prohibiting the feeding of outdoor cats unless part of a registered TNR or sterilization program;
- including mechanisms for tracking results;
- undertaking public education to encourage spaying or neutering loosely owned and feral cats whom people are feeding outside of formal feral cat care programs;
- enacting policy to ensure feral cat colonies are not located in, or are re-located from, any areas of particular environmental significance (see below).

Notes:

- Feral cat management must be administered with the goal of not only feral cat welfare but also reducing the population over time.
- Improving vaccination rates limits public health risk and increasing sterilization rates reduces nuisance behaviours.
- Local governments must work with local humane and cat-care organizations to develop a feral cat response program.

VII. PROTECTION OF DESIGNATED AREAS OF ENVIRONMENTAL SIGNIFICANCE

In addition to working with registered organizations and individuals to manage feral cat colonies, municipalities can identify environmentally-sensitive areas, such as Important Bird Areas, and natural habitats where feral colonies should not be located, and from which any existing feral colonies should be relocated to a less sensitive area.

The methods of identifying these areas and types of areas include but are not limited to:

- Local knowledge from naturalist and birding groups
- Provincial or municipal mapping of environmentally-sensitive areas
- Recovery Strategies and Action Plans for federal Species at Risk
- Important bird and biodiversity areas

Most medium- to large-sized municipalities have policy statements with regard to natural areas, natural policy areas, environmentally-sensitive areas, conservation areas, or otherwise identified natural features on the landscape. For example, the City of Toronto has the following statement on protection within its “Ravine Strategy:”

Ravines are fundamentally natural spaces. Ecological function and resilience is the foundation for long-term sustainability of the ravines and watersheds. We are all guardians of these spaces and must treat them with care and respect. All actions related to ravines should be guided by the overarching goal of protecting these spaces by maintaining and improving their ecological health.

Within such a strategy, a statement to inform management with regard to addressing a serious threat to ecological health is helpful. Given the estimated impact of domestic cats on wildlife populations, we recommend that municipalities include a statement similar to the following within their policies or strategies intended to protect ‘ecological health,’ ‘biodiversity’ or ‘natural areas.’

A sample statement:

“In recognizing the impact of outdoor domestic cats (*Felix catus domesticus*) on wildlife, the City will discourage, by humane means, the presence of cats within roaming distance of all areas identified within the City’s policies and schedules as important for biodiversity and ecological health, such as: natural features, natural parks, natural areas, ravines, and natural corridors. This includes, but is not limited to, feral cat colonies, whereby no new colony can be established near an environmentally significant area, and any existing feral colony must be relocated away from all natural areas within five years, or if species at risk are vulnerable, as soon as possible. To the greatest extent possible, relocated cats will be sterilized, rehabilitated, identified, and adopted out.”

If there is no bylaw limiting pet cats from roaming, the following statement should be added.

The City recognizes that, in the absence of a no free-roam bylaw, there is a need to educate residents living adjacent to natural areas of the consequences of allowing their pets (cats and dogs) to enter these areas unsupervised.

Notes:

- Areas of concentrated bird and wildlife activity should be protected.
- Gathering information on local environmentally-significant areas can inform the selection of priority areas for cat management and other environmental efforts.
- This approach reassures the bird conservation and naturalist community that cat management is being conducted with consideration for birds and wildlife.
- Relocation of existing feral cat colonies must be done carefully in order to succeed, preferably by a cat-care organization with suitable expertise.

VIII. RESPONSIBLE CAT OWNERSHIP EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The importance of public communications on the twin issues of cat and bird welfare cannot be overestimated. All of the above recommendations are most effective if they are contextualized as part of a community initiative to improve the welfare of both cats and birds. Convening the stakeholders and working to create a community-wide strategy ensures that messages across all channels are consistent. There are public education opportunities within many organizations' existing activities, including the municipality itself – websites, social media, humane education and nature education programs, schools, cat adoption kits, etc. – which can help reach all segments of the community. Keep Cats Safe & Save Bird Lives (www.catsandbirds.ca / info@catsandbirds.ca), has research and resources to help craft messaging that promotes community involvement in solving cat and bird welfare issues, including template articles for municipal websites, resources for cat-care organizations to use in adoption kits or when an owner is reclaiming a lost cat, resources for cat owners, case studies, and more.

Local government can support responsible cat ownership by working with animal welfare organizations, pet stores, veterinarians, and nature organizations to communicate the following to the public:

- The benefits of keeping cats indoors or under supervision outdoors, including: cats living longer, healthier lives; reduced feline exposure to diseases, poisons and parasites; lower vet bills; reduced likelihood of injury from fights with other cats, dogs or wildlife; reduction of the negative impacts on birds and other wildlife; and reducing the possibility cats will become lost;
- The benefits of sterilizing cats, including reducing the likelihood of certain diseases; reducing nuisance behaviours associated with mating and fighting; and limiting the possibility of contributing to cat overpopulation;
- The benefits to the community and the reduction of cat overpopulation due to adopting cats from shelters rather than purchasing them from pet stores;
- How bylaw compliance (identification, licensing, no roam compliance) supports a community effort that improves cat and wildlife welfare;
- There are lots of resources available to help cat owners transition their cats, care for indoor cats and supervise cats so they can enjoy the outdoors.
- Inform the public that abandoning a pet cat is an offence under the Criminal Code of Canada.

CONCLUSION

Municipal participation is essential if Canada is to succeed in protecting our bird populations and improving the welfare of our cat populations. Addressing the crisis for Canada's cats and birds will require changes in human attitudes and behaviour, and those changes won't happen overnight. While municipalities have much to do in terms of regulation through bylaws and enforcement, another critical component of the path forward is to convene local stakeholders – cat-care groups, nature organizations and municipal representatives alike – so that all parties may develop a coherent strategy and communications plan together. The group can gather information about shelter and municipal capacity to ensure the strategy is practical with the resources available. It is recommended that public education efforts begin prior to the introduction of any new bylaws, and that enforcement be treated as an opportunity to build public awareness and compliance. Nature Canada and its regional and local partners in the Keep Cats Safe & Save Bird Lives program have chosen a “cat-friendly” path forward to address this issue. We help municipalities take a collaborative approach to strengthening their communities' strategy, bylaws, enforcement approach, and public education. Contact us at info@catsandbirds.ca for more information.

Solving these human-created problems is an essential part of building healthier and more sustainable communities – something that we are committed to as a nation.

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Appendix 2

Calvert, A. M., C. A. Bishop, R. D. Elliot, E. A. Krebs, T. M. Kydd, C. S. Machtans, and G. J. Robertson. 2013. A synthesis of human-related avian mortality in Canada. *Avian Conservation and Ecology* 8(2): 11.

Humane Canada, 2017, *Cats in Canada 2017: A Five-Year Review of Cat Overpopulation*.

APPENDIX 1: THE BIRD POPULATION CRISIS

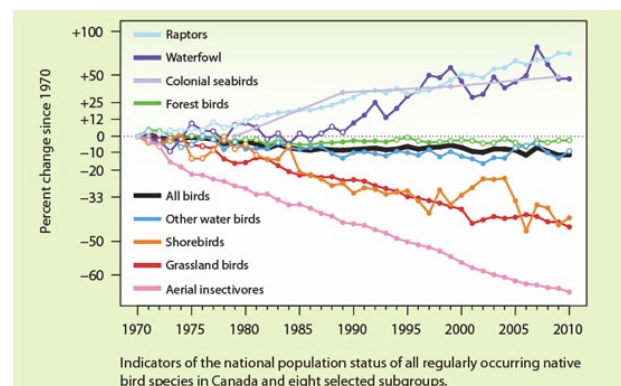
Canada's bird populations are declining at a precipitous rate. *The State of Canadian Birds* (NABCI Canada, 2012) shows that overall, Canadian bird populations have declined 12% since 1970. While a few groups of birds are increasing due to large-scale conservation efforts, some groups— aerial insectivores (birds that capture insects while in flight such as swallows) grassland birds, and shorebirds – show major declines of 40 to 60% in this same period, with some species declining by more than 90%. The number of bird species at risk has doubled since 2001. More recently, *The State of North American Birds* (NABCI, 2016) report demonstrated that a full one third of North American bird species are in need of urgent conservation action. The crisis in bird populations is part of a wider crisis in wildlife populations that are succumbing to human pressures. We can and must address the causes of wildlife declines that we are directly responsible for if we are to maintain the earth's biodiversity.

Scientific analysis of the reasons for these declines indicate that, while the indirect human-related causes – habitat loss, climate change, pollution, etc. – may be primary drivers of bird population declines, the direct impacts of various human activities are enormous. Thirteen different direct impacts were examined in one study, and the top four – collisions with windows, vehicles, transmission lines and predation by cats – were estimated to cause 130 to 433 million birds mortalities annually (Calvert, 2013). Of these, the top direct source was predation by cats, estimated to be between 100 and 350 million birds annually, or 2 to 7% of the entire bird population of southern Canada (Blancher, 2013). In other words, cat predation is believed to account for two-thirds of all the direct human impacts estimated in this study. It is important to note that these figures are estimates derived from other studies, many of them taking place in other countries, and it is particularly difficult to assess the size of the population of outdoor cats and arrive at an approximation of their impact. It is also important to note is that, unlike Europe and Asia, where cats have a much longer history and presence, domestic cats are relatively new to the Americas – having arrived on colonial ships.

Bird species that nest or feed on or near the ground are especially vulnerable to cat predation. Impacts are highest in densely-settled areas in southern Canada and during times when young birds are fledging and have difficulty flying.

On a global scale, cats have been linked to the extinction of 42 species of birds – second only to rats, which are linked to the extinction of 49 bird species (Birdlife, 2017). These have virtually all been island-dwelling species on islands where cats were introduced either deliberately or accidentally.

Of course, cats are not to blame for this situation – they are just being cats. By cultivating responsible pet ownership and creating comprehensive management strategies, municipalities can contribute to the solutions for both cats and birds.



State of Canada's Birds (NABCI, 2012)

APPENDIX 2: THE CAT POPULATION CRISIS

Canada's cat population is also in trouble. There are an estimated 9.3 million pet cats in Canada (Humane Canada, 2017) and a rough approximation of an additional 1.4 to 4.2 million feral cats (Blancher, 2013). Each year in Canada, hundreds of thousands of animals enter shelters and the vast majority of these are cats. Some are pets surrendered by their owners who can no longer care for them, while others are found roaming as strays. Some are never adopted. More than 260,000 homeless cats in Canadian shelters did not find new homes in 2016 (Humane Canada, 2017). Twice as many cats are admitted to shelters as dogs, despite the populations being of similar size. The proportion of those cats who are juvenile is also twice as high as for dogs, indicating an ongoing problem of unwanted litters. Animal welfare organizations are sometimes unable to accept cats and kittens due to the risk of overcrowding shelters, inadequate staffing and strained financial resources. Too often, pet owners with unwanted animals abandon them or stop caring for them – which is an offence under the Criminal Code of Canada. Feral and stray cats are a common sight, and there is widespread public concern for their welfare. Typically, cats do not receive as much veterinary care and attention as dogs and suffer from a problematic public perception about their value, especially compared to dogs. And this is reflected in shelter outcomes: while 68% of stray dogs in shelters are reclaimed by their owners, the figure is only 10% for stray cats (Humane Canada, 2017).

Cats are prolific breeders, able to produce 2 to 3 litters per year with an average of 3 to 5 kittens per litter. This is compounded by the fact that cats become fertile at as young as 4 or 5 months.

A single unspayed cat and her progeny can give birth to 25 to 50 kittens in just 18 months.

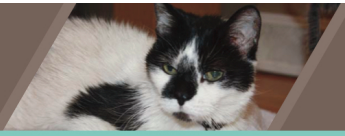
Veterinarians agree that indoor cats live longer and need less medical care than outdoor cats. Roaming cats are exposed to the risk of injury by cars; fights with other cats, dogs and wildlife; ticks and fleas; poisons; and potentially fatal diseases like rabies, feline leukemia, cat scratch disease and distemper, some of which are transferable to humans.

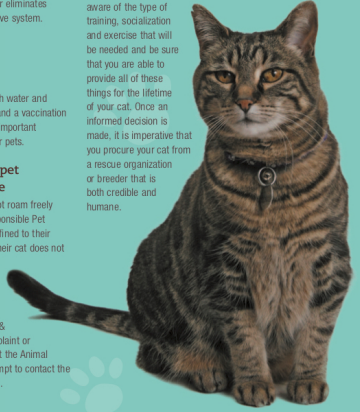
While some progress is being made to improve cat welfare and reduce overpopulation, change is not happening quickly enough to overcome the crisis.

APPENDIX 3: SAMPLE MESSAGING

• COMMUNICATE THE NORM

The City of Calgary Animal & Bylaw Services educates citizens about responsible pet ownership to help ensure that cats, their owners and neighbours live together in safety and harmony.





Reuniting lost pets with their owners
Animal & Bylaw Services impounds lost or stray cats under the Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw 23M2006. Our goal is to return impounded pets to their owners. If owners cannot be located and pets are left unclaimed, following a waiting period these animals are put up for adoption to find a new forever family.

Lost cats
If you lose your cat, contact 311 immediately to file a lost pet report. Visit calgary.ca/animalservices to view photos of the impounded cats at the Animal Services Centre and visit us at 2201 Portland St. S.E. Continue to visit our facility, the Calgary Humane Society and check with local vet clinics. Finally, ensure your lost pet report remains on file at Animal & Bylaw Services until your cat is found.

Principles of responsible pet ownership
Animal & Bylaw Services advocates responsible pet ownership and encourages pet owners to adhere to the five principles of responsible pet ownership:

- Provide a licence and permanent identification for your pet.
- Spay or neuter your pet.
- Provide training, socialization, proper diet and medical care.
- Don't allow your pet to become a threat or nuisance.
- Procure your pet ethically and from a credible source.

Principle #1: Provide a licence and permanent identification
A licence enables Animal & Bylaw Services to reunite lost pets with their owners. The Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw 23M2006 states that all cats residing in the city of Calgary must be licensed at three months of age. The City of Calgary enforces a zero tolerance policy on all unlicensed cats. A cat must be licensed but does not have to wear his licence tag as long as he has a readable microchip or legible tattoo.

There is a reduced fee for licensing a spayed or neutered cat or a kitten less than six months of age. However, there is a fine for falsifying information to receive the reduced licence rate.

In addition to a licence, it is important that cats have permanent identification, such as a microchip or a tattoo, in case they lose or are not wearing their licence tag. The preferred method of permanent identification is a microchip because a tattoo can fade over time.

Owners must remember to update their contact information with Animal & Bylaw Services and their microchip company or tattoo provider when their contact information changes.

Principle #2: Spay or neuter your pet
Responsible cat owners ensure their cats are spayed or neutered. Not only does spay/neuter surgery prevent cat overpopulation, it also makes for healthier pets. It eliminates crying, howling, nervous pacing and frantic attempts to get out and find a mate. Neutering reduces or eliminates inappropriate spraying. Spaying eliminates female heat cycles and bloody discharge. Spay/neuter surgery also reduces or eliminates disease, infection and cancer of the reproductive system.

Principle #3: Provide training, socialization, proper diet and medical care
All cats require daily care, nutritious food, fresh water and exercise. Regular grooming, yearly checkups and a vaccination schedule recommended by a veterinarian are important responsibilities that maintain the health of your pets.

Principle #4: Don't allow your pet to become a threat or nuisance
Responsible cat owners ensure that cats do not roam freely beyond their owner's property. Under the Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw 23M2006, cats must be confined to their owner's property. Owners must be sure that their cat does not cause damage to property, such as digging in neighbouring yards, knocking over garbage cans or scattering garbage.

If a cat is being a nuisance in your yard and you know where he lives, contact Animal & Bylaw Services through 311 to register a complaint or to reserve a cat trap. When we receive a cat at the Animal Services Centre, we make every possible attempt to contact the owner. Unclaimed cats are put up for adoption.

Principle #5: Procure your cat ethically and from a credible source
Having a cat means a commitment for the lifetime of that cat. Ask yourself if this is the right time to bring a companion animal into your family. Do your research on your potential cat's physical needs and what to expect for food, care and medical costs. Be aware of the type of training, socialization and exercise that will be needed and be sure that you are able to provide all of these things for the lifetime of your cat. Once an informed decision is made, it is imperative that you procure your cat from a rescue organization or breeder that is both credible and humane.

• INCREASE SELF-EFFICACY (REAL AND PERCEIVED)

Cats and Birds
March 22 · 🌐

If retraining your outdoor cat seems like a tall order, check out the tips here: <http://catsandbirds.ca/research/tips-for-transitioning>

Thinking about **transitioning** your cat?
We have some helpful tips!



👤 3,834 people reached

Boost Post

Cats and Birds
Published by Hootsuite [?] · April 13 · 🌐

Interested in leash-training your cat for safe outdoor time? Let this adorable kitty lead the way to animal behaviourist Joanna Berger's blog and step-by-step instructions! <http://ow.ly/QQb730jkPHM>

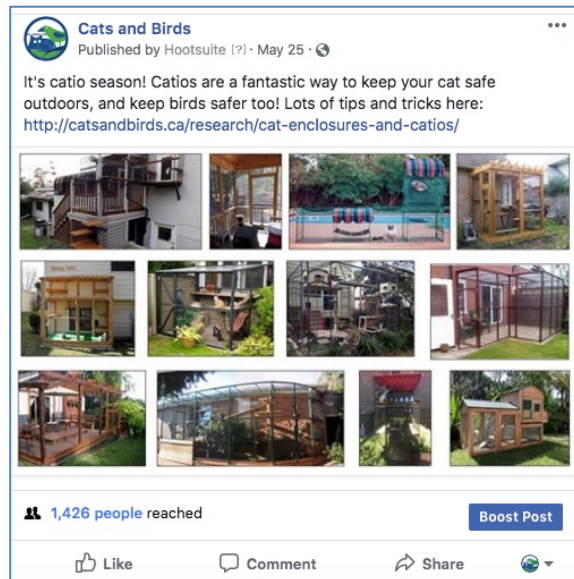


👤 2,634 people reached

Boost Post

👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

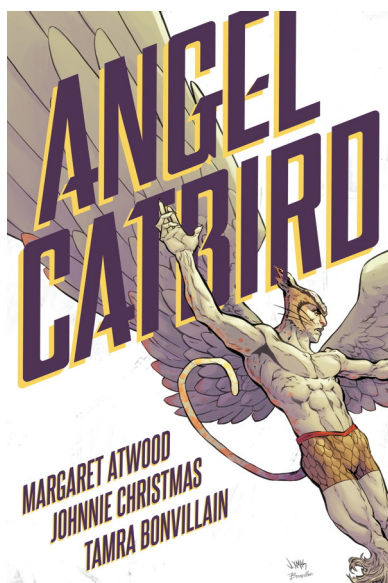
• SHOW THE DESIRED BEHAVIOUR



LEVERAGE INFLUENCERS AND EARLY ADOPTERS

“A number of years ago, I lost 2 cats to road accidents within days of each other, and now all my cats (5 of them!) are safe inside. My oldest two are now 17 and 19, and my younger cats are 7, 6.5 and 6, and have never been outside. They are happy playing indoors and watching my bird feeder from the window. Lots of toys and games keep them active. “ – Martha Franklin, <http://catsandbirds.ca/blog/a-crew-of-safe-cats> (an ‘early adopter’)

An influencer -



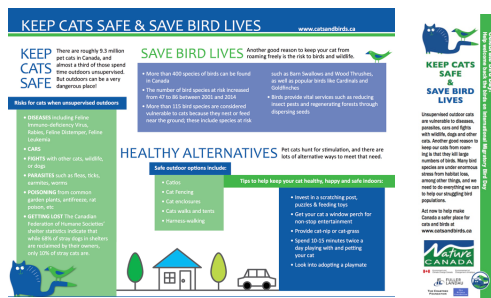
APPENDIX 4: AVAILABLE RESOURCES

Nature Canada / Keep Cats Safe & Save Bird Lives

For Municipalities

Calgary Case Study

For the Public



Hard copies of our brochure and bookmarks are available by request in English or French from info@catsandbirds.ca.

Safe, Happy Cat

A guide on how to keep an indoor cat sufficiently stimulated and exercised.

Safe Outdoor Options

An outline of the safe outdoor options (catios & leash walking)

Leash Training Your Cat

A step by step guide to leash training your cat

Cat Training Basics

Training your cat to obey several basic commands

Tips for Transitioning

How to retrain an outdoor cat to be content with a life indoors

Dealing with Escape Artists

How to train your cat out of continually trying to escape

Cat Spray Solutions

Natural ways to get rid of the smell of cat spray and discourage further spraying

DIY Cat Shelf

A step-by-step guide to building your cat a window shelf

Cat-proofing your Garden

Humane and natural ways to keep your neighbours' cats out of your garden

Keeping Birds Safe at Your Feeder

A guide to food choices, placement and plantings that help keep birds safe at your feeders.

How Birds are Vulnerable to Cats

A guide to the feeding and nesting habits, reproductive patterns and physical characteristics that make birds vulnerable to outdoor cats – even if the cats aren't hunting.

How Cats are Vulnerable to Wildlife

A guide to the threats that wildlife can represent for cats, including predation, close encounters with wildlife defense mechanisms, pests, parasites, and diseases.

Educational Program

A cats & birds educational program for Grades 4 to 9, suitable for use by teachers, humane and wildlife educators.

Junior Bird Guide

A 30-page booklet for kids to learn about birds, how to identify them, and what they can do to protect birds.

Angel Catbird Graphic Novels & Poster

Margaret Atwood's graphic novels, published in tandem with Keep Cats Safe & Save Bird Lives, offer an engaging narrative about an owl-cat-human superhero who is able see both sides of the cat-bird dilemma. Banners of real-world information supplied by Nature Canada appear throughout. (Link is to the poster. The graphic novels themselves are available via regular commercial channels.)

* [Keep Cats Safe & Save Bird Lives](#) also has resources specifically for use by humane societies, SPCAs and shelters (for use during adoptions or reclamation of a lost cat, etc.) and wildlife rehabilitators (for use when someone brings in a bird that was injured by their cat). These are available to our partners. For more information, contact info@catsandbirds.ca.

Bird Studies Canada

[Bird Studies Canada's Top 6 Ways You Can Help Birds](#)

Ecology Action Centre

[Where the Birds Are](#)

A poster showing the niches that birds use in your backyard that make them vulnerable to cats.

Stewardship Centre for British Columbia

[The Happy Cat](#)

Tips for responsible cat ownership

[Stewardship Practices Guide](#)

Stewardship practices for reducing cat predation of birds and wildlife

[Reducing the Impact of Cats on Birds and Wildlife: Results of a Public Opinion Poll & Telephone Survey in British Columbia](#)

Report on survey about attitudes towards roaming cats and their impact on birds and wildlife in BC

BC SPCA

[Indoor vs. Outdoor: How to Provide the Best Environment for Your Cat](#)

[Keeping Your Kitty Happy](#)

Environmental enrichment for indoor cats

[Catio-Dadio Poster](#)

[Help Your Cats Climb the Walls](#)

Access to heights as an enrichment strategy for indoor cats

[Pet Overpopulation: A Problem You Can Fix](#)

Educational lessons for intermediate students

[What Type of Identification Does My Pet Need?](#)

[Model Animal Responsibility Bylaw](#)

Humane Canada

[Cats in Canada 2017: A Five-Year Review of Cat Overpopulation](#)

An overview of cat overpopulation and shelter statistic trends.

[Accessible Spay/Neuter Toolkit](#)

Lays out the evidence for the benefits and savings of implementing spay/neuter programs at the municipal level and provides examples of successful initiatives that can be modeled in other communities

[Cat Healthy \(group of cat specialist Canadian veterinarians\)](#)

[Keep Your Cat Healthy & Happy Infographic](#)

