

How to Make Your Outdoor Cat a Happy Indoor Cat

Although it takes patience, an outdoor cat can become a perfectly content indoor pet. Whether you make the transition gradually or all at once, the key is to provide lots of attention and stimulation while the cat is indoors.

- Share periods of special play time to substitute for outside excursions.
- Offer interesting toys, especially those which are interactive. Some cats enjoy searching for toys; they also enjoy ping pong balls, paper bags and cardboard boxes.
- Cat condos offer places to lounge, play and scratch. Provide scratching posts and praise your cat for using them.
- Provide fresh greens for safe grazing as an alternative to damaging house plants.

How You Can Help

Keep your cat indoors and encourage others to do the same. If you are unwilling to keep your cat indoors, do not attract birds to your yard with feeders, bird houses or birdbaths.

- Do not rely on bells or declawing to prevent successful hunting; they are largely ineffectual. Declawed cats can bat prey to the ground and bite it. Once bitten, the prey will likely die.

- Spay or neuter your cat, and don't feed other outdoor cats. Feeding will not diminish hunting and will tend to form high densities of cats which adversely impact wildlife.
- Never abandon unwanted cats. Instead, take them to your local animal shelter to give them the best possible chance of adoption into loving, lifelong homes.

Local Animal Shelters

Contra Costa County Animal Services
4800 Imhoff Way, Martinez, CA 94553
(925) 608-8400

Antioch Animal Services
300 L Street, Antioch, CA 94509
(925) 779-6989

To find out more about cats and protecting birds and wildlife, go to the American Bird Conservancy website: abcbirds.org/program/cats-indoors/

Mount Diablo Bird Alliance (a chapter of The National Audubon Society) is a private 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.
P.O. Box 53, Walnut Creek, CA 94597
Website: mtdiablobirds.org
facebook.com/mtdiablobirds
instagram.com/mountdiablobirdalliance/



Mount Diablo Bird Alliance



Keep Cats Indoors

PROTECT BIRDS AND WILDLIFE

Cats, Birds and Wildlife

A scientific study published in the online journal *Nature Communications* estimates that in the United States each year outdoor cats kill 1.3 to 4.0 billion birds and 6.3 to 22.3 billion mammals. The study offers the most comprehensive analysis of information on the issue of outdoor cat predation. *Reference: abcbirds.org/news/outdoor-cats-single-greatest-source-of-human-caused-mortality-for-birds-and-mammals-says-new-study/*

Cats Are Not a Natural Part of Ecosystems

Descended from European and African wild cats and domesticated in Egypt more than 4,000 years ago, cats may be the most widespread and efficient predator in the world.

- Cats are hard-wired to hunt. Despite beliefs to the contrary, even well-fed cats hunt and kill wildlife. Birds that nest or feed on the ground, such as California Quail, are the most susceptible to cat predation, as are the nestlings and fledglings of many other bird species.
- Most birds that seem to escape do not survive cat attacks. Cats carry many types of bacteria and viruses in their mouths. A victim that looks perfectly healthy may die from internal hemorrhaging or injury to vital organs.

The Outdoors is No Place for Cats

According to the American Bird Conservancy, outdoor cats—even well-cared-for cats—face an extraordinary array of dangers:

- Cars kill millions of cats each year in the US and maim countless others.
- Cats find poisonous chemicals on treated lawns, in rat/mice bait and in antifreeze.
- Outdoor cats are injured or killed by free-roaming dogs, wildlife and other cats, and contract fatal diseases transmitted by bites and scratches from infected animals.
- Animal control agencies report situations where cats have been burned, stabbed or otherwise hurt by malicious humans.
- Unaltered outdoor cats are the main source of overpopulation. In warm climates such as ours, a female cat can have three litters per year with 4 to 6 kittens per litter, causing millions of unwanted cats to be euthanized at animal shelters each year. Dealing with this preventable tragedy costs taxpayers millions of dollars each year.
- According to The Humane Society of the United States, free-roaming cats typically live less than five years, whereas cats kept exclusively indoors can live to 17 or more years of age.

Cats and Disease

- Unvaccinated cats can transmit diseases to other cats, native wildlife and humans. Cats are the domestic animal most frequently reported to be rabid to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Cats are also suspected of spreading fatal feline diseases to native wild cats such as the mountain lion and bobcat.
- Plague is transmitted primarily by wild rodent fleas which can infect cats. In recent years, almost all human cases of pneumonic plague have been linked to domestic cats.
- Toxoplasmosis is caused by a tiny parasite which resides in cats' intestinal tracts and is expelled in the feces. If contracted by a pregnant woman in her first trimester, the disease can cause abortion of the fetus or blindness, retardation or seizures in the newborn.

