

Cats and Wildlife - how you can protect both



*Where is your cat at the moment?
Could it be harming native wildlife?
Is it crossing a busy road?*

*The information in this brochure will help you better
protect and enjoy your cat and our native wildlife.*



Government
of South Australia



What YOU can do to help

If we are to continue to enjoy Australia's unique wildlife we need to reduce our impact on the environment. You can reduce the effect cats have on wildlife and better care for your pet cat by simply:

- Identifying your cat as a pet not a stray
- Desexing your cat
- Never dumping unwanted cats or kittens
- Preventing your cat from roaming

© Department for Environment and Heritage

Revised June 2007

FIS 2604.06

ISBN:1 921 23802 X

Photo credits: Cat; Jones Creative Media. Southern Brown Bandicoot, Southern Brown Tree Frog, Western Pygmy Possum, Peninsula Dragon, White's Skink, Marbled Gecko, Painted Quail; Department for Environment and Heritage, SA (D. Harley, K. Long, T. Robinson & J. Van Weenen). Lesser Long-eared Bat; L. Lumsden



**Government
of South Australia**

Department for
Environment and Heritage

Adelaide and Mount Lofty
Natural Resource
Management Board



Australian Government

<NRMjobs>

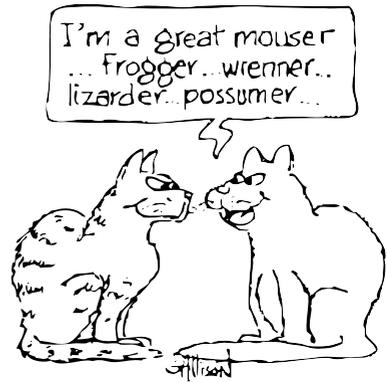
Nature
FOUNDATION SA



Cats are both pets and predators

Cats are present throughout South Australia, as domestic pets, free-living strays, and as feral animals. As pets, cats are wonderful companion animals. However, they are also very efficient predators of our native wildlife.

Australia's unique wildlife evolved in an environment that did not include cats. The relatively recent introduction of cats to Australia has added a predator with new hunting techniques that has changed the natural balance.



Well fed cats still instinctively hunt

Cats that live close to remnants of bush are likely to kill a wide range of native wildlife. Cats in suburbia can also have a large effect because cat numbers in these areas are high and numbers of native animals are generally low.

Wildlife that feed or nest on or near the ground is most at risk. For example, in the Adelaide Hills the Endangered Southern Brown Bandicoot lives on the ground and is often found in patches of bush near houses where cat numbers are high. This species is known to be killed by cats.

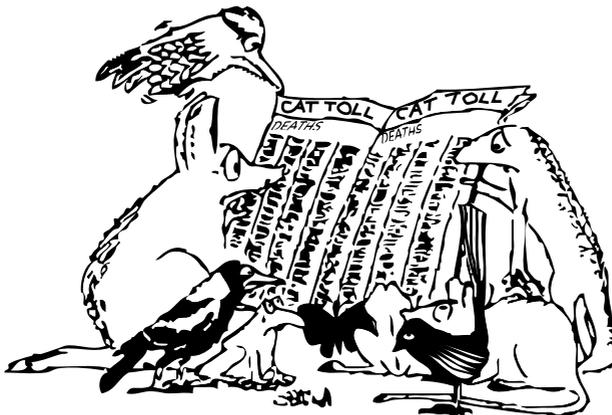
Even cats that are well fed will instinctively hunt. Prey that is not killed is likely to die later from shock or infection.

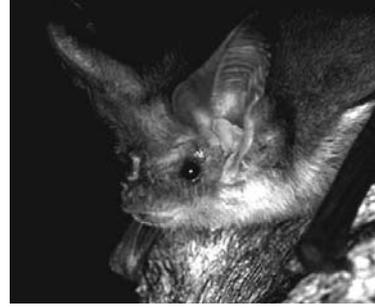


Scientists tell us cats threaten wildlife

CAT FACT: Cats are known to prey on more than 186 kinds of native Australian bird, 64 mammals, 87 reptiles, 10 species of amphibian, and numerous invertebrates.

- The stomach of a single feral cat shot in arid South Australia contained the remains of one house mouse, three striped skinks, one lined earless dragon, one smooth earless dragon, three bearded dragons, twenty-four painted dragons and a zebra finch....that was from just one day's hunting!
- On average, a domestic cat kills 16 mammals, 8 birds and 8 reptiles a year according to an Australia-wide survey.
- In Australia, cats are listed as a potential threat to the survival of at least 58 native species that are considered at risk of extinction (under the EPBC Act 1999).
- Research shows cats with bells on their collars still catch wildlife.
- Cats are the host of a blood disease called Toxoplasmosis which can cause sickness and death in some species of wildlife.





Four ways you can better care for your cat and protect wildlife

CAT FACT: Desexed pet cats that are prevented from roaming live four times longer on average!

Here are four things you can do to provide safer conditions for both your pet cat and for native wildlife.

- Desex your cat
- Identify your cat as a pet, not a stray
- Never dump unwanted kittens or cats
- Keep your cat close to home

...and encourage your neighbours to do the same

1) Desex your cat

- A desexed cat typically lives longer and is less territorial. It will wander, fight, and spray-mark its territory less, and in general makes a better pet.
- Desexing also prevents unwanted litters of kittens that contribute to the stray and feral cat populations and to the ongoing demise of native wildlife.

2) Identify your cat as a pet, not a stray

- Pet cats that are micro-chipped can be identified from stray cats by local councils and can be returned safely to their owners if they get lost or wander onto neighbouring properties.

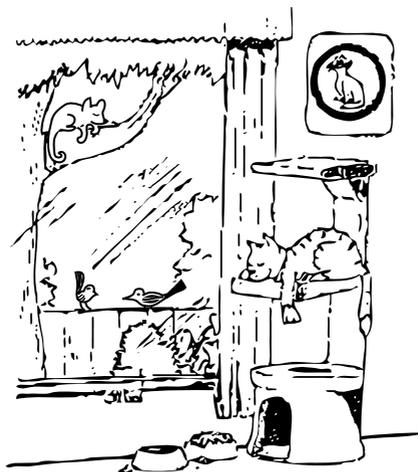
3) Never dump your unwanted kittens or cat

- Dumped cats are likely to become stray and rely more on wildlife as a food source. Unwanted cats and kittens should be given away to a good home or humanely euthanased. Contact your local vet or animal welfare shelter for assistance.



4) Keep your cat from roaming

- Pet cats that are prevented from roaming are protected from being hit by cars and from being injured or catching diseases from stray cats. In fact pet cats that are prevented from roaming have been found to live longer than those that are allowed to range freely.



- Cats kept indoors or in a specially designed "cat yard" won't prey on wildlife. You will get to enjoy their company more too! Cat yards can provide cats with access to your house and to an enclosed outdoor area. Enrich their environment to ensure they get enough exercise and don't get bored.



Cat fact or fiction?

It is cruel to confine my cat. **FICTION**

Urban and rural environments pose many risks to pet cats. If cats roam they can catch diseases and be injured by stray and feral cats. They can also be injured or killed on the road. Cats live very contently in a suitable enclosed area.



Cats are necessary to control mice and rats. **FICTION**

Cats will kill some mice and rats, but careful use of commercially available rodenticides is a more effective way of controlling introduced rodents.

Cats and wildlife can live together. **FICTION**

While the impact cats have on wildlife will vary between individual cats and locations, in general, cats reduce wildlife populations through predation, disease, and competition for food. When combined with threats like habitat loss, Australia's native wildlife is struggling to survive.

Some people keep their cats confined only at night. This may reduce the impact they have on nocturnal wildlife but not on wildlife that is active during the day, such as lizards and birds.

Cats in the suburbs, away from bushland are not a risk to wildlife. **FICTION**

Cats, especially males, can travel many kilometers and in doing so may hunt wildlife. Remember that wildlife isn't restricted to parks; many species of birds, bats and lizards can still be found in suburban areas.

Further information

- **Your local Council may require you to manage your cat.**

Contact them to find out about policies or bylaws that encourage responsible cat ownership. Councils can also provide information on what to do if you have a stray, wandering or feral cat on your property.

- **Cat Yards.** Contact details for commercial suppliers of cat enclosures can be found on the internet. Or, for guidance on building your own cat proof fencing or cat yard go to:

<http://www.pets.info.vic.gov.au/community/catenclosure.htm>

For additional information please contact

Department for Environment and Heritage

Ph: (08) 8204 1910

Online information available at: <http://www.environment.sa.gov.au>

The Dog and Cat Management Board

Ph: (08) 8124 4962

Online information available at: <http://www.dogsncats.asn.au>

RSPCA

Ph: (08) 8231 6931

Online information available at: <http://www.rspca.org.au>

Acknowledgements and further reading

"Cats and wildlife – how you can protect both" was prepared by the Mount Lofty Ranges Southern Brown Bandicoot Recovery Program, Department for Environment and Heritage, in consultation with the Dog and Cat Management Board, SA, based on a fact sheet of the same name produced by the Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE). Cartoon images have been reproduced with permission from the Department of Sustainability and Environment, VIC (@ State of Victoria Department of Sustainability and Environment 2003). Supporting information used in this fact sheet was sourced from the following places:

Department of the Environment and Heritage (2004). Protecting our Wildlife: Responsible pet ownership. www.deh.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/publications/responsible.html.

Dickman, C. (1993) Raiders of the lost ark: Cats in inland Australia. Australian Natural History, 24 (5), 44-52.

Environment Australia (1999) Threat Abatement Plan for Predation by Feral Cats. Biodiversity Group, Environment Australia, Canberra. www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/publications/tap/cats/index.html

Paton, D.C. (1993) Impacts of domestic and feral cats on wildlife In G. Siepen and C. Owens (eds) 'Cat Management Workshop: Proceedings - 1993', Queensland.

Read, J and Bowen, Z (2001) Population dynamics, diet and aspects of the biology of feral cats and foxes in arid South Australia. Wildlife Research, 2001, 28, 195–203

Temby, I. (2005). Wild Neighbours: The humane approach to living with wildlife. Citrus Press, NSW.

