



Community Cats and Wildlife

There is a legitimate issue behind concerns about cats preying on wildlife. Yet debates often polarize advocates precisely when they should be constructively and respectfully talking with one another about their common goals: effectively reducing the number of outdoor cats, minimizing threats to birds and other wildlife and improving the quality of life for cats, wildlife, and people. We all play a part in keeping cats and wildlife safe and this information will help you do so.

Best Practices for Pet Owners

The great outdoors can be a dangerous place. Pet cats may be injured or killed by cars, poison and other animals. In addition, cats – even well-fed cats – will hunt, injure and kill wildlife.

- Keep pet cats inside [It's a myth that cats have to go outside to be happy – you can easily provide indoor enrichment.
- Put a safety [collar and visible ID](#) on your cat, even if he/she stays indoors.
- Provide an outdoor enclosure to allow cats outdoor access while keeping them out of harm's way and protecting wildlife.
- Train pet cats to [walk](#) on a harness and leash.
- If you choose to let your cat outdoors, reduce the amount of time if possible and don't let your cat outside during dawn and dusk when birds are most active.
- If you choose to let your cat outdoors, consider using a product such as a CatBib™ or Birdsbesafe® cat collar. Bells on collars may not be effective.
- If you choose not to keep your present cat/s inside, plan to keep your next cats inside.
- Feed pets indoors to help them have a positive view of indoors and to avoid attracting wildlife to your yard.
- Keep your cat's rabies vaccination up to date. Even indoor cats can escape and come into contact with wildlife.
- If you're feeding an outdoor cat, have the cat spayed or neutered and rabies vaccinated. Many animal welfare organizations offer this service at no charge for community cats, but at some there may be a cost.
- Provide a home for a stray cat. If you have other cats, be sure the new cat is examined by a veterinarian before introducing the cats. Make sure the cat is not owned before deciding to keep him.
- Never abandon a cat to fend for him/herself. You can find [pet-friendly rental housing](#), resolve [behavior issues](#), [protect your cat](#) if she goes missing, and [purchase cat products](#), including enclosures, to keep her safe and [entertain your cat](#).
- Learn how to conduct an effective [search](#) in the unfortunate event that your cat becomes lost Shelters, rescues and TNR organizations exist all over the country and can help you with your cat.

Best Practices for Community Cat Caretakers

Many caring people feed community cats. Protecting community cats and wildlife should go hand in hand. Even well-fed community cats will hunt, injure and kill birds and other wildlife, especially wildlife that is attracted to cat food. These best practices are designed to humanely manage and reduce outdoor cat populations, for cats' sakes as well as birds and other wildlife.

- Get any outdoor cats you're feeding spayed or neutered and rabies vaccinated. [Many animal welfare organizations](#) offer this service at no charge for community cats, but some may charge a fee.
- Have the cats you feed vaccinated against rabies with a 3-year vaccine.
- Keep the feeding area clean and free of trash. If another person is feeding, ask them to do so as well.



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- Build a feeding station that deters raccoons
- Avoid feeding more than the cats can eat and remember to decrease the amount of food you provide as the colony size decreases so that the surplus food doesn't attract wildlife.
- Feed during daylight and remove food by dark to avoid attracting nocturnal wild animals.
- Deter wildlife. Although there aren't any repellents registered for use on coyotes, aversion agents used for dogs and cats have been used with some success. In addition, a technique used by ranchers to protect their cats is to provide a climbing pole that enables cats to escape when surprised in the open by a coyote.
- Learn about community cats, performing TNR and much more by visiting humanesociety.org/outdoorcats.

Best Practices for People Feeding Birds

Many people enjoy feeding wild birds on their property and can contribute to the safety of those birds by following our tips.

- Position feeders at least 12 feet away from grass and shrubs, which can serve as good cat cover.
- Hang feeders on a wire strung at least 8 feet above the ground, between two trees that are at least 8 feet apart.
- Install a predator guard (a metal cone with the wide bottom facing down) on pole-mounted feeders to keep cats and other animals from climbing up.
- Place circular fences, about 2 feet high and 4 feet in diameter, on the ground directly below feeders to make it difficult for cats and predators to creep up on birds unseen.
- Use high-quality food that birds will be sure to devour, rather than let some of it fall to the ground, where it can attract other types of birds and make them vulnerable. Also install a spill tray to catch seeds.
- Put down sharp-edged gravel beneath feeders—or, under a shallow layer of dirt or mulch, bury small-gauge chicken wire, or a plastic carpet runner with the knobby side up. Cats don't like walking on these types of irregular surfaces.
- Drive cats away from feeders with a motion-activated product that sends out a burst of high-pitched ultrasonic vibrations—in audible to humans but uncomfortable for cats. Or install a motion-activated sprinkler to soak cats stalking birds at feeders.
- Use non-toxic products on your lawn and garden.

Contact The Humane Society of the United States at cats@humanesociety.org for additional information and resources.