



## What Can I Do To Prevent Cat Predation?

Having a cat declawed, putting a bell on its collar and keeping it well-fed do **not** keep it from killing. Here are some suggestions for reducing the amount of cat predation on birds and other wildlife:

-  Make the indoors more comfortable for your cat with a scratching post, toys, indoor grass or catnip. Play with your cat often. If you do let your cat outdoors, try to train it to walk on a leash, or build a run or screened-in area off of your house where your cat can enjoy the outdoors.
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-  If you must let your cat roam free, at least try to control the time of day and season that you let your cat out. Birds are most active in the early morning and early evening. Also avoid letting your cat out during the breeding season, typically May - August, when baby animals are most vulnerable and cannot get away.
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-  Keep bird feeders out of a cat's reach. Place them high and away from windows and vegetation. If cat predation is severe, you may need to eliminate feeders altogether.
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-  At the very least, spay or neuter your pet to prevent overpopulation.

## Cats: Pet or Predator?



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## Wildlife Wins When Cats Stay In

For centuries, cats have been admired for their agility, stealth and grace. These characteristics have not only gained cats our respect, it also makes them highly capable predators. Many people share their homes and hearts with cats without understanding that a cat still possesses the weapons and instinct to kill.



animals are not governed by the same natural laws that govern wildlife. In a natural population, the number of prey animals determines the number of predators. This control does not apply to either pet or feral (*domestic animals that have reverted to a wild state*) animals because their numbers are constantly increased by newly abandoned animals or by free-ranging pets that join their ranks temporarily. The fact that your cat has a hunting instinct does not justify allowing it to behave like a wild animal!

### Cats compete with native predators

A pet cat's survival is not dependent upon its hunting success. They can always return home for food when the hunt is not successful. Cats also kill animals without eating them (even well-fed cats kill!) In this way, cats kill many more animals than a native predator. Pet cats are also afforded some protection from disease, predation and competition--factors that affect native predators like hawks, mink and foxes. Because of this, cats may out-compete native predators for food.



## Why Should I Keep My Cat Inside?

### Cats are not a natural part of ecosystems

To some, there may be no difference between a wild, natural predator killing another wild animal for food and a cat doing the same thing--but there *is* a difference. Domestic

## Being outdoors can be dangerous for your cat

The lifespan of a cat confined to the house is 15 - 20 years, compared to 3 - 5 years for one that roams freely. The hazards that face a free-roaming cat are numerous and include being hit by a car, poisoned, injured by other animals, caught in a trap, becoming a victim of animal abuse or theft, contracting a disease like rabies, feline leukemia, distemper or toxoplasmosis, or acquiring parasites like fleas, ticks, heartworms or roundworms.

## A Natural Instinct

Remember, a cat is only responding to its natural instinct. Ultimately, you are responsible for your cat and its behavior!



If you have any questions about the problem of cat predation on wildlife, please call the  
**McHenry County  
Conservation District's  
Wildlife Resource Center  
at 815-728-8307.**