

City of Richmond
Council Member Notice of Motion
For the General Purposes Committee Meeting on January 18th 2021

Date: January 4th 2021
From: Councillor Wolfe
Subject: Cat Education and Policy

Recommendation:

That Council endorse the following resolution to modernize our cat related bylaws and provide options for enhanced cat owner education campaigns.

Resolution:

The City of Richmond will work to reduce the number of bird and other wildlife-related fatalities from the teeth and claws of domestic cats. This includes a referral for a staff report to provide education for cat owners and revisions to the City website and bylaws.

Rationale:

In Richmond, both cats and birds can be in unnecessary danger when outside. This is why municipalities have taken the lead to provide education and adopt animal control bylaws that specifically address and humanely control cats and their threats to wildlife.

Recently Richmond has proudly become designated the first certified Bat Friendly Community in Metro Vancouver and we were profiled at the Bat Matters 2020 Conference.

The domesticated cat has contributed to the extinction of 34 species of birds across the world and also contribute 100 to 350 million bird deaths annually. Statistics are lacking for all other wildlife groups (e.g. rodents, bats, amphibians, etc.). The free roaming cat, be they spayed or neutered or neither, are the most problematic. It is in a predator's natural behaviour to ambush prey, even if they don't eat it. Cats are known for leaving dead "presents" for their owners. When humans have introduced animals into local ecosystems where they do not belong, they can wreak havoc. While people may treat their feline friends as a mix between pet and wildlife, we owe them the same level of care we give to dogs, for the most part.

The City Bylaws that may be part of this review include: 7138 (pet fees), 7310 (off lease areas), 7538 (pet stores), 7932 (pet rules), and 8856 (pet nuisance).

For cats, problems include:

- Not finding a home, as many cats reach end of life in shelters, hospitals, or no-kill sanctuaries (like the one Richmond RAPS maintains).
- Cats can become road kill (about 1000 per year in metropolis cities).
- Cats have a plethora of diseases and/or parasites that get picked up when outdoors (e.g. FIV, FLV, cancers, heartworms, ticks, fleas, etc.)
- Humans can have the bacteria *Toxoplasma gondii* transmit from their cats to cause serious Toxoplasmosis, particularly concerning for pregnant women.
- Where dogs are often contained by fences, cats will use neighbouring properties (gardens and sandboxes) as their personal outdoor litter box.
- Cats are injured by other cats, dogs, racoons, skunks, coyotes, and birds of prey.

- Cats get poisoned, from various solvents, consuming toxic plants, and eating poisoned mice and rats.
- Cats get lost and can get stuck high up trees. Nine lives is not immortal.

For cats, solutions may include:

- Spay and neuter your cat ASAP.
- Train/retrain your cat to stay indoors and extend their life.
- Provide outside time with a leash and direct supervision.
- Include both bells and colourful collars on your cat.
- Enrich your cat's life so it's content without free roaming time.
- Have a higher respect for your neighbours and wildlife.
- Bylaws (like in Calgary) may include licensing, restrictions on free roaming behaviour, a promise to return escaped cats, subsidized spay-neuter programs, and public awareness campaigns.

For birds, the problems include:

- Extinction is real, as very few bird species have healthy or stable populations.
- In addition to the impacts of climate change and habitat loss, 130 to 433 million birds a year die as a result of people. Of that estimate, 75% are thought to come from free roaming feral and non-feral cats.
- Most natural predators to birds are nocturnal, whereas cats are out during the day and night, often hunting in busy areas adapted to the human presence, with a lack of fear.

For birds, the solutions include:

- Providing year-round food, access to water, and nest boxes that provide sightlines to potential danger from ambush predators.
- Don't feed the birds, if cats are going to be allowed to continue status quo.
- Once ambush locations are determined, prune vegetation to expose them or place barrier fences to give birds more time to escape.
- Deterrents on the market include odour sprays, ultrasonic devices, and motion-activated water sprayers.

Sources:

AudubonPortland.org
 BirdLife.org
 BirdsCanada.org
 CatsAndBirds.ca
 Cat Wars by Peter P. Marra
 NatureCanada.ca
 RAPSBC.com
 Richmond.ca
 SPCA.BC.CA
 StewardshipCentreBC.ca

Attachments:

- 1) The Happy Cat brochure from the Stewardship Centre for BC
- 2) CBC News story "Cats, the No. 1 killer of birds in Canada" 2015

The feral cat epidemic

Every year in Canada, many cats end up homeless. They are either born feral or abandoned by their owners.

- Never abandon an unwanted cat or kitten.
- Resist feeding unowned or feral cats. It can allow cats to breed at a younger age and have larger litters, worsening the problem.
- Unwanted cats or feral cats deserve to be taken to a shelter for the best chance at finding a safe home.



What can we do to help?

- There are an estimated 1.4 – 4.2 million unowned cats in Canada. This is a tragedy for cats and for communities.
- Adopt from your local shelter. Cats come spayed and neutered and there are all ages and temperaments to choose from.
- Always have your cats spayed or neutered before five months of age to prevent unwanted kittens.
- Respect and follow animal responsibility bylaws in your municipality.

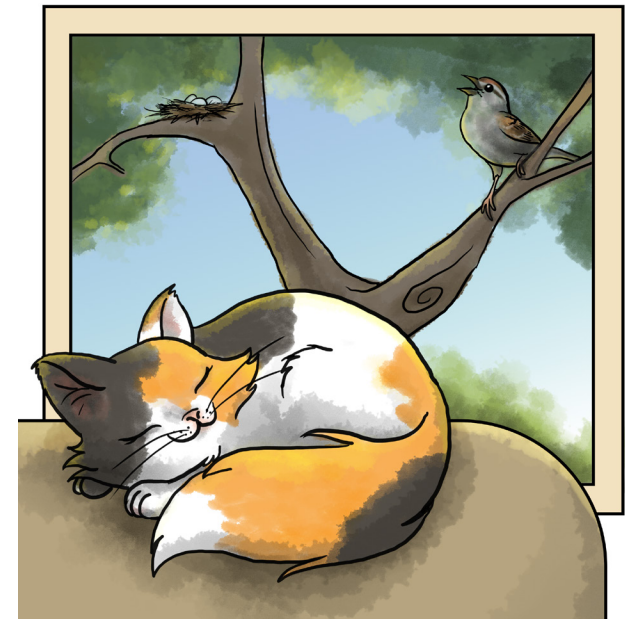
Fact: Spaying female cats before their first heat reduces the rate of mammary cancer by 80-90%. Neutered male cats are less aggressive and they spray less often than intact males.

Tips to keep your cat happy & healthy

Because cats are smart and independent, we think they can look after themselves when outdoors but that simply isn't true. Outdoor cats are exposed to the risks of predation, parasites, diseases, trauma and toxins. Due to these risks, cat welfare groups recommend keeping cats indoors with only supervised outdoor access.

Indoor cats can lead happy and healthy lives provided their behavioural and emotional needs are met.

- Provide window spots so your cat can look outdoors and watch the neighbourhood.
- Ensure your cat has sufficient vertical and private space to hide, sleep and feel safe.
- If you have multiple cats, be sure that all resources such as sleeping and hiding spots, feeding and litter are separated.
- Have enough litter boxes for all cats. Cats prefer two large litter boxes with daily cleaning. Avoid scented litter.
- Play with your cat regularly and encourage their urge to chase and pounce with toys.
- Provide your cat's favourite type of scratching posts such as vertical or horizontal posts of cardboard, carpet or natural fibre.
- Use food puzzles so that your cat has to "hunt" for their food or "scatter-feed" kibble so that your cat chases and catches its food like prey.
- Provide access to the outdoors with a screened porch or an enclosed outdoor run (catio).
- Like dogs, with training, cats can adapt very well to walking with a leash and harness.



The Happy Cat



STEWARDSHIP CENTRE
FOR BRITISH COLUMBIA

The Stewardship Centre for BC urges you to keep your cat indoors, supervise outdoor access and adopt these tips. It's better for cats and better for birds, bats and other wildlife.

For further information go to:
www.stewardshipcentrebc.ca
1-866-456-7222

What is a responsible cat owner?

Being a good guardian isn't just about keeping your cat fed and healthy. It's also your job to keep your cat safe and be responsible for your pet's behaviour.

Do:

- ✓ Keep your cat indoors and supervise outdoor access.
- ✓ Ensure your pet is spayed or neutered by 4-5 months.
- ✓ Identify your cat with permanent identification, so it can be returned to you if lost.
- ✓ Take your cat to the vet for annual check-ups and vaccinations.

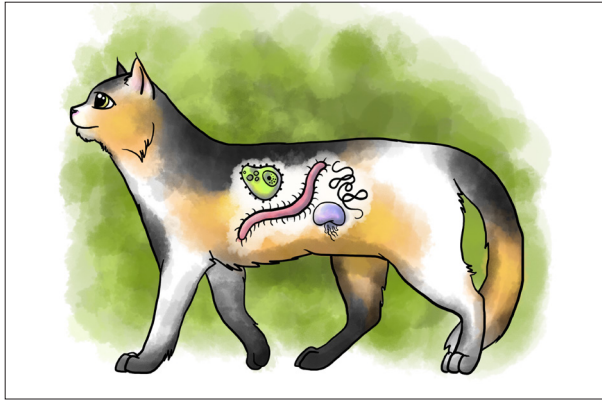
Don't:

- ✗ Let your cat roam where it may meet other cats or predators.
- ✗ Let your cat cross roads where it could get hit.
- ✗ Let your cat use gardens and children's play areas as a litter box.
- ✗ Let your cat chase and kill birds, bats, or other wildlife.



Fact: An indoor cat's estimated life span is 12-15 years, but an outdoor cat's is only 3-5 years.

Look what the cat brought in!



When our pets hunt wildlife, it's possible for them to bring home pathogens such as parasites, bacteria or viruses that can infect us or anyone else in contact with their feces. Examples are various types of roundworms, tapeworms, *Toxoplasma gondii*, salmonellosis and even rabies virus which can have very serious health implications for people. Allowing your cat to roam is not worth the risk to you or your neighbours. All cats should receive regular parasite tests and be vaccinated against all preventable infectious diseases.

Cats are natural hunters

Like dogs, cats can have an impact on native wildlife because of their powerful hunting instinct. Even if they leave the house on full stomachs, cats will seek out and catch birds, bats and other wildlife. Studies have demonstrated that cats only bring home about 23% of their wildlife prey.

- As their caregivers, we need to replace that hunting activity with stimulating activities with toys such as those that mimic fluttering (e.g., feathered wand toys) or that mimic scuttling movement (e.g., laser pointer).
- Whatever the toy is, make sure that your cat gets to catch it before you put it away.

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Wildlife in Canada need your help

Birds play an important role in all ecosystems and brighten up our lives with their beauty, bird song and activity. Next to habitat loss, the #1 source of bird deaths in the country is hunting by domestic and feral cats. Cats are estimated to kill 100-350 million birds every year in Canada. Cats also hunt other wildlife including bats. Bats can eat their body weight in insects every night and are vital to control insect pests. Cats may hunt bats as they swoop out of their roosts to forage or prey on sick or injured bats that may be on the ground.

Cats and wildlife don't mix!

- Don't put out feeders if you have cats coming into your yard.
- Keep bird seed off the ground by using seed hoops or trays.
- Do not place bat houses or bird feeders in areas where cats can reach them.
- Keep your cat inside or supervised when wildlife is present.
- Deter cats from your yard with plants with lemony scents, wet coffee grounds or with purpose-built fence toppers.



Fact: Canada's songbird populations are in serious decline. Many bat species are now at risk such as this endangered Little Brown Myotis.

Attachment 2 for Cat Education and Policy

Cats, the No. 1 killer of birds in Canada

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/cats-the-no-1-killer-of-birds-in-canada-1.3130437>

Conservationists urge owners to keep cats indoors and leashed when outdoors

North by Northwest · CBC News · Posted/Last Updated: June 27, 2015



Cats are the leading cause of death for birds in Canada according to a recent report. (Amr Abdallah Dalsh/Reuters)

Conservationists are urging owners to keep their cats inside, saying this could help save 200 million birds each year in Canada alone.

That figure comes from a [2013 study](#) published by Environment Canada scientists in the Avian Conservation and Ecology journal, which lists cats as the number one killer of birds in Canada.

Death by window collision is a distant second claiming about 25 million birds per year.

Canada's wild bird populations are estimated to have declined about 12 per cent in the last 40 years, with some populations decreasing by over 95 per cent.

"If we even step back from Canada and we look globally, we know for a fact that cats have contributed directly to the extinction of 34 species of birds. Next to rats and humans, of course, that's the biggest factor," said Ted Cheskey, a conservationist with [Nature Canada](#).

Globally, the number of at-risk bird species has increased from 47 to 87 between 2001 and 2015.

The causes of decline are complex, but cat predation introduces a significant additional pressure to populations that are already facing challenges such as loss of habitat, pesticides and factors associated with global warming, Cheskey said.

"British Columbia has a very high proportion of species at risk. The Okanagan Valley being perhaps the place where there's the highest density of species at risk in all of the country," Cheskey said.

Cheskey also noted that free-roaming cats pose a significant threat to the province's island-based bird populations.

"Island populations are pretty insular, and often they lack predators as well. When a new predator like a cat is introduced to an island, [it] can be totally devastating."

Well-fed, domesticated cats who have ample toys to play with still pose a danger to avian populations, Cheskey said.

"The hunting action is an instinctive action. They may not eat the birds, but they will still hunt."

"The cats, they're indiscriminate on who they choose to kill. It can be a common bird, but it can be a bird that's perilously close to being wiped out as well. It's a big problem."

"Ideally, cats wouldn't be allowed to roam freely. We know that for now that is unacceptable to many cat owners," Cheskey said, which is why Nature Canada plans to launch an awareness campaign later this year.

Many municipalities in Canada already have bylaws that obligate residents to keep their pets indoors, Cheskey said.

"We know it's better for birds and better for cats," said Cheskey, who said the average life span of an outdoor cat is two to five years, compared to fourteen years for an indoor cat.

The campaign will also focus on the importance of spaying and neutering cats to reduce the feral cat population.

To hear the full interview with Ted Cheskey, listen to the CBC audio labelled: [Keep your cats indoors, say conservationists.](#)