



Cats Indoors!

An Educator's Guide for Grades K-6



Thank you for using American Bird Conservancy's *Cats Indoors!* Educator's Guide for Grades K-6. To help us gauge its effectiveness, please answer a few short questions, some of which involve a brief survey of your students prior to and after the activity. If you are unable to complete the student survey, there are still valuable questions you can answer. Thank you for your time.

Before Activity Survey

1. What is the total class size? _____
2. What is the grade or age level? _____
3. How many students in the class have cats? _____
4. How many of those cats go outside? _____
5. How many students (including those who do not own cats) believe it is better for cats to stay indoors? _____

After Activity Survey

1. Having completed the activities, how many students (including those who do not own cats) now believe it is better for cats to stay indoors? _____

Further Questions

1. How many children participated in the activity? _____
2. Have you shared this guide with other educators?

Yes No

3. What activities were most useful?

1 2 3 4 5

4. Did you receive any response from parents?

Yes No

5. If yes, how would you categorize the comments?

Positive Negative Neutral

6. Did you download this guide from the Web?

Yes No

7. If Yes, did the guide download in a timely fashion?

Yes No

8. Did you experience any technical problems?

Yes No If yes, what was the problem?

9. Were you able to resolve the problem?

Yes No

Please suggest any improvements to the guide: _____

Would you be interested in receiving updates by e-mail on the *Cats Indoors!* Campaign or a notice about the children's poster competition for National Keep Your Cat Indoors Day, in May 2002? If yes please provide your e-mail address: _____

Thanks for your feedback!

Educator's Name: _____

School or other facility: _____

Address: _____

**Please fax questionnaire to: (202) 452-1534 or mail to American Bird Conservancy
1834 Jefferson Place, NW, Washington D.C., 20036**





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Dear Teacher:

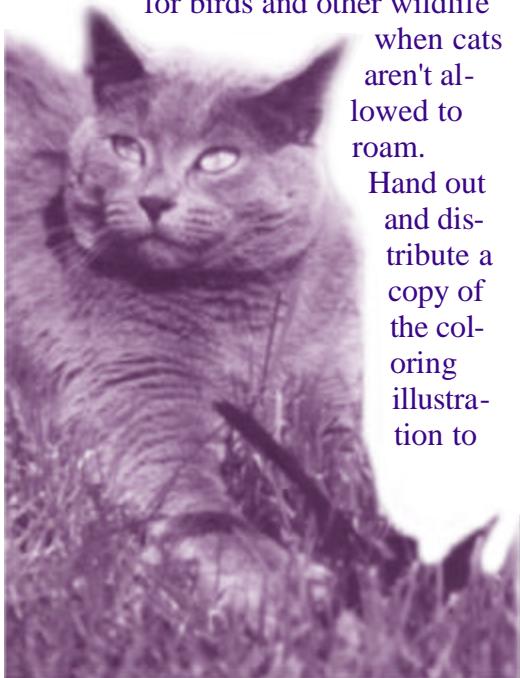
Cats are the most popular pets in the United States. Their fascinating behavior and physical beauty endear them to their owners. But inside every cat are the genes of an efficient, prolific, and non-native predator. Scientists estimate that free-roaming cats kill hundreds of millions of birds and probably more than a billion other small wild animals in the United States yearly.

Recognizing that cat predation is both a local concern and a national issue, American Bird Conservancy has created this educator's guide to help you acquaint your students with this pervasive problem. Use the information on the back of the coloring page included in this guide as background for you and as an introduction for any of the activities you plan to use. The activities cross the curriculum and will fit into your lesson plans neatly. With your help, future generations of wild animals will be safer, and cats will live longer, healthier lives. Plus your students will gain valuable skills by participating in the activities suggested here. Thank you for your help.—American Bird Conservancy

1. The Great Outdoors Is No Place for Cats

Cats allowed outdoors face a host of hazards ranging from automobile accidents to poisoning to disease. After learning of the many dangers that threaten outdoor cats, it's easy to conclude that the best place for a cat is safe indoors. And it's also much safer for birds and other wildlife

when cats
aren't al-
lowed to
roam.
Hand out
and dis-
tribute a
copy of the
coloring
illustra-
tion to



Cat with Barn Swallow by Marjorie Gibson

each student and give kids time to color the page. Ask the kids not to turn the pages over until you tell them to do so. Then ask them to circle the things shown in the picture that are dangerous to the cats. After everyone has finished, use the information on page 2 of the coloring page to go over the answers. Your kids may notice that the cat isn't the only one in danger in the picture. Outdoor cats pose a serious threat to birds and other wildlife. What's an easy solution to protect cats and wildlife? Keep cats indoors, of course!

Now that your students know how important it is to keep cats indoors, help them pass the word on to their families. Send the finished coloring pages home with the kids to share. Add a personal note of your own if you like. You might also consider ordering copies of the brochure “Keeping Cats Indoors Isn’t Just for the Birds” to accompany them. Ordering information for the brochure is found under “Resources” on page 6.

Grades: K-3

Subjects: language arts, science, art.

Objective: Name several dangers to cats outdoors and share this information with family members.

Materials Needed: copies of coloring page for each student, markers or crayons.

Answers: car, spilled antifreeze, dog, sick cat, mischievous boy trying to catch cat, cat in tree could fall, cat could fall into open storm drain.

Subjects: science, art.**Objective:** List several ways to keep cats happy indoors and make two cat toys.**Materials Needed:**
Varies. See specific instructions that follow.**Sneaky Stick Materials:** flexible stick or thin dowel about 18 inches long, embroidery floss or cotton yarn, scissors, nontoxic glue.**Shake, Rattle, and Roll Toy - Materials:** dried beans, plastic film canister with lid, nontoxic plastic glue, embroidery floss or cotton yarn, scissors, glitter or confetti (optional).

2. The Great Indoors Is Fun for Cats

What's a cat to do indoors all day? Plenty, if his owners provide him with lots of love and toys to keep him occupied. Below are just a few ways to make a cat's indoor life a happy one. Go over them with your students, and ask kids to describe ways they play with their cats. Very young children may not be able to make the toys easily. They can draw pictures of cats playing safely indoors.

y Play for fun and bonding. Cats crave the attention of their owners. What better way to spend time with a cat - and help keep him in shape - than to have frequent play sessions? The toys described in this guide are great for interactive play. But cats also love to play with simple things like ping pong balls or balls of aluminum foil (at least one inch in diameter for safety). Note: Never leave string toys out for a cat to play with unattended. Some cats will chew and swallow string.

y Games for when you're away. When you can't be with your cat, he can still have fun if you plan ahead. Leave out an open paper grocery bag or cardboard box for him to hide in. Hide a few treats around the house so he can go on a "scavenger" hunt. And leave out safe toys (not ones with strings) for him to play with by himself.

y A post for scratching. Cats need to scratch to exercise their legs and to condition their claws. Provide a scratching post covered with carpet or sisal, the taller the better. If the cat likes to scratch furniture, draperies, or rugs, cover them with masking tape and place the scratching post nearby. Sprinkling catnip on the post may make it more attractive. When the cat scratches the post, praise him. Trimming cats' claws regularly also alleviates damage from scratching.

y Greens for nibbling. Cats love to munch on grass, catnip, or greens. To keep cats from eating houseplants, give them their own garden. Plant pesticide-free alfalfa, grass, bird seed, or catnip in a pot just for your cat. You'll probably have to keep the pot out of reach until the plants are well established. Then bon appetit!

y A leash for outings. To give a cat safe access to fresh air and sunshine, take him for walks on a leash. Figure-eight harnesses are made especially for cats, and in time, cats grow accustomed to walking with them. A cat should *never* be allowed outside unsupervised, not even on a leash.

Sneaky Stick

1 Cut three 24-inch strands of embroidery floss or cotton yarn and tie them together in a knot close to one end, but leave about 2 inches of floss on the other side of the knot.

2 Tie the 2-inch strands around the end of the stick or dowel and add a few drops of glue to hold in place. Let dry.

3 Braid the strands, beginning where they attach to the dowel and continuing until there is about 3 inches left unbraided at the end. Tie the strands in a knot to hold the braiding in place.

4 Cut several 6-inch pieces of floss and tie the strands at the end of the braid around them to form a tassel. Put a drop of glue under the knot to keep the tassel strands from pulling out when the cat tugs on them. Let dry.

Shake, Rattle, and Roll Toy

- 1 Use the pointed end of a pair of scissors to poke a small hole in the center of the film canister lid. Thread several different lengths of embroidery floss through the hole and tie them together in a knot on the underside of the lid. Trim off any excess floss. Put a drop of glue between the knot and the hole in the lid to keep the strands in place.
- 2 Place several dried beans inside the film canister. If you have a clear canister, it's fun to put glitter or confetti inside along with the beans. That way, when the toy rolls around, it will sparkle. Put a few drops of glue on the top lip to hold the lid in place. Snap the lid on and let dry.
- 3 Tie knots in the ends of the floss strands



3. You Can Help Birds and Other Wildlife

Part I: Bring Birds to Your Yard and See What They Do

If you want your students to observe birds, the best way is to bring the birds to your own schoolyard. Putting out feeders and stocking them well will do the trick. To learn which birds you can hope to attract and what to feed them, consult someone at a store specializing in feeding wild birds or a local nature center. There are also many good books on the subject. Here are a few general tips for setting up bird feeding stations.

y If you have free-roaming cats that frequent your yard, do *not* set up feeders. You will be putting the birds in danger.

y Place feeders several feet away from windows to prevent birds from colliding with the glass. You are also more likely to attract birds if there are trees or other natural cover nearby. But be sure the cover isn't so close to the feeder that cats can hide in it and attack the birds.

y Keep the feeders clean and the seed dry. Birds can pass disease among themselves at feeders and seed can become moldy. At least four times a year, you should empty and scrub out the feeders using water and white vinegar. Rinse and dry the feeders

well before restocking.

y Provide water for drinking and bathing. You can use just about any shallow dish as a birdbath. Keep the water clean and shallow enough that birds can't drown.

y Place nest boxes in your yard. Someone at a nature center or wild bird store can help you choose and place houses appropriate for species in your area.

Enhance your yard with native plants that will attract birds and other wildlife. Creating a schoolyard habitat doesn't have to be a huge or expensive undertaking. Simply planting flowers, shrubs, and trees that produce nectar, fruit, or seeds goes a long way. Creating brush piles or other cover is another simple, effective measure, as birds prefer places where they can hide. The National Wildlife Federation sponsors a schoolyard habitat program that encourages schools to create habitats and even certifies those that do. See "Resources" below for more information.

y Once you have birds about, it's time to begin watching. You'll want to have several bird field guides on hand to identify the species you see, and the more binoculars you have the better. Encourage kids to

Grades: K-6 (part I), 4-6 (part II).

Subjects: language arts, science, social studies.

Objective: Learn how to attract and watch birds and other wildlife. Identify birds in your state that are declining and devise ways to help.

Materials Needed: reference books and research materials, gardening supplies, bird feeders, bird seed, binoculars, paper, pens or pencils, markers.



Ground-nesting birds such as quail are especially vulnerable to cats.

Bells, Schmells

A study in Great Britain found that the mean kill rate for belled cats was 19 and for non-belled cats 15. In other words, cats wearing bells killed more!

"You Can Help," continued
 draw pictures of the birds they see, then compare their pictures and observations with field guides. Develop your own classroom spotter list. Kids can also conduct surveys to determine which types of food different species prefer, what times of day different species frequent your feeder, and whether birds prefer to travel and feed in groups or individually. Consider combining the classroom sketches into your own field guide. Students can research the species and write brief descriptions to accompany the pictures in your guide.

Part II: Interest Kids in Conservation

Learn about some North American birds that have become extinct in the last 100 years. The Ivory-billed Woodpecker, Passenger Pigeon, and Carolina Parakeet are examples. The story of these birds shows

that even common species can vanish because of habitat loss, overhunting, and lack of protection. Share the book *Last of the Curlews* with your class to begin a discussion of bird extinction.

Many scientists now believe that birds evolved from dinosaurs such as *Tyrannosaurus Rex*, and recent fossil discoveries support this theory. Build upon kids' knowledge of dinosaur extinction to interest them in bird evolution and conservation. Local bird watching and conservation groups may be able to lead your class on a field trip or send out a speaker. Learn about species that need help in your state by checking the list of threatened and endangered species on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Web site at www.fws.gov. Determine why the species are in decline. Then brainstorm ways to help them, and make posters depicting the birds, the problems they face, and ways to help.

4. Dangerous Numbers

Grades: 5-6

Subjects: math, science

Objective: Use statistics on bird and wildlife predation as the basis for solving math equations.

Materials Needed: copies of the equations here for each student.

Fat Cats Are Still Killers

Many people mistakenly believe that a well-fed cat won't kill wildlife. Not so. In one study, a regularly fed cat killed nearly 1,700 animals over an 18-month period.

Solving these word problems will not only strengthen students' math skills, but will also help them appreciate the magnitude of problems cats can face and cause to wildlife. The figures used for this activity come from actual scientific research.

1 If an outdoor cat typically lives 5 years and an indoor cat lives 17, the indoor cat lives how many times longer than the outdoor cat?

2 If there are 66 million pet cats in the United States and 35% are kept strictly indoors, how many cats are allowed outside?

3 Studies have shown that of the animals free-roaming cats kill, approximately 65% are small mammals, 25% are birds, and 10% are reptiles, amphibians, and insects. It is also known that some free-roaming cats kill more than 100 animals in a year. If a cat kills 117 animals in

one year, how many of each type of animal would it kill, based on the percentages above?

4 One regularly fed cat who roamed a wildlife experiment station was recorded to have killed 1,690 animals over an 18-month period. What is the average number of animals the cat killed per month?

5 A Virginia study compared the predation of rural and urban cats. In the same 10-month period, each urban cat caught an average of 26 animals, while one rural cat caught an average of 83 animals. What is the ratio of kills between the urban cats and the rural cat?

6 Experts who treat injured wildlife report that only about 20% of the animals that come to them after being injured by cats survive. One wildlife rescue center reports that 30% of the birds and 20% of

Resources

Cats Indoors! materials include an education kit with 13 fact sheets, a copy of *Bird Conservation* magazine, and the brochure "Keeping Cats Indoors Isn't Just for the Birds" for \$6. Additional copies of the brochure are also available. A four-color poster is available for \$5.50. Write to American Bird Conservancy, *Cats Indoors!*, 1834 Jefferson Pl., NW, Washington, DC 20036 or call (202) 452-1535 or visit the Web site at www.abcbirds.org.

All the Birds of North America: American Bird Conservancy's Field Guide by Jack L. Griggs (HarperCollins, 1997)

The American Birding Association Web site is at www.americanbirding.org. It features content for kids and a list of books.

The Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology offers several educational programs involving the observation of feeder birds, including Project Feeder Watch and the Great Backyard Bird Count. In addition, the Lab's Web site offers information, images, and recorded bird calls. The site is at <http://birds.cornell.edu>.

The Bird Feeder Book: An Easy Guide to Attracting, Identifying, and Understanding Your Feeder Birds by Donald and Lillian Stokes (Little Brown, 1987).

The Indoor Cat, How to Understand, Enjoy and Care for House Cats by Patricia Curtis and Audrey Hayes (Perigee, 1997).

The Kid's Guide to Social Action: How to Solve the Social Problems You Choose - and Turn Creative Thinking into Positive Action by Barbara Lewis (Free Spirit, 1998).

The National Wildlife Federation's Guide to Gardening for Wildlife: How to Create a Beautiful Backyard Habitat for Birds, Butterflies, and other Wildlife by Craig Tufts and Peter Loewer (Rodale, 1995).

The National Wildlife Federation sponsors a Schoolyard Wildlife Habitat Program and awards certificates to schools that create such habitats. The Federation Web site contains lots of information on creating a habitat. Visit it at www.nwf.org/habitats.

"And The Survey Says," continued

accomplished. You can find your local animal shelter or humane society by looking in the phone book. For help in finding local birding groups, visit the Web site of the American Birding Association (www.americanbirding.org), which also lists birding festivals across the country. Share the results of your survey with the groups and offer the services of your class in creating and distributing information to the community. Use the information and activities in this guide to create a display at a library, a local bank, or supermarket. You could make and sell cat toys and include a class-made fact sheet about the dangers to cats and wildlife if cats are allowed to roam. Write letters to the editors of local papers. Your kids may even be able to work with scientists or naturalists in your area to determine the extent of cat predation in a park or other natural area.

The possibilities are as varied as the communities we live in. But one thing is certain, by beginning a *Cats Indoors!* campaign, your students will learn that they can make a difference.

Cats Indoors! An Educator's Guide for Grades K-6 was written and designed by Rhonda Lucas Donald for American Bird Conservancy. This guide was made possible by a grant from The Kenneth A. Scott Charitable Trust, managed by Key Trust Company of Ohio, Trustee.

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Teachers:

We'd love to receive survey results, drawings, photos, or other materials your students generate during their *Cats Indoors!* studies. Please send them to American Bird Conservancy, 1834 Jefferson Pl. Washington, DC 20036. We will not be able to return any materials.



Linda Winter

Ways to Help Cats Make the Adjustment to Life Indoors

If students have outdoor cats and need help getting them adjusted to life indoors, these tips will help.

- Make the adjustment gradually. Cats are creatures of habit, so you must slowly replace the cat's old routine with the new one. Gradually increase the time the cat is inside, and decrease the time outside until she is indoors at all times. Making the adjustment to life indoors may be easier during the winter, when a cat may want to stay inside more anyway.
- Play more. When the cat is inside, play with her. Play is a great reward for staying indoors, and will bring a cat and owner closer.
- Supervise excursions. If your cat howls to go out, let her - as long as she's wearing a leash and harness and you go with her.
- Consult an expert. If your cat develops behavior problems after making the transition to life indoors, it may be because the change was too abrupt or because she is bored. Your veterinarian or someone at your local animal shelter can advise you. However, litter-box accidents may also be caused by disease or infection, so you should consult your veterinarian right away if your cat develops this problem.

