

CONDUCTING A CATS INDOORS! CAMPAIGN IN YOUR COMMUNITY



Funded by The Pet Care Trust



Convincing cat owners, decision makers, and the general public that all cats should be indoors or under direct control when outdoors is an immense undertaking. However, with the right tools and a strong coalition, much can be accomplished.

To support your efforts, ABC has developed many educational materials, including a brochure, fact sheets, posters, print, radio, and TV Public Service Announcements (PSAs), an Educator's Guide for Grades K-6, and two Power Point presentations. Most materials can be downloaded from the Web site:

www.abcbirds.org/cats/catsindoors. Thousands of groups and individuals are conducting *Cats Indoors!* Campaigns in their area or state. This activist guide highlights a few initiatives, and offers tips on how to conduct a *Cats Indoors!* Campaign in your area.



SUCCESS STORIES



Local Education Campaigns

The Humane Society for Seattle/King Co., Progressive Animal Welfare Society, Seattle Audubon Society, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Seattle Animal Control, King County Wildlife Program, and ABC formed the Puget Sound Cats Indoors Coalition. A new brochure was produced using local information and resources. The brochures are being distributed to the public through festivals, veterinarians, and animal shelters. Local media has covered the issue.

Action: Find local partners and conduct an education campaign in your area.



State-wide Campaigns

*The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FFWCC) and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Nongame Wildlife Program (MNDNR) are conducting state-wide Cats Indoors! Campaigns. Part-time coordinators have distributed thousands of brochures and posters to veterinarians, humane societies, animal control agencies, wildlife rehabilitators, and nature centers throughout their state. The FFWCC also produced their own brochure, *Impacts of Feral and Free-Ranging Domestic Cats on Wildlife in Florida*. The MNDNR issued a state-wide press release and distributed the TV PSA to major TV stations. Both agencies have Web pages on cats and a link to ABC's *Cats Indoors!* Web page.*

Action: Encourage your state wildlife agency to adopt the campaign, distribute materials, publish articles in their publications, and create Web pages on the issue.



SUCCESS STORIES



Media Campaigns

Each year, ABC and Wild Bird Centers of America co-sponsor National Keep Your Cat Indoors Day on the second Saturday in May in conjunction with International Migratory Bird Day. A children's poster competition is held to help publicize the event, and to teach kids that it is better for cats and wildlife when cats are kept indoors. ABC issues national press releases announcing the event and the winners. The releases and posters can be viewed and downloaded from our Web site. To celebrate the day in Los Alamos, NM, campaign supporters produced a display for their local library, and got their county commissioners to pass a resolution endorsing the day.

Action: Use these press releases to advertise the event and the issue in your area. Ask your county commissioners to pass a resolution endorsing Cats Indoors!



County Park Campaigns

Populations of stray and feral cats can be a problem in parks and other natural areas because people abandon their pets there. If park managers do not remove the cats immediately, the cat population can quickly explode, as happened in some Miami-Dade County parks in Florida. To deal with a growing problem, the Board of Commissioners strengthened the laws against abandoning and feeding animals, and authorized staff to humanely remove nuisance animals. Cat advocates, who fed cats in the parks for years, strongly objected. ABC, Tropical Audubon Society and others formed the Natural Areas Coalition of South Florida to support the new legislation. Cats from the park have been humanely trapped and are being kept in an outdoor cat sanctuary pending adoption. Cats are no longer fed in the parks.

Action: If stray and feral cats are a problem in your local parks, ask park staff and commissioners to pass and enforce ordinances that prohibit feeding and abandoning animals, and to enforce anti-litter laws. Volunteer to trap the cats and take them to a shelter. Educate the public on the cruelty of abandoning pets and the need to remove the cats from the park. Support the park's efforts in the media.



SUCCESS STORIES



National Park Campaigns

Stray and feral cats were killing endangered Piping Plover, Least Tern, Black Skimmer, American Oystercatcher and other shorebirds that nest on the beaches of Cape Hatteras National Seashore. The National Park Service (NPS) hired a biologist to humanely trap the cats and take them to a local shelter. In partnership with The Nature Conservancy, they also hired a coordinator to conduct a *Cats Indoors!* Campaign for residents and tourists. Education materials were developed highlighting local information on cats and birds, and were distributed with campaign brochures and posters to veterinarians, animal shelters, and public officials in communities along the shoreline. Staff visited area schools, and published articles on the issue.

Action: If cats are a problem in a national park near you, encourage the park to conduct a similar campaign, and publicly support their efforts.



Local Ordinance Campaigns

Complaints about cats getting into garbage, and spraying prompted a campaign supporter in Viroqua, WI to bring up the need for a cat leash law at a city council meeting. The activist made copies of *Cats Indoors!* materials from ABC's Web site and gave them to every council member. She also circulated a petition for signature. The public safety committee drafted the legislation, which was approved by the council.

Action: If there is a cat overpopulation problem in your community, ask your city or county commissioners to pass cat control ordinances. For more information, please see the fact sheets: Cat Licensing; Get the Facts About Cat Law; and The Importance of Local Cat Ordinances.



Coalitions: The Sum is Greater Than the Parts

As you can see, whether you are working at the local or state level, establishing a *Cats Indoors!* coalition may be your first and most important step. Partnerships enable sharing the work, and help give your campaign more clout. Give your coalition a name to show backing, stability, and continuity.







Identify, inform, and ask for the involvement of groups and individuals with a natural interest in the campaign, such as conservation groups, bird and garden clubs, veterinarians, humane societies, animal control agencies, wildlife rehabilitators, nature centers, and state or local wildlife agencies.

College students and faculty members, especially those in wildlife resources or environmental studies, may provide an excellent source for leaders and volunteers.

Humane societies may join your coalition because free-roaming cats are at greater risk of suffering and premature death. If your objective includes animal control legislation, the active involvement of humane societies is essential. However, if you are addressing the problem of people feeding stray cats, these groups may or may not help, or may be your primary opposition. However, you may be able to agree to disagree on the issue of feral cats, but work together on the issue of cat owners keeping their cats indoors, spayed or neutered, and never abandoned.

Coalition Ground Rules

Once your coalition is formed:

-  Establish and articulate goals, objectives, strategies, time lines, and budgets.
-  Agree on procedures for clearing public statements and communicating among partners.
-  Define and assign tasks.
-  Meet regularly and communicate through other means such as e-mail.
-  Acknowledge and thank coalition partners for their efforts during and after the campaign.
-  Communicate with ABC to find out what's going on elsewhere, but also to share your good ideas with others.



Develop Your Case - The Very First Step

Presenting solid and compelling data is the first step in altering entrenched beliefs and behaviors. ABC's *Cats Indoors!* education materials will support your effort. However, addressing this issue at local and state levels also requires information specific to your situation. The following are some suggestions:



Identify the natural attributes of your community or state, such as species of resident and migratory birds, or threatened or endangered animals vulnerable to cat predation. Define specific problems in parks or beach areas; and document incidents of cat predation on wildlife. Many parks have an inventory of wildlife occurring there. Factor the economics of birding in your community or state into your local case for support.



Analyze cat overpopulation and related problems in your area. Become familiar with existing laws and regulations affecting cats and wildlife and how well they are working. Find out how many cats: enter local shelter(s) each year; are stray; are reclaimed by owners; are adopted or euthanized; and how many nuisance calls are generated about cats.



Build a catalogue of local stories, problems and case studies that support your position.





Campaign Components

Issue campaigns usually have four components:

- 👤 **Campaign Agenda:** with education, policy, research, and action goals
- 👤 **Communications:** getting the word out
- 👤 **Mobilizing the grassroots:** letter writing, telephone calls, rallies
- 👤 **Fundraising:** covering the costs

Campaign Agenda

Campaign plans have to be realistic and reflect the resources activists can muster and their capacities overall to conduct local campaigns. Objectives may include elements of any of the previously mentioned campaigns. Keep in mind that you may need to respond to an initiative from another source, e.g. an animal control agency proposal to regulate free-roaming cats.

Whether appearing before a local parks authority or testifying before the state legislature, knowledge of how the public authority operates and the advocacy skills needed are vital. Coalition partners and grassroots manuals such as those listed here can be very helpful. Information from organizations who have experience in working with the decision making body also can be very useful.

Communications

The capacity to do public relations and media work to create public support is crucial. If a coalition partner cannot supply this essential expertise, grassroots organizing manuals including those referenced in this fact sheet provide good guidance.

Media can include major news stories, opinion pieces, radio or television interviews, articles in group newsletters, or letters to the editor of local papers. Make use of the campaign print, radio, and TV PSAs available from ABC, and please share your press.

A word of caution: media coverage on this issue can be problematic. This issue can be emotional, and reporters may use it to pit cats vs. birds or else incorrectly reflect the conservation or cruelty issue. This is why it's important to have compelling documentation about cat predation, hazards to cats who roam free (see *Cats Indoors!* materials), and to seek out reporters interested in conservation.



Mobilizing the Grassroots

Decision makers can be swayed by the number of people they hear from and who these people are. In addition to core support from coalition members, visits to individual decision makers, and testifying at hearings, it may be useful to organize letter-writing campaigns, phone call blitzes, and even rallies. The bibliography includes guides for grassroots organizing techniques.

Fundraising

Many effective grassroots campaigns are run on very small budgets. Costs may be incidental, e.g., postage. Fundraising can be labor-intensive. Seek out in-kind and cash contributions and fundraising help from organizational partners. Many grassroots organizing manuals offer excellent suggestions for small fundraising activities, and fundraising events can also help build awareness of the issue.

Sources of Information for Organizing:

Following are resources on how to organize for change in your community which can be found in libraries, book stores, the INTERNET, or from the organizations listed.

Alinsky, S.D. 1971. Rules for Radicals: A Pragmatic Primer for Realistic Radicals. Vintage Books. New York. 196 pp.

Bobo, K., J. Kendall, S. Max. 1991. Organizing for Social Change: A Manual for Activists in the 1990s. Seven Locks Press, Cabin John, MD. 271 pp.

Also, please see the following web sites:

“The Virtual Activist”: www.netaction.org/training/

“The Foundation Center”: www.foundationcenter.org

“The National Database of Non-profit Organizations”: www.guidestar.org



For more information, contact:

AMERICAN BIRD CONSERVANCY
CATS INDOORS! THE CAMPAIGN FOR SAFER BIRDS AND CATS
1731 Connecticut Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20009

Phone: 202/234-7181; Fax: 202/234-7182; E-mail: abc@abcbirds.org; Web site: www.abcbirds.org