

## WHAT TO DO ABOUT YOUR NEIGHBOR'S CATS IN YOUR YARD

Bird lovers, indoor cat owners, gardeners and homeowners often ask, "What can I do about my neighbor's cats getting into my yard, digging up and fouling my garden, spraying my bushes and deck, and killing birds at my feeders?" Unfortunately, there aren't any easy answers. The following are some suggestions that may be helpful. However, the listing of these products does not imply American Bird Conservancy's (ABC) endorsement.

**Ask your neighbor:** The best solution is to get your neighbor to keep their cat indoors or under their control when outside. The ABC brochure, *Keeping Cats Indoors Isn't Just For The Birds*, ([www.abcbirds.org/cats/brochure/brochure.htm](http://www.abcbirds.org/cats/brochure/brochure.htm)) and fact sheet, *How to Make an Outdoor Cat a Happy Indoor Cat*, ([www.abcbirds.org/cats/outin.pdf](http://www.abcbirds.org/cats/outin.pdf)) should be helpful in explaining to your neighbor why they should keep their cat indoors and how to best make that transition. Explain to them that their cat can still get some fresh air if they build an outdoor enclosure or screened-in porch, or train them to accept a harness and leash. See below for more information on these options.

**Cat enclosures:** Many cat owners who want their cat to enjoy the outdoors safely will provide an enclosure. For a manual on how to build one, see the SafeCat Outdoor Enclosure at: [www.just4cats.com](http://www.just4cats.com). The *Cat Enclosure Kit*, which measures 6' x 6' x 6,' can be ordered at [www.cdpets.com](http://www.cdpets.com) or call 1 - 8 8 8 - 5 5 4 - 7 3 8 7 .

Another option is the *KittyWalk* at [www.midnightpass.com](http://www.midnightpass.com) or call 1-877-844-4438. Cat enclosures can be made interesting for cats by placing tree branches, tires, wooden boxes, platforms and other structures on which cats can play and bask in the sun.



Photo: Irene Davy



Photo: Kim Brink

**Training on a leash:** If your neighborhood is not overrun by free-roaming dogs, your neighbor may want to train their cat to go outside on a harness and leash. This takes patience, but it can be done. The cat can get

used to a harness by wearing it for short periods of time inside the house. Cats should never be left outside unsupervised while on a leash or lead.

**Cat-proof fencing:** If your cat-owning neighbor has a fenced in yard but refuses to keep their cat indoors or otherwise under control, perhaps you can convince them to install cat-proof fencing. This won't prevent the cats from killing birds and other wildlife in *their* yard, but at least it will keep the cats from killing wildlife in *your* yard. One option is *The Cat Fence-In System*. This is a 3/4" mesh black netting that attaches to the top of an existing fence. It angles inward, preventing cats from climbing over the top of the fence. Or, if you have a fenced-in yard, you may want to install this fencing yourself, because it is supposed to keep cats *out* of a yard as well. For more information, visit [www.catfencein.com](http://www.catfencein.com) or call 1-888-738-9099. A similar product is the *Affordable Cat Fence* at [www.catfence.com](http://www.catfence.com) or call 1-888-840-CATS .

Another method is *Kitty Klips* which is supposed to be easy to install, inexpensive to buy and works on nearly every type of tall fence. *Kitty Klips* is PVC pipe strategically placed to make it impossible for cats to dig in their claws and clear the fence. For more information on *Kitty Klips*, visit their web site at [www.corporatevideo.com/klips](http://www.corporatevideo.com/klips).

**Humanely trapping the cat:** When all else fails, some people feel they have no choice but to trap their neighbor's cat and take it to a shelter. You should check with local laws first, because in some areas, it is illegal to trap a neighbor's cat, even if it is on your property. Also warn your neighbor that you plan to trap their cat if they refuse to control it. Many animal control agencies or shelters have humane live traps to lend to homeowners who need to trap a nuisance animal. Use bait such as sardines or tuna spread on newspaper or a paper plate, and put it in the back of the trap such that the cat must enter the trap to get the bait. Regularly check the trap, preferably

every hour. A word of caution: well-fed cats can be hard to trap. You may also end up with non-target animals such as raccoons, opossums, or skunks, so avoid trapping at night. Also, minimize trauma to the cat by gently handling the trap, and put a cloth over it during transportation. Take the cat to your local shelter and tell them it's your neighbor's cat so that they can contact your neighbor. **Never abandon the cat or harm it in any way.** Be extremely careful not to get bitten or scratched, especially if you are trapping stray or feral cats, because they may carry rabies and other diseases. For more tips on trapping cats, see the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals fact sheet, *Feral Cats: Trapping is the Kindest Solution*, at: [www.helpinganimals.com](http://www.helpinganimals.com).

**Working for laws to prohibit free-roaming cats:** While this can be a multi-year effort, working for local cat ordinances to decrease a cat over-population problem or to prohibit free-roaming cats can be very effective, especially if the necessary funding for enforcement goes along with it. For more information, see the fact sheet, *Get The Facts About Cat Law* at: [www.abcbirds.org/cats/catlaw.pdf](http://www.abcbirds.org/cats/catlaw.pdf).

**Sonic cat collar:** *CatAlert* by Willana Lifesciences in England offers a sonic cat collar. The collar emits a high-pitched signal every 7 seconds to alert birds and other wildlife that a cat is near. A small field trial showed a 66% reduction in the number of birds killed, but it did not show a reduction in the number of small mammals killed. It is unknown whether *CatAlert* would be effective in reducing cat predation on nestlings, fledglings, reptiles or amphibians, and it would do nothing to protect the cat from the hazards of roaming outdoors. For more information, visit [www.willana\\_lifesciences.co.uk](http://www.willana_lifesciences.co.uk).

**CatStop:** *CatStop* is a lightweight neoprene bib that attaches to a cat's collar and prevents the cat from catching birds. It was invented by a bird lover who loves cats. A number of Wild Birds Unlimited and other bird-feeding stores sell this product. For more information, see: [www.catgoods.com](http://www.catgoods.com).

**Fencing around bird feeders:** Some people have found that placing poultry or rabbit wire fencing around bird feeders

and bird baths is a very effective way to prevent cats from killing birds at these locations. The fence need only be 2 feet high and 4 feet in diameter. If a cat tries to jump over it, it gives birds a chance to fly away.

**Hazelnut shells:** Some people have had success in keeping cats away from feeders by placing hazelnut shells under them. Cats avoid walking on hazelnut shells because the shells are sharp. The shells last over 5 years, prevent weeds, and are an attractive color. To order, call Evergreen Orchards at 1-866-434-4818 or visit [www.evergreenorchards.com](http://www.evergreenorchards.com).

**More tips on feeding birds:** Keep feeders well away from bushes and underbrush where cats can hide, and regularly clean feeders to prevent fungus and mold from growing in the seed. If free-roaming cats remain a problem at your feeders, please discontinue feeding the birds. You are doing more harm by attracting birds into a yard where there are cats.

**Spraying with a garden hose:** Some people try to discourage cats from getting into their yard by spraying them with a garden hose. This will only be an effective deterrent if the cat gets sprayed with water *every* time it comes into your yard.

**What we know doesn't work:** Putting *bells* on a cat's collar does not prevent predation on birds and other wildlife. A cat can learn to silently stalk its prey. Even if the bell does ring, a bird would not necessarily associate the sound with danger, and a bell would do nothing to protect young animals. *Feeding* a cat also does not prevent predation. Scientific studies have proven that well-fed cats still kill wildlife because the urge to hunt and the urge to eat are controlled by different portions of a cat's brain. *Declawing* a cat does not prevent predation. A free-roaming declawed cat in a scientific study in Wichita, KS killed more birds than any other cat in the study.



Photo: Dr. Gil Ewing

For more information, contact:  
**AMERICAN BIRD CONSERVANCY**  
CATS INDOORS - THE CAMPAIGN FOR SAFER BIRDS AND CATS  
1731 Connecticut Avenue, NW, 3rd Floor  
Washington, DC 20009  
Phone: 202/234-7181; Fax: 202/234-7182;  
E-mail: [abc@abcbirds.org](mailto:abc@abcbirds.org); Web site: [www.abcbirds.org](http://www.abcbirds.org)