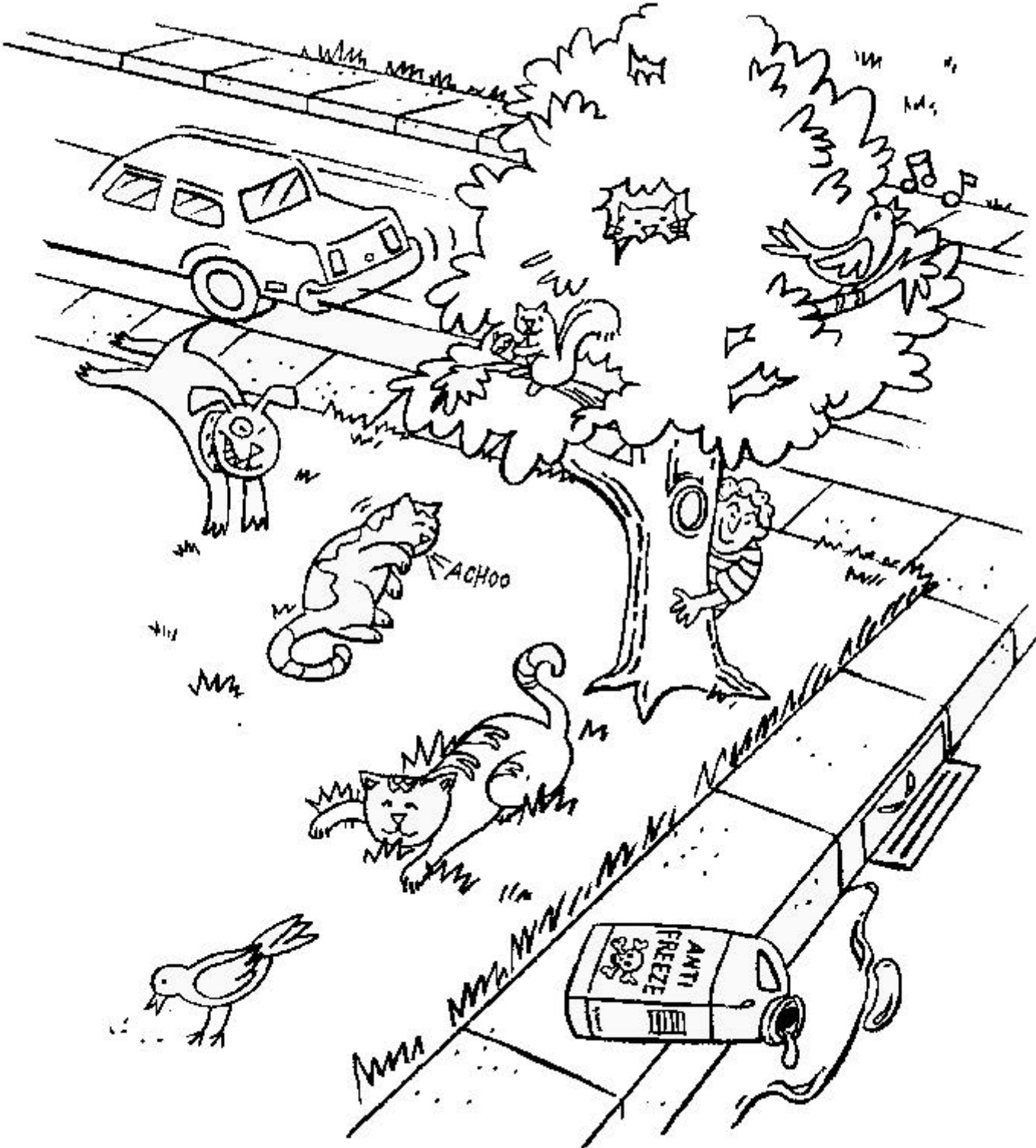


American Bird Conservancy *Cat Indoors!* Campaign
Coloring Page



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Why Allowing Cats Outdoors is Hazardous to Cats, Wildlife, and Humans

Outdoor cats, even otherwise well-cared-for cats, face an extraordinary array of dangers. According to The Humane Society of the United States, free-roaming cats typically live less than five years, whereas cats kept exclusively indoors often live to 17 or more years of age.

General Hazards to Free-Roaming Cats
Cars. Cars kill millions of cats each year in the United States and maim countless others.

Poisoning. Cats can find chemicals that are poisonous to them on treated lawns, in rat or mice bait, and on driveways and roads from car antifreeze.

Other Animals. Outdoor cats can be injured or killed by free-roaming dogs, wildlife, and other cats.

Human Abuse. Animal care and control agencies report cases of cats being burned, stabbed, or otherwise hurt. Free-roaming cats may also be stolen.

Traps. Cats caught in traps set for other animals may suffer for days before release or starvation.

Overpopulation. Unaltered outdoor cats are the major source of the cat overpopulation problem, causing millions of unwanted cats to be euthanized at animal shelters each year. Kittens can be safely spayed or neutered as early as eight weeks of age, and there are significant physical and behavioral benefits from this procedure.

Disease Risks to Free-Roaming Cats, Wildlife, and Humans

Free-roaming cats are at risk from many diseases.

Some diseases affecting cats can be transmitted to humans.

Rabies is caused by a virus that can infect warm-blooded animals, including cats, people, wildlife, and farm animals. Rabies is lethal if not detected and treated immediately.

Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV) compromises a cat's immune system and is the leading cause of death due to infectious disease in cats. There is no cure.

FeLV has also been diagnosed in a mountain lion.

Feline Panleukopenia (FPV) (feline distemper) is extremely contagious. FPV disarms the cat's immune system. It is fatal without intensive medical treatment. FPV has been diagnosed in the endangered Florida panther.

Feline Infectious Peritonitis (FIP) is a debilitating and fatal viral disease. No cure exists. FIP has been diagnosed in jaguars, mountain lions, and lynxes.

Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) destroys a cat's immune system and is often fatal. It is found most often in unneutered, free-roaming males. No vaccine or cure is available. FIV has been found in bobcats and the endangered Florida panther.

Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis and Feline Calicivirus are extremely contagious, with death occurring most often in very young or older cats.

Cat-scratch disease, toxoplasmosis, lyme disease, roundworms, hookworms, and plague are other cat diseases or parasites that are transmissible to humans and can cause serious illness.

The Threat Outdoor Cats Pose to Birds and Other Wildlife

How many birds and other wild animals do domestic cats kill each year in the United States? No one knows, although reasonable extrapolations from scientific data can be made. Nationwide, cats are estimated to kill hundreds of millions of birds and more than a billion small mammals such as rabbits, chipmunks, squirrels, and shrews each year. Cats kill not only plentiful animals, but also rare and endangered species for which the loss of even one animal is significant.

There are more than 66 million pet cats in the United States. A recent poll shows approximately 35% are kept exclusively indoors, leaving more than 40 million owned cats free to kill birds and other wildlife all or part of the time. In addition, millions of stray and feral cats roam our cities, suburbs, farmlands, and natural areas. Strays may be lost or abandoned by their owners. Feral cats are the descendants of strays and shun all human contact. These cats are victims of human irresponsibility. No one knows how many homeless cats are in the United States, but estimates range from 60 to 100 million. These cats lead short, miserable lives. Loss and fragmentation of wildlife habitat, resulting from development, road construction, intensive

agriculture, and other land uses, are by far the leading causes of declining bird populations.

Domestic cats are numerous, efficient, non-native predators that contribute to the decline. Here's how:

Cats Are *Not* a Natural Part of Our Ecosystems The domestic cat is a descendant of the wild cats of Africa and Asia. Cats were introduced to North America when Europeans arrived on this continent. Some people presume that cats killing certain animals, such as field mice, is beneficial, but native small mammals are important in maintaining biologically diverse ecosystems.

Cats Compete With Native Predators. Owned cats have huge advantages over native predators. And they are not strictly territorial, keeping members of their own species out of a given area.

As a result, cats can exist at high densities and may out-compete native predators for food. In addition, unaltered cats are prolific breeders. A female cat can have up to three litters per year, with four to six kittens per litter. Studies of Cat Predation. Extensive studies of the feeding habits of domestic, free-roaming cats have been conducted over the last 50 years. These studies show that approximately 60% to 70% of the wildlife cats kill are small mammals, 20% to 30% are birds, and up to 10% are amphibians, reptiles, and insects.

Scientists have found that the number and types of animals killed by cats vary greatly. Some free-roaming domestic cats kill more than 100 animals each year. Rural cats take more prey than suburban or urban cats. Birds that nest or feed on the ground are the most susceptible to cat predation, as are nestlings and fledglings of many other bird species.

For more Information

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