

Keeping Cats Indoors Isn't Just for the Birds!

Courtesy of the Puget Sound Cats Indoors Coalition

You care about your cat...

As a responsible cat owner, you know that cats need a caring home to be healthy and happy. Keeping them indoors is part of providing a caring home. We often feel there is still something “wild” about our cats, but they are domestic animals, not wildlife. Every time our cats go outdoors, they are at risk. Also, when we keep our cats indoors, we are kinder neighbors. Often cats fight or howl at night, or use our neighbors’ yards as litter boxes, exposing children to feces and contaminating vegetable gardens.



As a responsible and loving cat owner, what would you choose for your cat?

Staying Indoors...

What would your Cat Gain?

- Possibly 10-15 more years to live, triple that of an outdoor cat
- Better daily health
- Fewer injuries, infections, and illnesses
- A safer, more comfortable environment

What would You Gain?

- A healthier cat and fewer veterinary visits
- A flea-free zone
- Appreciative neighbors
- The chance to detect feline illnesses, such as urinary infections, before it's too late
- Peace of mind knowing your cat is safe

What would your Cat Miss?

- Being hit by a car
- Attacks by other animals, wild or domestic
- Getting lost
- Contracting serious or incurable disease, such as feline leukemia, distemper and FIV (cat HIV)
- Parasite infection
- Being trapped, poisoned or stolen and inhumanely trapped
- Illness from consuming a wild bird, mammal, reptile or amphibian

Help for the Reluctant Cat - How to Enrich Indoor Living

Provide gradual adjustment time

Bring him in for an increasingly longer time each day (for the first year, bring your cat in only during the wildlife breeding season-March through June)

Build a safe outdoor enclosure

Animal shelters and veterinarians can give you the specifications, or buy a ready made one

Make resting shelves or high perches by windows so cats can see outside, or provide multiple layer cat “condos”

Provide a scratching post

Open screened windows so your cat can sit in the fresh air and enjoy new smells

Scoop litter box daily

Keep lots of toys

- Include bags and boxes, “chase” toys (balls, small objects, etc.) and “kill” toys (cat nip animals such as stuffed mice)
- Rotate the toys, and store “out of play” toys in a large jar or bag with some loose catnip
- Hide toys from them and play with your cat regularly
- Suspend toys from tables
- Grow a pot of wheat or oat grass (sold at pet supply stores) for your cat to chew on

Take your cat on walks. Use a leash and harness, not a collar, and experiment indoors first

Don't feel guilty. Cats are not wild animals; they need your care

Cats and Wildlife

There are about 500,000 cats in the greater Puget Sound area alone. If each catches only one bird per month, 6,000,000 birds would be killed per year. A Department of Fish and Wildlife study counted 20 cats per block in a typical Seattle neighborhood. That is an enormous number of predators on wildlife.

What do cats do when they are outdoors?

Lounge in the sun, explore and play. What is cat play? Hunting, chasing, stalking, and killing. Even if the bird or other animal escapes, they often die later. Cats carry bacteria in their mouths that overwhelm small animal immune systems. Injuries and a high degree of stress usually kill a small bird or mammal even after it escapes the cat.

Many people don't believe their cats would kill wildlife

Cats are predators whose instinct is to hunt, stalk and kill. The absence of evidence at your back door doesn't mean your cat has not killed. Some cats do not bring in their kills. Other times, wildlife is not killed right away, but dies elsewhere.

Well fed cats still hunt

Our cats' urge to hunt and chase is located in a different part of the brain than the urge to eat. Companion cats are usually well fed, but continue to kill wildlife

Domestic cats are not part of the natural ecosystem

Europeans introduced domestic cats in large numbers to this country during the late 1800s. North American birds have developed defenses against these "super predators". House cats differ from natural predators because:

- They are an introduced predator
- They exist in unnaturally large numbers, far greater than any natural predator
- They are prolific breeders
- They tolerate other cats in their territories, so large numbers are maintained
- They have a constant food source and are often more fit than natural predators

Bells Don't Help

Birds do not recognize a soft, tinkling bell as an alarm and will not be scared away in time. Cats can learn to walk soundlessly, even with a bell.

Always spay or neuter your cat

If you are absolutely convinced that the indoor life simply does not fit your cat's lifestyle, pledge to make your next cat an indoor-only cat.