

WILDLIFE COMMITTEE

February 21, 2025

1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Literature resources folder:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1pK5Eur7G_ABeGQzfTlJeAqKk6NlpMnp9?usp=drive_link

Outdoor Cat Proposal :

[uuhdU6JMYpdw9GDcGVRW13i/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=111926354097808985220&rtpof=true&sd=true](https://docs.google.com/document/d/uuhdU6JMYpdw9GDcGVRW13i/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=111926354097808985220&rtpof=true&sd=true)

NOTES:

Attendees:

Scott Meister

Joy O'Keefe

Liza Leher

Katie Baughman

Michael Eichholtz

Gary Glowacki

Welcome from Joy.

Need to write the introduction with attention to the sensitivity of the issue but need for education and awareness.

Joy will add - more info on distribution around the world.

Mike will share a paper that talks about invasive species with a section on feral cats.

Scott talked about the Illinois distribution. There is nothing that documents the distribution of feral cats across the state. He has looked at other papers to show the range and populations, etc. in and out of state. He uses notations from I Naturalist as a source.

There are cat observations on I Naturalist. **Scott will add the citation from I Naturalist.**

There does not seem to be a good handle on population size. Is this something the State should know? Should we encourage them to find this out? Is it that useful? Est. numbers are used to document songbird deaths. Might be helpful if recommending reduction of outdoor cats.

Michael has an estimation of the damage – each estimate will be so broad that they will compound on each other. Not sure spending a lot of time on this will not be that useful.

The Committee assumes similar impacts in IL. How did other states estimate their numbers?
Scott will include this information.

Cat Productivity and Mortality section:

Mike has a bunch of papers and information that will be added later today.

Literature to parse to separate out rural and urban areas –

Three sources of outdoor cats – research doesn't exist but the management may need to be different based on these three sources of free ranging cats.

3 sources of cats:

Owned and housed

Owned and barn dwelling

Feral

Mike has not been able to find any estimates in changes in population size and any potential growth rate. Assume - higher mortality for urban than rural cats. Assume biodiversity impact felt more in rural areas and home range sizes are very different.

Table:

Consequences of introduction

Known pest range

Pest reproductive potential – **Mike to add summary text to the table to explain why the committee gave these cats a score of 3**

Life history – actual productivity over a lifetime

Economic Impact

E = 1

Parasites transmitted – cats can be injurious to agriculture animals, e.g., toxoplasmosis – 30% of people impacted, livestock and goats are impacted – spontaneous abortion. Sarcosystis - can cause large cysts in sheep or goats - lose their value. Can contaminate entire flock.

Need to bold Bullet Point F – would elevate the score to “2” - medium impact. **Joy will look into sheep and goats in IL to see what she can find out.**

Still need the cost of T & R calculated in – Joy will work on this.

Environmental Impact

Katie and Liza have added a lot of info there.

Liza' may connect to the environmental impacts to economic impacts. Landscape of Fear

She could not find any information in the literature, except for rats and pest control.

Asked if anyone is aware of any studies. Influence of recreational activity on wildlife

distribution – alter wildlife behavior. She could cite other examples from other animals. Only thing she found was cat's ability to manage populations of rats, etc. No clear outcome on that. **Liza decided she will cite Landscape of Fear and Predatory Prey Dynamics.** Concern about being too speculative – could cats move wildlife around the landscape, exposing them to novel stress, etc. We discussed that potential impacts implies speculation and decided this was ok.

Disease

Environmental Impact

Impact to T & E species and critical habitats could be important, ex. carnivore impacts on weasels – may be difficult to measure.

T & E species

Types of species that would be threatened, Katie went through herps. She already had information on birds and mammals. There is information on herps in Australia. Cats have been found to eat turtle eggs or soft shelled animals in other locations. Snakes are impacted by cats which is documented in other areas. In a study from Australia they looked at reptiles taken by cats. There appears to be a difference in latitude. There is less information on amphibians. Again, most of the information is from Australia. Numbers appear to be under reported. More likely to see amphibians reported where they are able to looking at the cat's guts. She did not include salamanders that are fully aquatic. Animals running around on the ground are more likely to be impacted.

Katie will write up a summary paragraph above this section on T & E species to explain the types of fauna cats affect so that the list below will make sense to readers.

Liza's question about survey work – Gary did some research on publications and looked at public outreach and public awareness campaigns. They seem to be very effective when they focus on the welfare and health of the cats. There is a lot of research of public perceptions. Education appears to do very little to change behavior, unless it includes welfare and care of cats. Canadian paper – suggests that the most effective outreach and campaigns are cat welfare and health. He expressed concern over funds invested and little outcome.

Joy pointed out that it was like smoking campaigns. Smoking is something people have done for a long time and it took a big campaign to reduce it. There are a lot of entrenched beliefs about cats.

Mike pointed out that we need to recognize that people who are educated on the subject we are not likely to change their minds. We need to get a better understanding of who has awareness of the impacts of outdoor cats. There are several papers, in the shared Google folder where the message is getting across but there is little to no movement on the needle to get cats indoors.

Liza pointed out that there could be good timing on an effort to educate the public. Birding has exploded as a hobby – perhaps this is the right time to launch something like this.

The Committee needs to add some depth to the recommendations section – background information, e.g., because this, this, and this have happened before; our recommendations are ; perhaps an educational campaign reaching out to the humane societies etc.; the negative health impacts to outdoor cats; and ecological damage also helpful. We could build on the benefits to birds to birding groups.

Joy asked that as people review the papers they make some notes at the side so when the Committee comes back to the document we can refer to that work and make recommendations based on who has the knowledge. We need to know who to talk to about any comments or thoughts. Gary to make a background about his readings.

Assignments:

Mike – define the three types of cats and life history section, reproductive history to justify the score of 3

Liza – environmental impacts – landscape of fear, intersection between disease and wildlife

Katie – env. impacts – how cats affect different taxa broadly to justify

Gary – put in background on what he has learned about the effects of education and survey work.
Flesh out the recommendations to be more specific – discuss at next meeting

Scott – Cats in IL to indicate how cats estimates were made and add citations

Joy – cats around the world, economic impacts, T & R costs and management, goat and sheep populations