



THE CAMPAIGN FOR SAFER BIRDS & CATS

CONDUCTING A CATS INDOORS! CAMPAIGN IN YOUR COMMUNITY

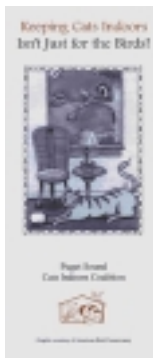


Convincing cat owners, decision makers, and the general public that all cats should be indoors or under direct control when outdoors is an immense undertaking. However, with the right tools and a strong coalition, much can be accomplished.

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

Thousands of groups and individuals are conducting *Cats Indoors!* Campaigns in their community 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 brochure was produced using local information and resources. The brochures were distributed to the public through festivals, veterinarians, and animal shelters. Local media also covered the issue.

Action: Find local partners, develop and distribute campaign materials in your area.

State-wide Campaigns: The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Nongame Wildlife Program (MNDNR) have conducted state-wide *Cats Indoors!* Campaigns. Part-time coordinators distributed thousands of brochures and posters to veterinarians, humane societies, animal control agencies, wildlife rehabilitators, and nature centers throughout their respective states. The FWC also produced their own brochure, *Impacts of Feral and Free-Ranging Domestic Cats on Wildlife in Florida* at www.floridaconservation.org/viewing/articles/cat.pdf.

The MNDNR issued a state-wide press release and produced and distributed their own radio PSA to 260 radio 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 publications, create web pages on the issue and link to ABC's *Cats Indoors!* web page.

Media Campaigns: Each year, ABC sponsors National Keep Your Cat Indoors Day on the second Saturday in May in conjunction with International Migratory Bird Day. In 2003, the MNDNR sponsored a children's poster competition to help publicize the event. They sent an announcement asking for posters depicting a happy indoor cat to public and private schools as well as National Wildlife Refuges throughout the state. MNDNR also issued a press release about the winners, and ABC showcased the winners on its web site. To celebrate the day in Los Alamos, NM, campaign supporters produced a display for their local library, and convinced their county commissioners to pass a resolution endorsing the day.



Poster by: Brittany L. Kuschel

Action: Sponsor a poster competition in your community or state. Ask a wild bird or pet store to donate the prizes. Ask your county commissioners or state legislature to pass a resolution endorsing National Keep Your Cat Indoors Day.

County Park Campaigns: Populations of stray and feral cats can be a problem in parks and other natural areas where irresponsible people abandon their pets. If the cats are not immediately removed, the cat population can quickly explode, as happened in Greynolds Park in Miami-Dade County, FL. 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. People 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 laws. The County sponsored an education campaign called “Be A Park Pal” to make people aware of the new laws. Cats have been humanely trapped and removed from Greynolds Park and cats too wild to be adopted are being kept in an outdoor enclosure. Cats are no longer fed in the park.

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 cats from the park. Support the park’s efforts in the media.

National Park Campaigns: Stray and feral cats were killing the endangered Piping Plover, Least Tern, Black Skimmer, and other shorebirds that nest on the beaches of Cape Hatteras



Piping Plover, Clipart.com

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. These materials 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 lobby her city council for a cat restraint law. 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, see the fact sheet:

Get the Facts About Cat Law at www.abcbirds.org/cats.

COALITIONS: THE SUM IS GREATER THAN THE PARTS

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 work, and 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 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. 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:

1. 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. See www.blm.gov/wildlife/pifplans.htm for conservation plans by physiographic area for priority bird populations and habitats.



2. 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.

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

Campaign Components

Issue campaigns usually have four components:

1. Campaign Agenda

Campaign plans have to be realistic and reflect the resources activists can muster and their overall capacity 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 below can be very helpful. Information from organizations who have experience in working with the decision-making body also can be very useful.

2. 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 TV

interviews, articles in group newsletters, or letters to the editor of local papers. Two sample letters to the editor are available on ABC's web site, as well as print and radio PSAs at www.abcbirds.org/cats. Please share your press with ABC.

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 free-roaming cats (see *Cats Indoors!* materials), and to seek out reporters interested in conservation.

3. Mobilizing the Grassroots

Decision-makers can be swayed by the number of people they hear from and who those 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 rallies. See guides for grassroots organizing techniques below.

4. Fund-raising

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

Sources of Information for Organizing

See below for resources on how to organize for change in your community. These resources 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.

Shaw, R. 2001. *The Activist's Handbook: A Primer*. University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA.

Also visit the following web sites:

The Virtual Activist: www.netaction.org/training

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

Fact Sheet Funded by The Pet Care Trust

For more information, contact:

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