

Lynn Manley
North Berwick
LD 644

Current laws governing criminal trespass specifically exclude cats and the sound reasons for that haven't changed. As far as owned cats are concerned, according to the Humane Society of the US 71% of those are kept indoors. As one of hundreds of animal rescue volunteers in Maine I can testify that trap-neuter-return programs have been successful in greatly decreasing the population of non-owned cats in the state.

The estimate of birds killed by free-roaming cats provided by the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2013 has been called in to question by a number of well-respected scientists. For example, the 2014 State of the Birds report, published by the North American Bird Conservation Initiative, notes that "habitat loss is by far the greatest cause of bird population declines." Whether the constituent behind Rep. Doudera's bill lives in a house or an apartment, he himself is responsible for more impact on the environment of wild birds than his neighbor's cat!

While there is general agreement that free-roaming cats can pose a risk to wildlife populations, the credible evidence is quite clear that this risk is limited to very specific contexts (e.g., small islands) and even then is likely only one part of a larger story. Sweeping claims that blame cats and lack necessary context not only confuse the issue and impede dealing with the real causes of bird population declines, but can result in the unnecessary deaths of large numbers of felines, many of whom are beloved family pets.

I highly recommend reading the National Feline Research Council's excellent article "Wildlife impacts of free-roaming cats: Estimates vs. evidence" (2020), <https://www.felineresearch.org/post/issue-brief-wildlife-impacts-of-outdoor-cats> It includes a list of over 50 references that refute the need for restricting the presence of felines outdoors.

I also recommend watching a cat trying to catch a bird in the great outdoors – it's a difficult and time-consuming endeavor. The number of birds caught and killed any single cat is greatly outweighed by the number of small mammals which make up the majority of their diet. If a person is concerned with predation problems in a specific location, that should be dealt with on an individual basis, not by trying to pass legislation which would be detrimental to vast numbers of uninvolved animals.