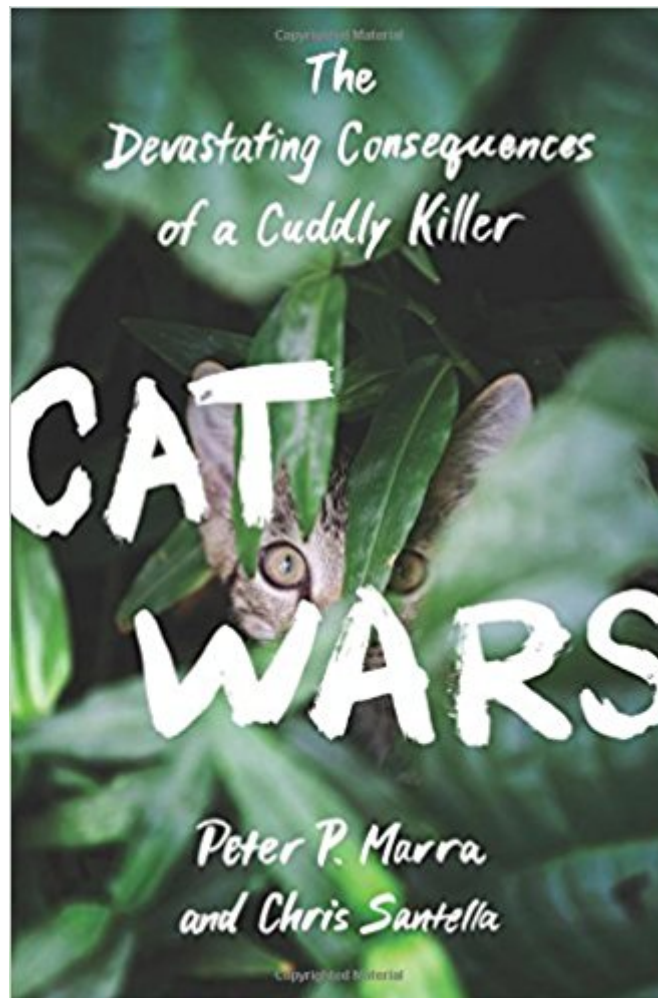




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Cat Wars: The Devastating Consequences Of A Cuddly Killer



Synopsis

In 1894, a lighthouse keeper named David Lyall arrived on Stephens Island off New Zealand with a cat named Tibbles. In just over a year, the Stephens Island Wren, a rare bird endemic to the island, was rendered extinct. Mounting scientific evidence confirms what many conservationists have suspected for some time—that in the United States alone, free-ranging cats are killing birds and other animals by the billions. Equally alarming are the little-known but potentially devastating public health consequences of rabies and parasitic *Toxoplasma* passing from cats to humans at rising rates. *Cat Wars* tells the story of the threats free-ranging cats pose to biodiversity and public health throughout the world, and sheds new light on the controversies surrounding the management of the explosion of these cat populations. This compelling book traces the historical and cultural ties between humans and cats from early domestication to the current boom in pet ownership, along the way accessibly explaining the science of extinction, population modeling, and feline diseases. It charts the developments that have led to our present impasse—from Stan Temple's breakthrough studies on cat predation in Wisconsin to cat-eradication programs underway in Australia today. It describes how a small but vocal minority of cat advocates has campaigned successfully for no action in much the same way that special interest groups have stymied attempts to curtail smoking and climate change. *Cat Wars* paints a revealing picture of a complex global problem and proposes solutions that foresee a time when wildlife and humans are no longer vulnerable to the impacts of free-ranging cats.

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Customer Reviews

One of Forbes.com's 10 Best Conservation and Environment Books of 2016 "We know that nature's theater bristles with industrious carnivores and omnivores--hawks that pluck cardinals right off a bird feeder, squirrels that grab eggs from crows' nests, and crows that grab babies from squirrels' nests. What makes free-ranging cats such an exceptionally dangerous threat to birds and other wildlife? The book describes a number of factors."--Natalie Angier, New York Review of Books "Peter Marra and Chris Santella base their case in the end on an appeal to the scientific evidence, which they set out as calmly as they can. . . . What they fear most, however, is the inaction of ordinary, decent people who have just not grasped how quickly the tapestry of the world's ecology is unravelling before our eyes."--Jeremy Mynott, Times Literary Supplement "Marra and Santella thoughtfully examine the severe ecological damage caused by feral cats and outdoor pet cats. Highly readable. . . . Cat lovers are presented in a sympathetic light throughout, making the book worth reading no matter a reader's position on free-ranging cats."--Publishers Weekly "This deeply researched overview by conservation scientist Peter Marra and writer Chris Santella interlaces discussions of feline domestication and avian conservation with the science of decline and of feline spillover diseases."--Nature "Marra and Santella make an impassioned plea for action in this compelling report on an often overlooked threat."--Scientific American "Cat Wars is a work of commanding reasonableness, with plenty of facts and figures and the testimonies of experts to support its unpalatable conclusions. There are some fascinating digressions, too, including sympathetic profiles of activists on both sides of the debate in the U.S."--The Australian "Cat Wars has a broader, more ecological focus, documenting the global impact of cats on wildlife, both by preying on animals and by transmitting diseases. . . . Marra and Santella explore the solutions (keeping cats indoors, catios--an enclosed area outside the home--and killing strays). . . . This is an important and eye-opening book that clearly says: 'keep Tiddles a house cat.'"--Adrian Barnett, New Scientist "Cat Wars is valuable that it calls to attention a huge problem (set of problems, really) of which many people have, hitherto, been unaware--or ignored."--10,000 Birds Blog "Cat Wars, a brilliantly crafted book, describes numerous scientific studies that link bird disappearance to free-ranging feral domestic cats."--NSTA Recommends "TNR advocates and birders with outdoor cats are encouraged to read this book."--Birdwatcher's Digest "This necessary book provides the science-based case for removal of free-roaming house cats from our environment. . . . If you are unfamiliar with these important issues, you should find this book a useful starting point."--Gerry Rising, Buffalo Spree "Cat Wars covers not only the data corroborating the problems posed by loose cats but also the people involved in the story. Marra and Santella interview researchers and activists

on both sides. The readers learns of efforts to bridge differences between factions, so the massive mortality caused by cats can be effectively reduced. This is a well-written summary of a complicated problem that deserves great attention."--Joel Greenberg, BirdWatching Magazine

"In this book, the authors provide a detailed examination of the threats to global biodiversity, the environment and public health posed by free-ranging cats. They describe many scientific studies that use population modelling, feline diseases and extinctions, and they share the history of how small, but extremely vocal, special interest groups successfully prevent any action being taken to deal with the vast population explosions of feral and free-roaming cats. Cat Wars examines this complex global issue and proposes scientifically sound real-world solutions to this problem. This painstakingly researched and readable book is a must-read for all pet owners (whether you have a cat or not) and is an iron-clad argument that the best thing for local wildlife, people and the cats themselves is for cat owners to keep their pets indoors, always."--Forbes.com, a "10 Best Conservation and Environment Books of 2016"

"[Cat Wars] is a [book] weâd all benefit from reading."--Ed Kanze, Bedford Record-Review

"It took courage, good scholarship, and clearly a passion for wildlife for Marra and Santella to draft this thorough review of the cat problem. . . . The authors do a great job of gathering evidence and presenting it thoroughly and authoritatively, yet the book is entertaining and easy to read."--Jack Dumbacher, Journal of Field Ornithology

"Very few people enjoy thinking about the calamitous problem of free-roaming cats and biodiversity, and even fewer dare to talk about it openly. Marra and Santella's book is therefore doubly welcome. It's not only important reading for anyone who cares about nature. With its engaging storytelling, its calmly scientific approach, and its compassionate handling of a highly fraught issue, this is also a book that a person might actually read for pleasure."--Jonathan Franzen

"Cats, most of them unowned free-ranging cats, kill as many as four billion birds in the United States each year. What, if anything, should be done about it? Cat Wars tackles this difficult dilemma. If you are a cat lover, a bird lover, a philosopher, an ethicist, or just anyone interested in gut-wrenching dilemmas, you will find this a gripping book."--Jared Diamond, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of Guns, Germs, and Steel

"Here, at last, is what native-ecosystem advocates have been waiting for--a complete, dispassionate examination of America's free-ranging cat debacle. It's all here--from the horrendous bird mortality to the cat-borne pathogens blighting wildlife and humans to the cruelty and futility of Trap-Neuter-Return. Everyone gets to speak--including the feral-cat lobby."--Ted Williams, environmental journalist

"The level-tempered approach of Cat Wars will win many advocates. Anyone interested in the broader topics of a healthy environment and healthy human society will

benefit from reading this book. It's as powerful as TV ads featuring the 'crying Indian' in the antilittering campaign of the early 1970s."--Bill Thompson III, editor of *Bird Watcher's Digest*"In *Cat Wars*, Peter Marra and Chris Santella lay out the extraordinary (and extraordinarily devastating) toll that America's favorite pet inflicts on America's favorite birds. At a time when native bird populations are in desperate trouble, and the number of free-ranging cats has never been higher, the authors bring clear-eyed science and commonsense solutions to one of the most polarizing issues in avian conservation. This is an important book, even if the message is not a comfortable one."--Scott Weidensaul, author of *Living on the Wind: Across the Hemisphere with Migratory Birds*"A great overview of a complex and often emotional challenge. *Cat Wars* unravels yet another layer of the global decline in biodiversity and frames the potentially drastic consequences of inaction."--Grant Sizemore, American Bird Conservancy"*Cat Wars* is a brave, engaging, and careful accounting of the cats we love and the devastation they inflict on birds and other wildlife."--John M. Marzluff, author of *Welcome to Subirdia: Sharing Our Neighborhoods with Wrens, Robins, Woodpeckers, and Other Wildlife*

Yes, the ways in which the devastation wreaked by feral and house cats on songbird populations was estimated by the author invites criticism, although it is no different from how other population studies are done--by using statistical projection techniques based on multifarious smaller studies. But what sets this book apart is the author's comprehensive and sympathetic discussions of all sides of the issue of bird destruction by cats, regardless of whether you agree with the exact numbers, and the enormous wealth of thought-provoking facts and insights marshaled to make his case--that mass euthanization is a viable (not the only viable) solution posed by feral cat predation. For the record, I am the pet of four beloved indoor cats, and the thought of mass euthanization of feral cats makes me cringe. Nevertheless, this is a compelling argument.

Songbird populations are in steep decline worldwide because of man-made threats: pesticides, habitat loss, climate change, and domestic cats. There are 10,000 species of birds in the world, amazingly varied in their elaborate adaptations, many of them smart and social. We could try to help them survive by taking responsibility for our pet cats by keeping them indoors, where they themselves would be healthier and live longer. Suddenly introducing a new predator into an ecosystem which hasn't gradually evolved to include it is never a good idea.

I found "Cat Wars" to be a well-written book - and a GOOD READ. With "Cat Wars" - Dr. Peter Marra

provides an important introduction to an extremely serious, rapidly expanding problem. His detailed description of Toxoplasmosis is better (more accurate) than most. This book provides you with information you should know.

A clear, rational presentation of a major problem. Cats are a serious problem not only as predators on birds, but also for a public health. Marra presents an arresting discussion of the problem of cats as bird predators as well as the possible solutions that both institutions and individuals can take to reduce the tolls on birds specifically and biodiversity more broadly. Cat Wars is timely. Extinction cannot be reversed, but actions can be taken to reduce the effects of feral and outdoor cats. The call to action is certainly justified by the potential reductions in biodiversity.

Not being either a strong "bird person" or a strong "cat person" -- but having noticed an uptick in the number of cats roaming my neighborhood -- I read this book with an open and inquisitive mind. The authors present a fairly balanced account of the effects that outdoor cats have on birds and on ecological balance, in general. Obviously, this is a hotly contested issue (as evidenced by the bimodal distribution of reviews!), but coming to the topic without any priors, I felt like the book was well written and I learned a lot about an environmental issue taking place right in my neighborhood. Like any book that takes a position on divided topic, it's unlikely to convince entrenched cat lovers that more should be done to reduce the impact of outdoor cats on the environment, and it's likely to have bird lovers nodding their heads in agreement that much more needs to be done to protect endangered birds. But for a relatively neutral reader, like myself, the book gave a balanced introduction to the debate, which is a valuable service, because (in my opinion) divisive disputes rarely get resolved from the extremes, but have some hope of resolution with informed, neutral parties.

Excellent, readable treatise on an immensely important and complex, multifaceted ecological issue. Dr. Marra deals in an even-handed, scientifically sound, data-driven manner with multiple issues in the management of cats. He takes very seriously the sad lives of cats left to roam outdoors - vulnerable to predation, vulnerable to cars, vulnerable to illnesses and malnutrition. Hence it is not a book only about the damage done by outdoor cats (owned, un-owned or feral). The damage however is serious and well documented. The damage to wildlife - birds, mammals and reptiles is staggering, many species populations are seriously endangered by the addition of cat predation to habitat loss and climate change. The damage to people can also be considerable. The problem of

Toxoplasmosis to human health is well documented in the book and the broader literature. It is a must-read for those who take seriously the balance of nature, the preservation of the living environment (even in your own back-yard!), the health and well being of the living, interacting systems of which we humans are an important component. The persons who denigrate and demean the message of this book just aren't getting it!

An excellent book outlining problems facing wildlife in easy to understand concepts. The authors give a balanced review, number one being loss of habitat, but predation by feral cats is a problem and it can be managed.

This book provides a fascinating, comprehensive and balanced discussion of the impacts of cats on native wildlife. I strongly recommend it.

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