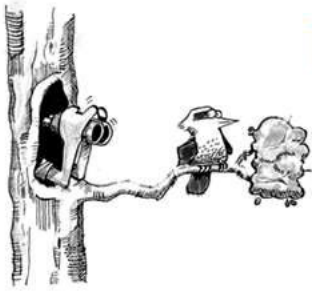


Submission
No 9

INQUIRY INTO MANAGEMENT OF CAT POPULATIONS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Blue Mountains Bird Observers Inc.

Date Received: 22 November 2024



Blue Mountains Bird Observers Inc.

Web: www.bmbo.org.au
Email: info@bmbo.org.au

Submission: Legislative Council Inquiry into management of cat populations in NSW

Blue Mountains Bird Observers Inc (BMBO) is a community-based volunteer association whose main objectives are to encourage birdwatching, knowledge about and appreciation of birds, and to promote the conservation and protection of native birds and their habitat. The club has over 200 members between Penrith and Lithgow including several leading members of the Australian birding community. Our activities include collecting and collating data on bird species found in the mountains. We are affiliated with BirdLife Australia and maintain close links with numerous groups in New South Wales through the Bird Interest Group Network.

I write representing BMBO and as a concerned 25-year resident of Blackheath.

Living in the Blue Mountains City surrounded by the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area we are very concerned about the impact roaming pet cats are having on our native wildlife, particularly in the extensive and vulnerable urban interface.

BMBO therefore supports sensible amendments to the law to enable local governments to enforce anti-roaming laws for pet cats, bringing NSW into line with almost every other state, being aware that Blue Mountains City Council has a range of measures ready to implement once enabled.

Cats are both valued companion animals and one of the world's most successful predators. In NSW, approximately 96 million native mammals, birds and reptiles are killed by roaming pet cats every year – with about 110 native animals killed by each roaming, hunting pet cat. Unfortunately, about 70% of cat owners still allow their pets to roam.

We can't change the nature of cats, but we can change the culture that allows pet cats to roam and kill. We urgently need responsible pet ownership, and this starts with clear rules to ensure pet owners keep cats contained to their property to save our native wildlife.

BMBO strongly supports the 24-hour containment of domestic cats.

This will also benefit pet cats. Cats that are kept at home are happy and can live up to 10 years longer than cats that roam which are often injured or killed through fighting, car accidents and disease.

Toxoplasmosis (*Toxoplasma gondii*) is widely carried and transmitted by cats. The transfer to native mammals is studied but not understood by most in the community. Even less in the case of birds. Very few studies appear to exist on the transmission to and effect on native birds.

BMBO is aware of some information but does not have the resources to conduct or sponsor studies, nor fully research existing material.

Here is a meta-analysis of research from 1992 to 2024

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S240567312400014X>

BMBO would urge the NSW Government to invest in such studies, particularly in relation to species that are listed as threatened.

Many native bird species are in serious decline and one of the main causes of this decline is predation by invasive species in particular cats, not just feral cats but also pet cats. 71% of pet cats roam and of these, 78% hunt. On average, a roaming pet cat kills 186 animals per year. Research released by the Australian National University in 2023 found that roaming pet cats kill around 66 million native animals each year in Sydney alone.

The reform to 24-hour containment should be accompanied by funding for education, compliance and to make desexing and registration easier. We also need clear rules around desexing by 4 months of age to prevent unwanted breeding and requirements for all local governments to develop and implement companion animal management plans.

BMBO would support the concept of variable rules for fully-rural areas.

BMBO does NOT support the concept of “Trap, Neuter, Release” as this does not reduce the number of uncontrolled cats hunting & otherwise disturbing native fauna, especially avian species. (see item 6 below). Note that the presence of cats is often as disturbing to native species as hunting activity.

BMBO calls on the NSW Government and the Animal Welfare committee to support:

- 1. Amendments to the NSW Companion Animals Act 1998 to enable local governments to enforce anti-roaming laws for pet cats at a local level, bringing NSW into line with almost every other state. We recommend annual cat registration, with a 3 to 5 year option that is discounted and phased in.** (Currently in NSW it is a life registration). This it would allow councils to collect reliable data for management purposes, budgets and planning, and raise revenue.
- 2. State government funding of a minimum of \$9 million to fund compliance, education, desexing, identification and registration programs.**
- 3. Requirements for all local governments to develop companion animal management plans to protect wildlife, as is required in Victoria.**
- 4. Development of a state-wide web resource for responsible pet ownership.**
- 5. Making desexing mandatory state-wide by 4 months of age, as is required in WA, Tasmania, ACT and SA.**
- 6. Compassionate euthanasia by authorized authorities in cases of obvious non-rehabilitation or potential long cage confinement of captured animals.**

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this matter,

Conservation officer
Blue Mountains Bird Observers

Email: info@bmbo.org.au

Web: <http://www.bmbo.org.au/>