

Resolution to Reduce the Negative Impacts of Feral Cats in Wisconsin

WHEREAS, according to the American Bird Conservancy, there are well over 100 million cats across the U.S. today [1], which is a significant increase from the estimated number of 30 million in 1970 and 60 million in 1990 [2]. A Wisconsin study performed in 1996 estimated up to 2 million feral cats in rural Wisconsin alone [3]. Based on recent national estimates, an increase in feral cats in Wisconsin is expected for 2019; *and*

WHEREAS, the 1996 study estimated that birds make up 23% of a feral cat's diet, and feral cats kill 7.8 to 219 million birds in a single year in Wisconsin [3], including pheasants, native quail, grouse, turkeys, waterfowl, and endangered piping plovers [4]. As a result of high predation rates, domestic cats are considered primarily responsible for the extinction of 33 bird species globally since the 1600s [5]; *and*

WHEREAS, 1.7 million Wisconsin residents ages 16 and older reported bird-watching in 2011, which has contributed to Wisconsin becoming the second most popular state for bird watching in the U.S. [6]; *and*

WHEREAS, In 2011, bird watching generated a revenue of over \$40 billion from trip and equipment expenditures in the U.S. [7]. However, an additional \$17 billion that could have been generated is lost due to feral cat predation. Increase in feral cat predation leads to less birds and bird species. Less birds and bird species result in more hunting and field observing restrictions, as well as increases in costs to rear birds for hunting and birdwatching [8]; *and*

WHEREAS, feral cats have the capacity to carry and transmit infectious diseases, including toxoplasmosis and sarcosporidiosis, to native species, livestock, and humans [9]; *and*

WHEREAS, the mission of the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation (WWF) is to conserve Wisconsin's wildlife and outdoor sporting heritage [10], and feral cats are diminishing Wisconsin's bird populations; *and*

WHEREAS, in the past, Wisconsin attempted the management of feral cats through the Conservation Congress as they sought to define a legal definition of feral cats. There was statewide support of this management plan. However, legislation did not support this, and the issue was not pursued any further; *and*

WHEREAS, current techniques to manage feral cats have been largely ineffective in decreasing Wisconsin's feral cat population; *and*

WHEREAS, lack of current data regarding Wisconsin's feral cat population hinders our ability to effectively communicate amongst the various stakeholders; *and*

WHEREAS, there is a great need to bring together experts on this issue so we can come to a consensus on a long-term management plan for feral cats; *and*

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the WWF, at its Annual Meeting in Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin, on April 12th-13th, 2019, establishes conversation regarding the long-term management of feral cats in Wisconsin through committee assignment or through the establishment of a feral cat ad hoc committee; *and*

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the WWF lead a coalition of stakeholders and interest groups for the long-term management of feral cats in Wisconsin; *and*

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the WWF requests that the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection, and local municipalities provide education and outreach programs pertaining to the negative impacts of feral cats.

Submitted by the Wisconsin Conservation Leadership Corps by:

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Sources

[1] - <https://abcbirds.org/program/cats-indoors/>

[2] https://extension.illinois.edu/wildlife/files/cats_and_wildlife.pdf

[3] - <https://dnr.wi.gov/wrnmag/html/stories/1996/dec96/cats.htm>

[4] - <https://www.audubon.org/news/feral-cat-predation-birds-costs-billions-dollars-year>

[5] - <http://extensionpublications.unl.edu/assets/pdf/ec1781.pdf>

[6] - <https://wsobirds.org/images/atlas/WisconsinBirdsAndBirding.pdf>

[7] - <https://www.fws.gov/southeast/pdf/report/birding-in-the-united-states-a-demographic-and-economic-analysis.pdf>

[8] - <https://www.audubon.org/news/feral-cat-predation-birds-costs-billions-dollars-year>

[9] - <https://www.environment.gov.au/system/files/resources/34ae02f7-9571-4223-beb0-13547688b07b/files/cat.pdf>

[10] <https://wiwf.org/about-us/>