

For Immediate Release
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Statewide Bird Conservation Coalition Addresses the Threat of Free-ranging Domestic Cats to Birds and Wildlife

COLUMBUS, OH – Feral and Free-ranging Domestic Cats pose a significant threat to Ohio's biodiversity, as well as to human health and the welfare of other domestic animals, according to the Ohio Bird Conservation Initiative (OBCI). OBCI's "White Paper on Feral and Free-ranging Domestic Cats" is available at www.obcinet.org.

Because domestic cats are not a natural part of Ohio's ecosystems, their impact on native wildlife, including birds, is dramatic. Studies show that cats are one of the greatest sources of human-caused mortality for birds and mammals in the country. Free-ranging cats also act as sources of dangerous diseases that have serious implications for human health, including rabies, tularemia, hook worms, and toxoplasmosis. A recent study in Northeastern Ohio found more than half of sampled free-roaming cats were infected with the parasite that causes toxoplasmosis.

In addition to the numerous negative impacts on Ohio's ecosystems and public health, allowing cats to range freely outdoors is dangerous and inhumane for the cats as well. During their time outside the home, cats are at risk for vehicle trauma, predation, disease, and severe weather.

OBCI supports efforts to encourage pet owners to keep domestic cats indoors, opposes the establishment of feral cat colonies, and encourages additional research into solutions to mitigate the effects that feral and outdoor, unattended domestic cats have on native wildlife populations and human health.

Kimberly Kaufman, Vice Chair of OBCI and *Executive* Director of Black Swamp Bird Observatory (BSBO), lauded the coalition for taking a stand. "There's a lot of sound science to support the devastating impact that feral and free-ranging domestic cats have on birds and other wildlife. As a founding partner of OBCI, the Observatory is pleased that the coalition has taken a stand on this threat to birds. That so many conservation partners across the state came together to adopt this position should send a powerful message about the importance of this issue."

A free webinar for the public on the impacts of free-ranging cats on birds and people and the need for effective management will be offered on October 21st at 12pm. Registration information is available at www.obcinet.org.

The Ohio Bird Conservation Initiative is a coalition of 102 non-governmental organizations, governmental agencies, and businesses that share a vision for the successful conservation of birds and their habitats in Ohio. Formed in 2004, OBCI coordinates the diverse skills and resources of its partners to deliver the full spectrum of bird conservation in Ohio.

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