# Cat owners urged to keep pets indoors at night to protect vulnerable wildlife



Cat owners in the UK are being advised to consider keeping their pets indoors at night to protect vulnerable wildlife, particularly during the spring and summer months. This comes amid growing concerns over the impact that outdoor cats have on native bird populations, especially during the crucial breeding season spanning April to June.

During these months, many British bird species such as robins, sparrows, starlings and finches engage in nesting, feeding their young and fledging. These stages are critical to the survival and continuation of these species, many of which have faced population declines in recent decades.

Rebecca Bevan, author of The National Trust Book of Nature Friendly Gardening, has highlighted the potential harm caused by domestic cats allowed to roam freely in gardens, parks, countryside and other open areas. Speaking to the Express, Bevan pointed out that while cats are popular UK pets, their hunting behaviour can be detrimental to native wildlife. She explained that domestic cats are descended from African wildcats, species not native to Britain. Consequently, local birds and mammals have not developed defence mechanisms against these predators, leading to population impacts.

Bevan advises cat owners to put bells on their cats' collars to make hunting more difficult and to consider keeping cats indoors at night, particularly during the bird fledging season. She also cautioned against placing bird feeders and nesting boxes in areas accessible to cats, to reduce the risk of predation.

Expanding on this perspective, an expert at the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) ‘Ask An Expert’ forum, identified as IanH, stated that while cats are not driving any UK species to extinction, they do kill more than 50 million birds annually, as well as frogs, slow worms and other small mammals.

The recommendations vary, with some conservationists even urging cat owners not to allow their cats outdoors at all if they live in areas with nesting or thriving bird populations.

These warnings come as part of broader efforts to balance the enjoyment of pet ownership with wildlife conservation during a sensitive season for many native species.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://nation.cymru/opinion/killing-machines-keeping-cats-indoors-is-a-win-for-them-and-our-native-wildlife/> - This article supports the claim that keeping cats indoors can significantly benefit native wildlife by reducing predation rates. It highlights the substantial impact of free-roaming cats on bird populations.
2. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7909512/> - This study explores the reasons why some cat owners choose to keep their pets indoors, including concerns about wildlife conservation. It reflects the international perspective on balancing pet ownership with environmental considerations.
3. <https://www.cats.org.uk/help-and-advice/home-and-environment/indoor-cats> - This guide provides advice on managing cats indoors, especially for those used to outdoor access, to reduce stress and ensure they can still express their natural behaviors without harming wildlife.
4. <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/advice/gardening-for-wildlife/> - The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds offers general advice on gardening to support bird life, which aligns with the recommendations for minimizing cat impacts on bird populations during vulnerable seasons.
5. <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/6-ways-to-make-your-garden-wildlife-friendly> - This resource from the National Trust provides tips on making gardens more wildlife-friendly, including recommendations that indirectly support reducing cat predation by protecting wildlife habitats.
6. <https://www.birdlife.org/worldwide/news/why-here%E2%80%99s-what-you-can-do-help-birds-your-backyard> - Like other conservation efforts, this article suggests ways to create bird-friendly environments, which include managing domestic pets like cats to minimize their impact on local bird populations.
7. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2046628/cat-owners-keep-cats-out-gardens> - Please view link - unable to able to access data