



MUNICIPAL SERVICES, FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE
Council Chambers B, Keene City Hall
March 23, 2022
6:00 PM

A. AGENDA ITEMS

1. Edward Coppola - Expressing his Concern over Local Wildlife and Asking that the City Council Consider Measures to Minimize the Number of Birds and Small Animals that Domestic Cats Kill with Their Free-range Hunting Habits in Keene Neighborhoods
2. Vicky Morton - In Support of the Licensing of Outdoor Cats
3. Relating to Stop Signs – Washington Avenue
Ordinance O-2022-03
4. REPORT OUT: Request to Remove a Nearby City Tree - 79 Woodburn Street

B. MORE TIME ITEMS

1. Dana D'Arcangelo/Eversource Energy - Requesting Permission to Remove Trees on Scenic Roads

NON PUBLIC SESSION

ADJOURNMENT



CITY OF KEENE NEW HAMPSHIRE

ITEM #A.1.

Meeting Date: March 23, 2022

To: Mayor and Keene City Council

From: Edward Coppola

Through: Patricia Little, City Clerk

Subject: **Edward Coppola - Expressing his Concern over Local Wildlife and Asking that the City Council Consider Measures to Minimize the Number of Birds and Small Animals that Domestic Cats Kill with Their Free-range Hunting Habits in Keene Neighborhoods**

Council Action:

In City Council March 3, 2022.

Referred to the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee.

Recommendation:

Attachments:

1. Communication_Coppola

Background:

Mr. Coppola is asking that the City Council consider the following measures to minimize the number of birds and small animals that domestic cats kill - such as the licensing of cats, taking steps to control cats from wandering onto other private landowners' yards; requiring that cat owners provide bells or multi-colored "scarves" to alert wildlife of the presence of a cat and advising property owners of their rights regarding cats hunting on their property.

2/22/2022

To: Keene City Council

RE: Cat Owner Responsibility

Dear Keene City Council,

I believe that as a progressive, forward-thinking City, Keene can do more to ensure that humans and wildlife can better co-exist.

My intention is to start a dialogue on how the City of Keene can 1. require that cat owners license their animals 1. Take steps to control their animals wandering into other private landowners' yards; 2. Require that cat owners provide bells and/or multi-colored "scarves" for their animals to alert other wildlife of their presence. 3. Advise property owners of their rights regarding cats hunting on their property.

The goal is to minimize the number of birds and small animals that domestic cats kill when free-range hunting in our neighborhoods.

Thank you for your consideration. Please contact me with further questions.

Sincerely,

Edward Coppola



72 Ridgewood Avenue, Keene

Attached:

https://www.npr.org/2020/04/18/820953617/the-killer-at-home-house-cats-have-more-impact-on-local-wildlife-than-wild-preda?fbclid=IwAR1IFVkmNTrVuJHoc29_8ey_K1Q75ZIWtLDzdidIdkSO_LtG1LTnA7qV9h0

<https://www.audubon.org/news/new-federal-report-confirms-ongoing-crisis-north-american-birds>

The Killer At Home: House Cats Have More Impact On Local Wildlife Than Wild Predators **What does an outdoor cat do all day? According to new research, it could be taking a heavy toll on local wildlife.**

A tracking study of more than 900 house cats shows when they kill small birds and mammals, their impact is concentrated in a small area, having a bigger effect than wild predators do.

"Even though it seems like their cat isn't killing that many, it really starts to add up," said Roland Kays, a scientist at North Carolina State University and the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences. (Full disclosure: Kays isn't a cat or dog person but a "ferret person.")

Kays and colleagues collected GPS data from cats in six countries and found most cats aren't venturing very far from home.

"These cats are moving around their own backyard and a couple of their neighbors' backyards, but most of them are not ranging very much further," Kays said. "So initially I thought: 'Oh, this is good news. They're not going out into the nature preserves.' "

Then Kays factored in how much cats kill in that small area. Some cats in the study were bringing home up to 11 dead birds, rodents or lizards a month, which doesn't include what they ate or didn't bring home to their owners.

"It actually ends up being a really intense rate of predation on any unfortunate prey species that's going to live near that cat's house," he said.

He calculates that cats can have four-to-10 times the impact of a wild predator. Native predators, like jungle cats, also kill a lot of small animals, but their impact is spread out over a larger area.

"The big concern is where we have an overlap of people and cats with native species that are small and vulnerable," Kays said.

One study estimates that house cats, both domestic and feral, kill billions of birds every year.

"The simplest thing to do is to keep your cat indoors," he said. For those who refuse to keep their cat inside, there are potential options.

St. Lawrence University associate professor Susan Willson went looking for one when she rescued a cat known as "the Gorilla." He was fighting with her other cats, but when she let him outdoors, he brought home dead birds.

"I'm a bird biologist, so that's just horrifying," she said.

Willson tried putting a bell on her cat but didn't see any effect. **So she found a special brightly colored collar online.** **"It looks kind of like an Elizabethan collar-slash-scrunchie," she said. "The whole idea is that the bird will be able to visually see this cat creeping up on it before it attacks it."** Willson tested the collar on both her cat and dozens of others. It dramatically reduced the number of birds the cats brought home, but small rodents weren't so lucky.

"Which isn't surprising, because [those] mammals see in black and white," she said.

"They're not as visual as a bird."

Still, she says a pounce deterrent may be better than nothing. "I'm not saying these collars can make a significant difference in the massive bird mortality that we're seeing," she said. "But each individual bird that somebody in their backyard is not finding dead, I think matters."

Since the study, Willson's cat has given up its free-ranging ways. "Gorilla is now a happy indoor cat, loving his life," she says.

New Federal Report Confirms Ongoing Crisis for North American Birds

New report should guide the conservation actions needed to bring birds back.

WASHINGTON - "With **three billion birds** lost in North America since 1970, we are in a bird emergency – and we know that if they are in trouble, so are we," said Sarah Greenberger, senior vice president for conservation policy, National Audubon Society. "The priority species identified by the Fish and Wildlife Service provide a common playbook for federal, state and tribal leaders as well as many other stakeholders to align their conservation investments. We will all need to work together in order to bring birds back and with them the lands and waters we all need to thrive."

The US Fish and Wildlife Service today released the **Birds of Conservation Concern Report for 2021**, the first update published since 2008. The list includes 269 bird species, none of which are currently listed under the Endangered Species Act. By publishing this report, the USFWS aims to set priorities and spur cooperative efforts to avoid the need for an endangered listing.

"All of the birds in this report are protected by the **Migratory Bird Treaty Act**, which underscores the importance of the administration's effort to reinstate longstanding protections under the law and drive proactive conservation before birds become endangered or threatened," said Erik Schneider, policy manager, National Audubon Society. "Restoring and strengthening the MBTA is a key step, but we need a suite of legislative and administrative actions that can lay a foundation for more successful, collaborative conservation efforts across the board whether public or private."

The National Audubon Society, American Bird Conservancy, and several other groups have drafted a policy agenda that lists the kinds of actions needed. They include:

- **Reinstate and strengthen the Migratory Bird Treaty Act** through administrative and legislative action.
- Increase funding and coordination for federal and state wildlife agencies to address the needs of vulnerable species and landscapes they manage.
- Revitalize and enhance the framework for national and international conservation of migratory birds through a suite of actions to improve coordination, planning, partnerships, monitoring, research and more.

"Birds are an indicator of the threats we face, and the birds included in this report in particular will tell us over time if threats continue to worsen or if conservation actions are working," said Dr. Chad Wilsey, chief scientist, National Audubon Society. "Many of the birds identified in this report are facing the same threats as people, like drought, extreme weather, and habitat degradation on land or at sea."

The report did not assess the threat of climate change comprehensively, but a 2019 report from the National Audubon Society showed that two-thirds of North American bird species risk extinction if nothing is done to address climate change.

“Many of the threats birds are facing are exacerbated by climate change,” said Wilsey. “The good news is that conservation and restoration of the places needed to recover bird populations will also help absorb carbon pollution and mitigate climate change.”

This year’s report includes a significant number of grassland and aridland bird species, like the Lesser Prairie-Chicken and the Greater Sage-Grouse, both of which face serious threats from oil and gas development and invasive plant species on public and private lands. Both species receive significant federal attention, and the Lesser Prairie-Chicken was just proposed to be added to the Endangered Species List.

“The solutions to bring grassland and aridland birds back will help farming and ranching communities as well,” said Greenberger. “Fostering healthy grass and soil will benefit cows and birds alike. Not only that, healthier grasslands retain more groundwater, are more resilient, and they can sequester carbon.”

The report also includes a significant number of shorebirds and seabirds. North American shorebird populations have decreased by 70 percent since 1973. Seabird populations worldwide have decreased by 70 percent since 1950. Species like the American Oystercatcher, Elegant Tern, and Black-footed Albatross are facing some of the most serious threats due to decreasing coastal habitat and changing ocean conditions.

“We have an opportunity as we invest in our nation’s infrastructure to make our coasts more resilient to extreme weather and more bird-friendly by engineering with nature,” said Greenberger. “Natural infrastructure involves restoring and mimicking natural landscapes like wetlands to buffer communities against flooding, enhance habitats for birds and other wildlife, and absorb carbon pollution.”



CITY OF KEENE NEW HAMPSHIRE

ITEM #A.2.

Meeting Date: March 23, 2022
To: Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee
From: Vicky Morton
Through: Patricia Little, City Clerk
Subject: Vicky Morton - In Support of the Licensing of Outdoor Cats

Recommendation:

Attachments:

1. Communication_Morton_Cats_Redacted

Background:

Ms. Morton has submitted a communication in support of the licensing of outdoor cats.

March 8, 2022

Mayor George Hansel
City Manager Elizabeth Dragon
City Council Members
3 Washington Street
Keene, New Hampshire 03431

Vicky L. Morton
275 Water Street
Keene, New Hampshire 03431

Dear Mayor, City Manager, and City Council Members,

I am writing in support of the proposal to license outdoor cats.

I have indoor cats. They are indoor cats for numerous reasons, including their protection and the protection of other animals in our yard. We gardened extensively to include shelter, food, and water for birds, chipmunks, snakes, opossums, and rabbits; the wildlife of Keene. Neighboring cats hunt in our yard killing anything that moves. The worse part of the "wanderers" is to discover that they have used my gardens as litter boxes. Not only is it outright gross, but it also endangers all who venture into our gardens, humans included, if that/those cats are diseased. "Wanderers" spray urine on doorsteps, windows, and landscaping, and dig up plantings. Too many times we have smelled the urine stench on each of our porches. Additionally, the "wanderers" can spread disease and interbreed with the ferals at the end of Victoria Street.

As to the proposal to force owners to dress their outdoor felines with bells or special collars, I consider that to be a death sentence as the bobcat, fisher, and coyotes pass through the neighborhood frequently. The bell collar will tell these predators exactly where to find a delicious feline snack.

In support of my submission, I have included sources, below my signature, as to the millions of wildlife that outdoor, and feral, cats kill.

Cat owners, on social media, have written that they cannot keep their cats indoors, they are too destructive when they want to go out or that their cats are happiest and don't do any harm when they are out. Honestly, these owners do not know what their feline does unless they have fitted it with a go-pro type of camera to record their activities. If they were held financially liable for the destruction their cats caused, would they indeed change their perspective? Additionally, why should property owners be financially hampered to replace landscaping and/or cleanse their property of feline litter and urine?

I am under no illusion that enforcement will be any more successful than the enforcement of the mask mandate. I don't believe the City has the funds to devote to chasing cats, especially since the current Animal Control Officer has additional priorities that have little to do with animal control. Therefore, I urge the Council to allow neighbors to address wandering feline issues on their property.

I can be reached via email at v [REDACTED]

Respectfully submitted,



Vicky L. Morton

Sources:

<https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/91280/8-ways-domestic-cats-are-serious-threat-nature>

"THE U.S. HAS A CAT PROBLEM TOO

In the United States, an estimated 60 to 100 million cats range free, and the number of domestic cats has tripled during the past 40 years. Scientists from the Smithsonian Institution and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimate that domesticated cats—both free-roaming pets and feral—kill as many as 4 billion birds and 22 billion small mammals in the U.S. each year. This makes them "likely the single greatest source of anthropogenic mortality for U.S. birds and mammals," according to the Smithsonian. While controlling feral cats poses a daunting problem, simply keeping pet cats indoors at least reduces the slaughter. The Humane Society of the United States has developed tips to help indoor cats stay happy, and suggest that you always neuter even indoor animals."

"THEY CARRY DISEASES.

Peter Marra, director of the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center and co-author of *Cat Wars: The Devastating Consequences of a Cuddly Killer*, tells *mental_floss* that cats are known to carry plague, rabies, and the parasite *Toxoplasma gondii*. All are zoonotic diseases, carried by animals and capable of jumping to people. *Toxoplasma gondii* only reproduces in cats, Marra said, producing virtually indestructible oocysts—cysts containing a zygote formed from an egg and sperm. "They persist for years, in frozen soil, in saltwater environments. In the U.S., about 20 percent of the human population is infected, and globally, about a third of the population." There is no cure."

<https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-21236690>

Cats killing billions of animals in the US

By Rebecca Morelle

Science reporter, BBC World Service

Cats are one of the top threats to US wildlife, killing billions of animals each year, a study suggests.

The authors estimate they are responsible for the deaths of between 1.4 and 3.7 billion birds and 6.9-20.7 billion mammals annually.

To find out more, researchers from the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute (SCBI) and the US Fish and Wildlife Service carried out a review of studies that had previously looked at the predatory prowess of cats.

Their analysis revealed that the cat killings were much higher than previous studies had suggested: they found that they had killed more than four times as many birds as has been previously estimated.

Birds native to the US, such as the American Robin, were most at risk, and mice, shrews, voles, squirrels and rabbits were the mammals most likely to be killed.

Dr Pete Marra from the SCBI said: "Our study suggests that they are the top threat to US wildlife."

The team said that "un-owned" cats, which they classified as strays, feral cats and farm cats, were killing about three times as many animals as pet cats. However, they said pet cats were still killing significant numbers of animals, and that their owners should do more to limit the impact.

Dr Marra said: "We hope that the large amount of wildlife mortality indicated by our research convinces some cat owners to keep their cats indoors and that it alerts policymakers, wildlife managers and scientists to the large magnitude of wildlife mortality caused by cat predation."

A spokeswoman for the animal welfare charity the RSPCA said that a properly fitted collar and bell could reduce a cat's success when hunting by at least a third.

<https://besjournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/pan3.10073>

The most direct way in which domestic cats influence wildlife is through predation. This is perhaps also the most significant way, given the high numbers and densities of cats in many areas, coupled with their hunting instinct, which can be strong even in well-fed pet cats (Coman & Brunner, **1972**). Cats are opportunistic hunters, and prey items include a wide range of animals, including birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish, and invertebrates like butterflies and dragonflies. To illustrate, the 14,370 prey items brought home by a sample of 986 British pet cats in a 5-month survey period in 2003 included 20 mammal species (e.g. mice, voles, shrews, squirrels, stoats, rabbits and bats), 44 bird species, four reptile and three amphibian species and some invertebrates (Woods, McDonald, & Harris, **2003**). To provide another example, a recent citizen science survey in Italy rendered records of 2,042 animals killed by 145 cats, involving no less than 207 different species (Mori et al., **2019**). Whereas most cat prey tends to consist of small animals, domestic cats have been documented to prey on medium-sized animals weighing up to 4 kg (e.g. Fancourt, **2015**).



CITY OF KEENE NEW HAMPSHIRE

ITEM #A.3.

Meeting Date: March 23, 2022

To: Mayor and Keene City Council

From: Donald Lussier, City Engineer

Through: Kurt Blomquist, ACM/Public Works Director
Elizabeth Dragon, City Manager

Subject: **Relating to Stop Signs – Washington Avenue
Ordinance O-2022-03**

Council Action:

In City Council March 17, 2022.

Referred to the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee.

Recommendation:

That Ordinance O-2022-03 be referred to the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee for consideration and a recommendation back to the Council.

Attachments:

1. Ordinance O-2022-03_referral

Background:

Public Works received a resident request to evaluate the configuration of the Washington Street / Washington Avenue intersection. During the course of that review, it was discovered that the existing stop signs are not currently listed in City Code. The Engineering Division believes that the signs are warranted and in conformance with the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD).

Ordinance O-2022-03 will codify the existing signs. Minor changes to the configuration of this intersection will be made as part of the upcoming 2022 Pavement Preservation project. These changes will involve the arrangement of pavement markings only; no changes to the infrastructure are proposed.



CITY OF KEENE

O-2022-03

Twenty-two

In the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand and

Relating to Stop Signs on Washington Ave

AN ORDINANCE

Be it ordained by the City Council of the City of Keene, as follows:

That the City Code of the City of Keene, New Hampshire, as amended, is hereby further amended by adding the bolded text to the provisions of Section 94-321, "Stop Signs" in Division 5, "Specific Street Regulations" in Article IV of Chapter 94, entitled "TRAFFIC, PARKING AND PUBLIC WAYS" as follows;

Washington Avenue for eastbound traffic turning left onto Washington Street.

Washington Avenue for eastbound traffic turning right onto Washington Street.

George S. Hansel, Mayor

In City Council March 17, 2022.
Referred to the Municipal Services,
Facilities and Infrastructure Committee.


City Clerk

PASSED



CITY OF KEENE NEW HAMPSHIRE

ITEM #A.4.

Meeting Date: March 23, 2022

To: Mayor and Keene City Council

From: Municipal Facilities, Services and Infrastructure Committee, Standing Committee

Through:

Subject: **REPORT OUT: Request to Remove a Nearby City Tree - 79 Woodburn Street**

Council Action:

**In City Council March 3, 2022.
More time granted.**

Recommendation:

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee recommends the communication from Loretta Simonds requesting the removal of a City tree be placed on more time.

Attachments:

None

Background:

Chair Greenwald returned to the first agenda item, stating that he saw that Loretta Simonds is not present. He recognized City staff.

Mr. Blomquist stated that he had the opportunity to go visit Ms. Simonds and look at the situation. He continued that he would like to note that the home is up for sale. He has also been contacted by potential buyers. His recommendation this evening is to place this item on more time, to evaluate. If the tree is considered for removal, he needs to look at it and see whether it is healthy or not. Also, there may be a change in property ownership.

Chair Greenwald stated that he would like to note that the tree is more than 20 feet from the house. He continued that Ms. Simonds is not present, so as much as he dislikes placing items on more time, this is a time to do that. He asked for a motion.

Councilor Roberts made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Williams.

On a vote of 5-0, the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee recommended the communication from Loretta Simonds requesting the removal of a City tree be placed on more time.

Councilor Williams stated he would love to hear about potential replacements for a street tree in that area if Mr. Blomquist looks at this tree and determines that it should be removed.

