



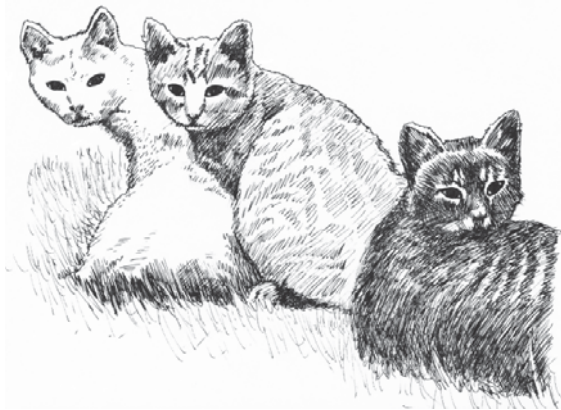
# Housecats in Our Parks

Listen! What's that rustling in the bushes? It's not wildlife, it's a housecat! Untamed domestic, or "feral," housecats are commonly found on city streets, and are being seen more and more frequently in our state parks.

## Where do they come from and why are there so many?

Pet owners faced with unwanted cats may abandon them outdoors, sometimes in parks. Well-meaning people then feed these cats, sometimes following a plan where the cats are trapped, neutered, possibly vaccinated, and re-released in an outdoors location. Problems inherent in this approach include:

- Cats will continue to be dumped where people think they will be fed.
- Catching all cats before they reproduce is impossible, so the number of cats increases.
- A large number of cats in one area, and cat food, attracts predators and other animals and encourages the spread of disease.
- People may stop putting out food, leaving the cats to try to survive on their own.



## What is the problem with cats in parks?

Cats catch and kill small mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians—it is their habit as predators—and by doing so they compete with native predators. Studies have found that the typical housecat allowed to roam outdoors brings home more than 50 small mammals, birds, and lizards per year. This number would be even higher for feral cats living in our state parks.

Additionally, feral cats also pose a public health risk, from bites and scratches to rabies and other diseases that can be passed to both wildlife and humans. Feral cats live difficult, often painful lives, exposed to a host of dangers including bad weather, accidental injury, intentional harm, predation by dogs and wildlife, injury from other cats, and disease.

## What is park policy on feral cats?

Housecats do not belong in our state parks. To willfully abandon any animal is prohibited by state law, and the feeding of feral cats within state parks is specifically prohibited by state regulations. Whenever possible, cats are humanely trapped by park staff or animal control agencies and removed to local animal shelters, where they often must be euthanized.

## What can you do?

Visitors should report feral cats and feeding stations to park staff when cats are seen in undeveloped areas of the park.

Please do not feed cats, or any wildlife, in state parks.