

Cat's out of the bag: Risks to and from free-roaming domestic cats



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Dan Herrera is an urban ecologist that has been studying wildlife in Washington, DC for the last 4 years. In addition to research, Dan also works as a science communicator and illustrator by making infographics, project logos and handouts. In this seminar, he will discuss research from the DC Cat Count, which he has been a field researcher for the last 3 years. Free-roaming domestic cats (*Felis catus*) encounter risks that are novel to the outdoor environment such as predation and potential for zoonotic disease. Likewise, cats with outdoor access pose these same risks to local wildlife. Data from a three-year camera trap survey of Washington, DC, were analyzed to investigate the factors that contribute to these risks in order to inform data-driven cat management strategies. We found that tree canopy cover was the most influential driver of occupancy for most species, and that cats spatially overlap with vectors and prey to varying degrees across the city. We also found that distance to a forest edge was the best predictor of whether a cat's prey is a native or non-native species. These findings have implications for data-driven population management decisions.