Felis catus was domesticated in the eastern Mediterranean c. 3000 years ago. Considering the extent to which cats are valued as pets, it is not surprising that they have since been translocated by humans to almost all parts of the world. Notable predators, cats threaten native birdlife and other fauna, especially on islands where native species have evolved in relative isolation from predators.

Species Description
Felis catus is a small animal in the wild (up to 5kg, but more commonly 1.5 -3.0kg) but may be considerably heavier when domesticated. Colour is extremely variable in domesticated varieties and feral cats commonly revert to black, tabby or tortoiseshell with varying extents of white starting from the belly and breast.

Lifecycle Stages
Gestation: 65 days. Weaning: 35-40 days. Sexual maturity: 9 months.
Habitat Description
Feral cats adapt to a variety of habitat types and circumstances. On the Australian continent they inhabit forests and woodland habitats in eastern, western and northern parts of the country (Dickman 1996). On Hahajima Island, Japan, feral cats have been observed widely in various kinds of habitats, including primary forests (Kawakami and Higuchi 2002). On Macquarie Island, (a sub-Antarctic Australian island) most cats live in herb-field or tussock grassland (Brothers Skira and Copson 1985), showing an ability to adapt to difficult terrain. A study of the habitat use and diet of feral cats in a Mediterranean habitat in a riparian reserve in central California (Hall et al. 2000, in Brickner 2003) can probably reflect on the situation in other areas with similar climatic areas. Cats in the reserve seemed to strongly prefer staying in riparian habitat. Hall and colleagues (2000) suggest that this habitat provides ample cover and perhaps a variety of prey, especially birds. Cats in the study foraged mostly in the adjacent fields and annual grasslands and, to a lesser extent, in the riparian habitat (in Brickner 2003).

Reproduction
Domestic cats are intensive breeders, maybe due to the seasonal estrous cycle of the females, during which each female comes into heat several times until pregnancy or end of cycle (Gunther and Terkel 2002, in Brickner 2003). A female cat reaches reproductive maturity between 7 to 12 months of age can be in estrous as many as five times a year (Ogan and Jurek 1997, in Brickner 2003). The gestation period lasts 63 to 65 days (Nowak 1991, in Brickner 2003) and the average litter is four to six kittens (O’Donnell 2001, in Brickner 2003). Cats can reproduce any month of the year, where food and habitat is sufficient. An adult female may produce three litters per year (Fitzwater 1994, in Brickner 2003).
Nutrition

Male and female feral cat home ranges overlap (Say and Pontier 2004). The mean home range for feral cats in Hawaiian forests was 5.74km² for males and 2.23km² for females (Smucker et al. 2000). Australian studies have given mean home ranges of 7 to 28 hectares for domestic cats and up to 249.7 hectares for feral cats; while a New Zealand study posted home ranges of between 75 hectares and 985 hectares. Prey availability is a primary factor in determining home range size for feral cats (Edwards et al. 2001; Barratt 1997). Cat activity is bimodal, with peaks near dawn and dusk (Konecny 1987).

The diet of feral cats on islands may vary significantly to that of feral cats on the mainland, with cats often taking advantage of alternative food sources. On the tiny 28 hectare Herekopare Island, New Zealand, for example, there are no introduced or native species of mammals. Prior to elimination of feral cats there in 1970, fairy prion (see *Pachyptila turtur* in IUCN Red List of Threatened Species) comprised the bulk of the diet with other sea birds and occasional land birds making up most of the remainder (Fitzgerald and Veitch 1985, in Dickman 1996). The weta (a native insect in the order Orthoptera) also appeared to be important to individual cats; two cats' stomachs were found to contain over 100 insects each. Similarly, in the Galapagos Islands, birds are an important component of the feral cat's diet, with cats sometimes taking birds of similar mass to themselves, such as frigate birds (*Fregata* spp.), pelicans (*Pelecanus* spp.) and flightless cormorants (*Phalacrocorax* spp.) (Konecny 1987, in Dickman 1996). On Aldabra Atoll, Seychelles, hatchlings of the green turtle (see *Chelonia mydas* in IUCN Red List of Threatened Species) are seasonally predominant in the diet of feral cats (Seabrook, 1989). On Christmas Island, the introduced black rat (*Rattus rattus*) comprises almost one third of the diet of feral cats by weight, however, 21% of the diet is comprised of the large flying-fox (see *Pteropus melanotus* in IUCN Red List of Threatened Species) and 28% of the imperial pigeon (see *Ducula whartoni* in IUCN Red List of Threatened Species) (Tidemann et al. 1994, in Dickman 1996).

Click here to see Major prey of feral cats in Australia (source: Dickman 1996).
General Impacts
The most obvious impact of feral cats is the predatory impact they exert on native prey populations; this has resulted in the probable local or regional decline or extinction of many species (Dickman 1996). However, unambiguous evidence of cats causing a decline in a prey species is difficult to find as other factors, such as other predator species, may also be involved in the decline (Dickman 1996). One exception to this is a study by Saunders (1991) which showed that cats killed 7% of nestlings of red-tailed cockatoos (Calyptrorhynchus magnificus) over 11 breeding seasons in Western Australia. Several reintroduction programmes in Australia have failed, due to the predation pressure exerted by feral cats, often in conjunction with foxes. For example, the success of the reintroductions of the golden bandicoot (Isoodon auratus) and the burrowing bettong (Bettongia lesueur) in the Gibson Desert, Western Australia was hindered primarily by feral cat predation. In general, the predatory impact of cats primarily affects birds and small to medium-sized mammals (Dickman 1996). Endangered species around the world are threatened by the presence of cats, including the black stilt (see Himantopus novaezelandiae in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species) (New Zealand), the Okinawa woodpecker (see Sapheopipo noguchii in IUCN Red List of Threatened Species) (Japan) and the Cayman Island ground iguana (see Cyclura lewisi in IUCN Red List of Threatened Species), to list just some of the many species effected.

Changes in island fauna after the introduction of cats can provide compelling evidence of their predatory impact. Cats have been introduced to 40 islands off the coast of Australia; seven off the coast of New Zealand and several dozen islands elsewhere in the Pacific (Dickman 1992a, Veitch 1985, King 1973 1984, in Dickman 1996). Feral cats have been implicated in the decline of at least six species of island endemic birds in New Zealand, including the Stephens Island wren, the sooty shearwater (Puffinus griseus) and the kakapo (Strigops habroptilus), as well as 70 local populations of insular birds (King 1984, in Dickman 1996). The elimination of cats often leads to an increase in the population size of prey species. For example, following removal of cats from Little Barrier Island, New Zealand, the stitchbird (Notiomystis cincta) increased from less than 500 individuals to 3000 individuals in just a few years (Griffin et al. 1988, in Dickman 1996).
Management Info
Cats were first domesticated in Egypt around 2000 BC (Serpell 1988, in Coleman et al. 1997, in Brickner 2003) and brought to Britain by 300AD by the Romans. European colonists introduced them around the globe (Coleman et al. 1997, in Brickner 2003). As cats are often revered as pets in our society this raises the moral dilemma of how to handle them when they have become a threat to native wildlife. Brickner (2003) suggests that animal rights organisations that condemn cat control via killing are over-looking the approximately 275 million animals killed by 9 million cats in Britain alone (Woods et al. in press). Obviously there are two quite different situations for management of the species, depending on the status of the cat: one is where a cat is a domesticated household pet and the other is when a cat has gone wild or feral and has no owner to protect and feed it.

When a cat is a pet, there are a number of ways in which to help prevent damage caused to wildlife. Brickner (2003) suggests keeping a cat in at night, fitting it with a bell, neutering the animal when it is young and giving it toys. However, the divided results of several investigations shows that the positive outcome of such actions is uncertain. Barrette (1998) found that fitting cats with bells has no significant effect on the amount of prey caught, whereas Ruxton et al. (2002) found that equipping cats with bells reduced prey delivery rates by about 50% (in Brickner 2003). Woods, McDonald and Harris (2003) found that the number of birds and herpetofauna brought home by cats was significantly lower in households that feed birds (but the number of actual different types of bird species killed was greater in households that feed birds). The number of mammals brought home per cat was lower when cats were equipped with bells or kept indoors at night, however, the number of herpetofauna brought home was greater when cats were kept in at night. The outcome of this is that there appears to be a subjective choice to be made as to whether it is more important to protect herpetofauna or mammals. Obviously, if the mammals being caught are introduced species, such as rats and mice, this raises another dilemma.

In the second situation, when a cat is feral and threatening wildlife, a more severe means of controlling cats appears justified. In 1992 the Australian Parliament passed the Endangered Species Protection Act 1992, which obligates the commonwealth to provide a Threat Abatement Plan (TAP) for each listed threatening process, including one for feral cats (Brickner 2003). The key objectives of the feral cat TAP are: eradicate feral cats from islands where they threaten vulnerable native animals; prevent feral cats from occupying new islands where they may be a threat to native communities; promote the recovery of species threatened by feral cats; improve the effectiveness and humaneness of cat control methods and improve the understanding of the impacts of feral cats on native animals. The use of visual lures (such as feathers and cotton wool) and attractants (such as tuna oil) are currently being tested in an effort to attract greater numbers of feral cats to traps and baits. The impact of feral cats on native wildlife is being studied in various parts of Australia in order to have it quantified (Brickner 2003). Predation by feral cats was listed as a Key Threatening Process under the Federal Endangered Species Protection Act 1992. A Threat Abatement Plan for Predation by Feral Cats was produced in 1999 and amended in 2008 to promote the recovery of vulnerable and endangered native species and threatened ecological communities (Environment Australia 1999 and DEWHA 2008). A recently published review (Denny and Dickman (2010)) assesses the efficacy of the methods used to estimate relative abundance of cats; describes currently used cat control methodologies; and discusses possible future directions for the control of cats in Australia. It also includes details of the current legislative framework that exists for cat control in Australia; describes the ecology of feral and stray cats exploiting various habitats. Please follow this link to view Denny E. A & C. R. Dickman 2010. Review of cat ecology and management strategies in Australia
Pathway
Many ships of the 18th and 19th centuries were infested with rats and so carried cats to control them. Taken by humans as pets then left behind or the young dispersed.

Principal source:

Compiler: IUCN/SSC Invasive Species Specialist Group (ISSG)
Updates with support from the Overseas Territories Environmental Programme (OTEP) project XOT603, a joint project with the Cayman Islands Government - Department of Environment

Review:

Publication date: 2010-09-15

ALIEN RANGE

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Red List assessed species 587: EX = 44; EW = 3; CR = 104; EN = 135; VU = 132; NT = 82; DD = 16; LC = 71;
Full Account for: Felis catus

**Emoia adsersa** EN
**Emoia loyalliensis** VU
**Epictates monensis** EN
**Eremiornis carteri** LC
**Euastacus armatus** DD
**Euastacus balanensis** EN
**Euastacus bindal** CR
**Euastacus brachytyorax** EN
**Euastacus claytoni** EN
**Euastacus dalaqarbe** CR
**Euastacus diversus** EN
**Euastacus fleckeri** EN
**Euastacus girurmulayn** CR
**Euastacus grurughi** CR
**Euastacus hirsutus** EN
**Euastacus jagabar** CR
**Euastacus maccai** EN
**Euastacus mirangudjin** CR
**Euastacus pilosus** EN
**Euastacus rieki** EN
**Euastacus setosus** CR
**Euastacus spinichelatus** EN
**Euastacus suttoni** VU
**Euastacus valentulus** LC
**Euastacus yanga** LC
**Euastacus yigara** CR
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**Euleptes europaea** NT
**Eurydactylodes agricolae** NT
**Eurydactylodes symmetricus** EN
**Falco araea** VU
**Felis margarita** NT
**Fossa fossana** NT
**Foudia sechellarum** NT
**Fulica alai** VU
**Galidia elegans** LC
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**Gallicolumba norfolciensis** EX
**Gallicolumba salamonis** EX
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**Gallotia nigra** LC
**Eriphius tricolor** LC
**Eretrmochelys imbricata** CR
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**Gallicolumba rubescens** VU
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GLOBAL INVASIVE SPECIES DATABASE
FULL ACCOUNT FOR: Felis catus

Psitirostra psittacea CR
Pterodroma arminjoniana VU
Pterodroma axillaris EN
Pterodroma brevipes VU
Pterodroma cookii VU
Pterodroma externa VU
Pterodroma hasilata EN
Pterodroma longirostris VU
Pterodroma madeira EN
Pterodroma phaeopygia CR
Pterodroma sandwichensis VU
Pteropus melanolotus VU
Ptilinopus huttoni VU
Ptychoramphus aleuticus CR
Puffinus creatopus VU
Puffinus heinrothi VU
Puffinus mauretanicus CR
Puffinus opisthomelas NT
Puffinus yelkouan NT
Rallina canningi NT
Rattus tunneyi LC
Reithrodontomys spectabilis CR
Rhacodactylus leachianus LC
Rhacodactylus trachyrhynchus CR
Rhionaeschna galapagoensis EN
Sarothrura elegans LC
Scelarcis perspicillata LC
Scolopax celebensis NT
Sephanoides fernandensis CR
Sialospeus deplanchei NT
Siphonornis brewsteri NT
Sminthopsis brevieri VU
Sminthopsis douglasi NT
Solenodon cubanus EN
Sorex pribilofensis EN
Spheniscus humboldti VU
Spheniscus mendiculus EN
Stercorarius antarcticus LC
Sturna fuscata LC
Strigops habroptila CR
Suta flagellum LC
Sylvilagus mansuetus NT
Synthliboramphus craveri VU
Symaticus soemmerringii NT
Tarsius dentatus VU
Tarsius pelengensis EN
Terpsiphone corvina CR
Pterodroma alba EN
Pterodroma atrata EN
Pterodroma barau EN
Pterodroma cervicalis VU
Pterodroma delillippiana VU
Pterodroma feae NT
Pterodroma leucoptera VU
Pterodroma macroptera LC
Pterodroma magentae CR
Pterodroma rapanum EN
Pterodroma solandri VU
Pteropus psephokon CR
Ptilinopus mercieri EX
Puffinus auricularis CR
Puffinus gravis LC
Puffinus huttoni EN
Puffinus newelli EN
Puffinus pacificus LC
Pyrhula mira EN
Rallus semiulmbeus EN
Reithrodontomys raviventris EN
Rhacodactylus auriculatus LC
Rhacodactylus sarasinorum VU
Rhynochetos oxyrhynchus LC
Rhynochetos jubatus EN
Saxicola dacotae NT
Sciurus griseus LC
Scolopax mira VU
Setonix brachyurus VU
Sialospeus ruficauda VU
Sminthopsis atkeni CR
Sminthopsis dolichura LC
Sminthopsis psammophila EN
Solenodon paradoxus EN
Spheniscus demersus EN
Spheniscus magellanicus NT
Spilogale pygmaea VU
Sternbergi LC
Sternula virgata NT
Sphydropus tenebrosus NT
Sylvilagus bachmani LC
Sylvilagus palustris LC
Synthliboramphus hypoleucus VU
Tamias palmeri EN
Tarsius larang DD
Tarsius tarsier VU
Thalassarche melanophrys EN
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<td>Zootera turipavae</td>
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<td>Zygomys palatalis</td>
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</table>

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Management information


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Summary: This report reviews available information on the adverse effects of 14 alien vertebrates considered to be of significant invasive species on islands of the South Pacific and Hawaii, supplementing the authors' experience with that of other workers.


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Summary: Eradication case study in Turning the tide: the eradication of invasive species.


Summary: This paper looks at the effectiveness of the trap/neuter/release methods used to control domestic cat colonies in the USA.


Summary: This paper considers the problem of domestic cat populations in natural areas in the USA.


Summary: This paper considers the problem of domestic cat populations in natural areas in the USA.


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Summary: This article looked at the impacts of feral cats in the Poco das Antas Biological Reserve in Brazil.


Summary: This study looked at the impact of cat predation on a house sparrow population in a typical English village.


Summary: English: The species list sheet for the Mexican information system on invasive species currently provides information related to Scientific names, family, group and common names, as well as habitat, status of invasion in Mexico, pathways of introduction and links to other specialised websites. Some of the higher risk species already have a direct link to the alert page. It is important to notice that these lists are constantly being updated, please refer to the main page (http://www.conabio.gob.mx/invasoras/index.php/Portada), under the section Novedades for information on updates.

Invasive species - mammals is available from:

http://www.conabio.gob.mx/invasoras/index.php/Especies_invasoras_-_Mam%C3%ADferos [Accessed 30 July 2008]

Spanish:

La lista de especies del Sistema de informaci?n sobre especies invasoras de m?xico cuenta actualmente con informaci?n acerca de nombre cient?fico, familia, grupo y nombre com?n, as? como h?bitat, estado de la invasi?n en M?xico, rutas de introducci?n y ligas a otros sitios especializados. Algunas de las especies de mayor riesgo ya tienen una liga directa a la p?gina de alertas. Es importante resaltar que estas listas se encuentran en constante proceso de actualizaci?n, por favor consulte la portada (http://www.conabio.gob.mx/invasoras/index.php/Portada), en la secci?n novedades, para conocer los cambios.

Especies invasoras - Mam?feros is available from:

http://www.conabio.gob.mx/invasoras/index.php/Especies_invasoras_-_Mam%C3%ADferos [Accessed 30 July 2008]


Summary: This paper looks at the range of predators which feed on the endangered Hutton s shearwater in New Zealand.


Summary: This article looks at the differences in the impacts of feral cats on introduced and endemic rodents in the Galapagos Islands.


Summary: Comprehensive overview of features of feral cats in Australia and their impact on native species.


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FULL ACCOUNT FOR: Felis catus


Summary: This paper outlines the history of mammal introductions to Sao Tome and Principe.


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Summary: This paper discusses the ecology of the feral cat on Macquarie Island.


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Summary: This paper looks at the causes of fledgling mortality in the endangered black-fronted tern in New Zealand.


Summary: This paper reports on the changes in shearwater mortality on Natividad Island, Mexico, following cat eradication.


Summary: This article reports on the predation by cats on storm petrels in the Molene Archipelago, France.


Summary: This paper presents the findings of video recordings of the nests of the endangered palila, in Hawaii.


Summary: This paper presents the findings of video recordings of the nests of the endangered palila, in Hawaii.


Summary: This paper discusses the diet of feral cats in central Australia.
This paper examines the causes for mortality of wild and released grey partridges in Finland.


**Summary:** This paper examines the causes for mortality of wild and released grey partridges in Finland.


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**Summary:** Information on wild cats.


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