Felis catus

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Kingdom</th>
<th>Phylum</th>
<th>Class</th>
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<td>Mammalia</td>
<td>Carnivora</td>
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Common name: cat (English), domestic cat (English), pusiniweikau (English, Fiji), house cat (English), Hauskatze (German), poti (Maori), feral cat (English)

Synonym: Similar species:

Summary: 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 (*Calyptorhynchus 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 (*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 affected.

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 overlooking 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:
FULL ACCOUNT FOR: *Felis catus*

**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**

|---------------------|--------------|

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

- **Acanthophis rugosus** LC
- **Acrocephalus aequinoctialis** EN
- **Acrocephalus luscinus** CR
- **Acrocephalus rodericanus** EN
- **Acrocephalus taïti** VU
- **Actenoides bougainvillii** VU
- **Aceros narcondami** EN
- **Acrocephalus kerearako** NT
- **Acrocephalus rimatae** VU
- **Acrocephalus sechellensis** VU
- **Acrocephalus vaughani** EN
- **Aegotheles savesi** CR

Alauda raza CR
Ambylosomus corrae NT
Anarhynchus frontalis VU
Anas chlorotis EN
Anas wvilliana EN
Antechinomys laniger LC
Anthus novaeseelandiae LC
Aphelocoma coerulescens VU
Aplonis santovestris VU
Apertyx haastii VU
Apertyx owenii NT
Arvicola sapidus VU
Atelopus guanujo CR
Bayavia cyclura DD
Bayavia geitaina NT
Bayavia madjo NT
Bayavia ornata EN
Bayavia robusta NT
Bayavia septuclavus NT
Bettongia penicillata CR
Brachylophus vitiensis CR
Bulweria bulwerii LC
Burhinus grallarius NT
Buteo galapagoensis VU
Caledoniscincus aequilinius NT
Caledoniscincus auratus EN
Caledoniscincus bodoi LC
Caledoniscincus cryptos DD
Caledoniscincus haplothorax LC
Caledoniscincus reueni EN
Callaeas cinereus EN
Calonectris edwardsii NT
Camarhynchus heliobates CR
Caprimulgus noxilus EN
Celatiscincus similis EN
Celestus warreni CR
Chaeropus ecaudatus EX
Chalcides viridans LC
Charadrius melodus NT
Charadrius obscurus EN
Chaunoproctus ferreorostris EX
Chlamydosaurus kingii LC
Chrysolophus basalis LC
Cnemaspis kandiana LC
Coenocorypha aucklandica NT
Colurea seychellensis CR
Columba argentina CR
Columba jouyi EX
Columba versicolor EX
Conolophus subcloudatus VU
Coracina newtoni CR
Corvus kubaryi CR
Crex crex LC
Crocidura trichura CR

Algyroides marchi EN
Anairetes fernandezianus NT
Anas aucklandica VU
Anas eatoni VU
Anolis longiceps VU
Anthornis melanocephala EX
Aplopteron familiae VU
Aphrastura masafuerae CR
Apertyx australis VU
Apertyx mantelli EN
Aratinga brevipes EN
Aspidoscelis catalinensis VU
Bayavia crassicollis DD
Bayavia exsucida EN
Bayavia goroensis EN
Bayavia montana DD
Bayavia pulchella NT
Bayavia sauvagii DD
Bettongia lesueur NT
Boweria rufescens EX
Branta sandvicensis VU
Bulweria fallax NT
Burramys parvus CR
Cabalus modestus EX
Caledoniscincus atropunctatus LC
Caledoniscincus austrocaledonicus LC
Caledoniscincus chazeaui EN
Caledoniscincus festivus LC
Caledoniscincus oreates EN
Caledoniscincus terai VU
Caleonas nicobarica NT
Calepynynus campestris EX
Camarhynchus pauper CR
Celatiscincus euryotis LC
Celestus anelpistus CR
Cettia haddeni NT
Chalcides simonyi EN
Chalinolobus tuberculatus VU
Charadrius mongolus LC
Charadrius sanctaehelenae CR
Chelonia mydas EN
Chlamyphorus truncatus DD
Chthonolobus saigitatus LC
Coccyzus farrugineus VU
Coenocorypha pumila VU
Colocolia elaphra VU
Columba nova EX
Columba junoniae NT
Conilurus penicillatus NT
Copsychus sechellarum EN
Corvus hawaiiensis EW
Coturnix novaezelandiae EX
Crocidura canariensis EN

Crotalus catalinensis CR

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GLOBAL INVASIVE SPECIES DATABASE
FULL ACCOUNT FOR: Felis catus

Cryptoblepharus novocaledonicus LC
Ctenosaura palearlis EN
Cyanoramphus cookii EN
Cyclura carinata CR
Cyclura cornuta VU
Cyclura onchopis EX
Cyclura ricordii CR
Dasycercus cristicauda LC
Dasyornis broadbenti LC
Dasyurus geoffroii NT
Dasyurus maculatus NT
Dasyurus viverrinus NT
Dierogekko insularis NT
Dierogekko koniambo CR
Dierogekko pouimensis CR
Dierogekko validiclavis EN
Diomedea antipodensis VU
Diomedea exulans VU
Diplotriches legata EN
Dipodomys margaritae CR
Ducula aurora EN
Dysmorodrepanis munroi EX
Elania ridleyana VU
Eleutherodactylus barlagnei EN
Eleutherodactylus pinchoni EN
Emballonura semicaudata EN
Emoia adpersa EN
Emoia loyaltiensis VU
Epicrates monensis EN
Eremiornis carteri LC
Euastacus armatus DD
Euastacus balanesis EN
Euastacus bindai CR
Euastacus brachythorax EN
Euastacus claytoni EN
Euastacus dalagarbe CR
Euastacus diversus EN
Euastacus fleckeri EN
Euastacus girurmulayn CR
Euastacus guruhqi CR
Euastacus hirsutus EN
Euastacus jaqabar CR
Euastacus maccaii 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 vigara CR
Eudyptes chrysocome VU
Euleptes europaea EN
Ctenosaura bakeri CR
Cyanoramphus auriceps NT
Cyanoramphus novaezelandiae VU
Cyclura collei CR
Cyclura lewisi CR
Cyclura pinguis CR
Cyclura steinegeri EN
Dasyornis brachypterus EN
Dasyurus albopunctatus NT
Dasyurus hallucatus EN
Dasyurus spartacus NT
Dierogekko inexpectatus CR
Dierogekko kaalaensis CR
Dierogekko nehoueensis CR
Dierogekko thomaswhitei CR
Diomedea amsterdamsensis CR
Diomedea epomophora VU
Diomedea sanfordi EN
Dipodomys insularis CR
Dipodomys stephensi EN
Ducula pickeringii VU
Dysmoropelia dekarchiskos EX
Elanus scriptus NT
Eleutherodactylus martinicensis NT
Elurus myoxinus LC
Emberiza socotrina VU
Emoia lawesi EN
Emoia nigra LC
Epthianura tricolor LC
Eremochelys imbricata CR
Euastacus australasiensis EN
Euastacus bidawalis EN
Euastacus bispinosus VU
Euastacus clarkae CR
Euastacus crassus EN
Euastacus dharafulus CR
Euastacus eungella CR
Euastacus gamalaro CR
Euastacus gumar EN
Euastacus guwiius CR
Euastacus hystricosus VU
Euastacus jaqara CR
Euastacus mailae CR
Euastacus monteithorum CR
Euastacus polysetosus EN
Euastacus robertsi CR
Euastacus simplex VU
Euastacus sulcatus VU
Euastacus uropiniosus EN
Euastacus wiwuru NT
Euastacus yarreansis VU
Eudyptes chrysocome VU
Eudyptula minor LC
Eupleres goudoti NT

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GLOBAL INVASIVE SPECIES DATABASE
FULL ACCOUNT FOR: \textit{Felis catus}

\textbf{BIBLIOGRAPHY}

132 references found for \textit{Felis catus}

\textbf{Management information}


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


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


Summary: This paper presents the results of a study into the prey composition for house cats in Canberra, Australia.


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


Brickner, I. 2003. \textit{The impact of domestic cat (Felis catus) on wildlife welfare and conservation: a literature review. With a situation summary from Israel.}


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 discusses the interaction between wildcats and domestic cats in Scotland, and suggests management measures.


**Summary:** This paper gives details of the eradication of introduced species in Europe, including the eradication of *M. vison* from Hiimaa Island in Estonia.


**Summary:** Overview of cat eradication from North West Island.


**Summary:** Galapagos Invasive Species: Harmful animals, 2004. Farewell to the airport cats: Eradication of feral cats from Baltra island.


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

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**Summary:** Galapagos Invasive Species: Harmful animals, 2004. Farewell to the airport cats: Eradication of feral cats from Baltra island.


**Summary:** Galapagos Invasive Species: Harmful animals, 2004. Farewell to the airport cats: Eradication of feral cats from Baltra island.


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**Summary:** Galapagos Invasive Species: Harmful animals, 2004. Farewell to the airport cats: Eradication of feral cats from Baltra island.

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

Pacific Invasives Initiative (PII), 2006a. Viwa Island Restoration Project


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

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

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

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

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

Summary: This paper examines the impact of predation by domestic cats on wildlife in Great Britain.

General information

Summary: This article discusses the spread of the cat throughout mainland Australia and the early impact on native fauna.

Summary: This study reports on the impacts of predators on the endangered Newell’s shearerwater on Kaua I, Hawaii.

Summary: This short note discusses the diet and home range of feral cats on Dassen Island, South Africa.

Summary: This paper examines the impact of cat predation in an urban area (Bristol, UK).


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


Summary: Cet article présente la situation actuelle et les impacts des populations introduites de mammifères dans les îles subantarctiques françaises. Les moyens de contrôle en place ou planifiés sont également présentés.


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


Summary: 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 note 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 información sobre especies invasoras de México cuenta actualmente con información acerca de nombre científico, familia, grupo y nombre común, así como hábitat, estado de la invasión en México, rutas de introducción y ligas a otros sitios especializados. Algunas de las especies de mayor riesgo ya tienen una lista directa a la página de alertas. Es importante resaltar que estas listas se encuentran en constante proceso de actualización, por favor consulte la portada (http://www.conabio.gob.mx/invasoras/index.php/Portada), en la sección novedades, para conocer los cambios.

Especies invasoras - Mamíferos 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 house cats introduced and endemic rodents in the Galapagos Islands.


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


Summary: This short paper looks at the history and diet of cats on Campbell Island, New Zealand.


Summary: This paper outlines the historical introduction of mammals to Sao Tome and Principe.


Pauquier, L. 2005. Evaluation de l'impact des chats hares Felis catus sur les populations d'oiseaux marins de deux îles tropicales (La Réunion et Juan de Nova) et propositions de mesures de gestion. Rapport de stage, Master SET, Université Paul Cézanne et Laboratoire ECOMAR Université de la Réunion. 36pp


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


**Summary:** This paper examines the impacts of introduced mammals such as feral cats on breeding seabird populations in the California Channel Islands and the Northwestern Baja California Islands.


**Summary:** The authors outline the threats to the European wildcat in Scotland, including hybridisation with domestic cats.

GLOBAL INVASIVE SPECIES DATABASE
FULL ACCOUNT FOR: *Felis catus*

UAE Interact. Undated a. The Islands - Arzanah


Summary: Information on wild cats.

Urtizberea, pers.comm., 2007
Summary: Personal communication with Frank Urtizberea, from the Direction de l‘Agriculture et de la Forêt.

Summary: This paper reports on the release of the Aldabra rail on to Aldabra Atoll in the Seychelles.

Summary: This paper examines the relationship and potential for competition between feral cats and the Iriomote cat on Iriomote Island, Japan.


Summary: This study looked at the impact of feral cat predation on a population of black redstarts in Switzerland.