

Woodland Birds Cat Containment Resource



This project has been supported by the New South Wales' Government's Saving our Species program through its Office of Environment and Heritage and Environment Trust.

This resource was put together by the Molonglo Conservation Group as part of a landscape-species conservation project pertaining to *Artamus cyanopterus*, *Chthonicola sagiatta*, *Petroica phoenicea*, *Petroica boodang* and White Box-Yellow Box-Blakeley's Red Gum Grassy Woodlands.

This resource was developed in conjunction with the *Luna the Stay-At-Home Cat* series published by the Molonglo Conservation Group in 2023.

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we work and the places in which we live. We pay respect to Ancestors and Elders, past, present and emerging. We recognise the unique cultural and spiritual relationship and celebrate the contributions of First Nations peoples to Australia.



United for Nature



Proudly supported by:
SAVING OUR SPECIES

Non-contained domestic cats can be just as harmful
to our native wildlife as feral cats or foxes



Across Australia, research shows that non-contained domestic cats kill almost 80 million native birds every year



Research shows that 4% of all native birds are killed by cats every year, significantly increasing Australia's species extinction rate



Suburb greenspaces and fragmented areas of bushland are successful hunting grounds for cats as there is limited protection for the birds



Like their lion and tiger relatives, cats are obligate carnivores, which means they need meat to survive



Even if they're well fed at home, cats enjoy hunting,
catching and playing with their prey for fun



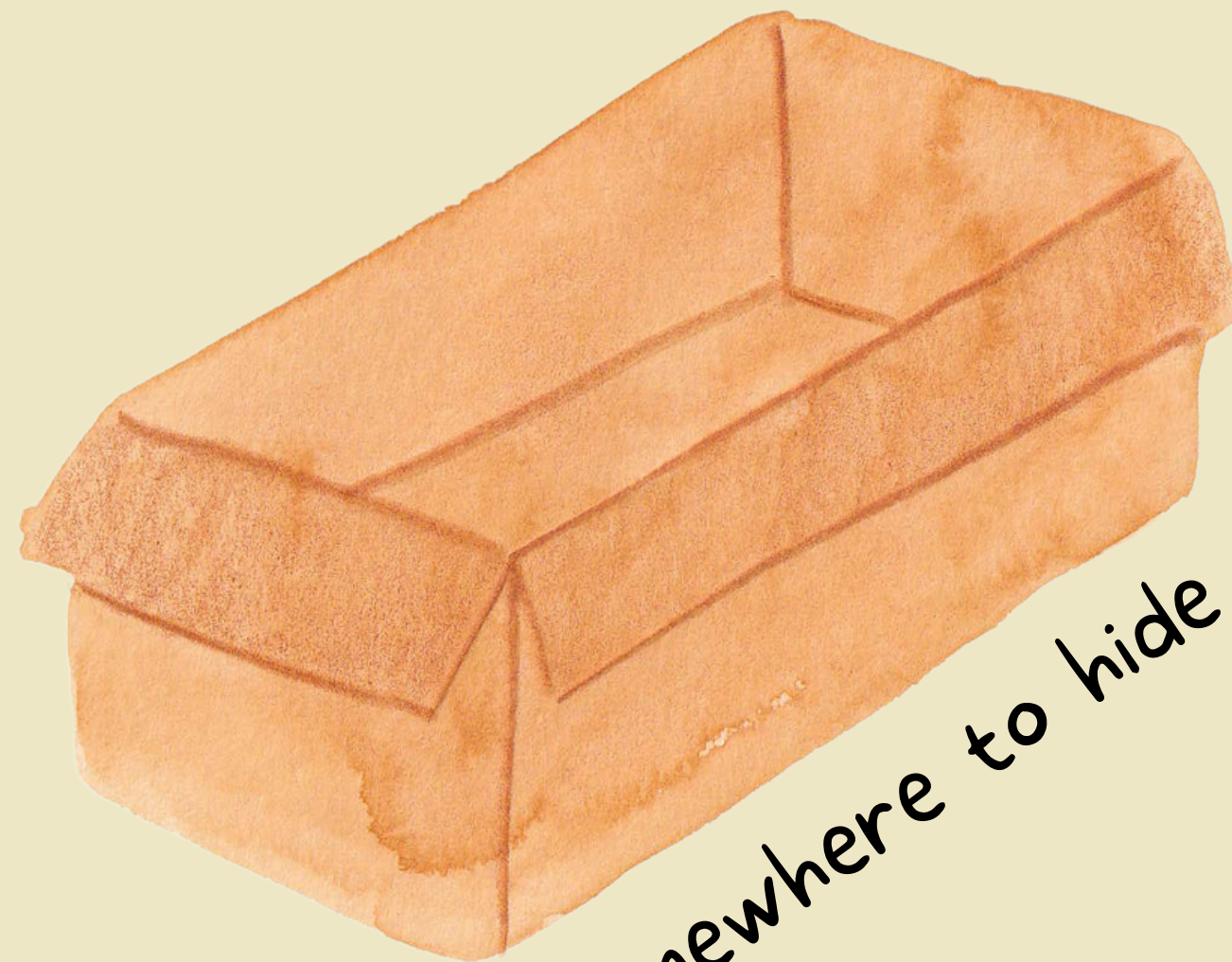
Cats can live happy and fulfilled lives contained in the home as long as their basic needs are met



somewhere to scratch

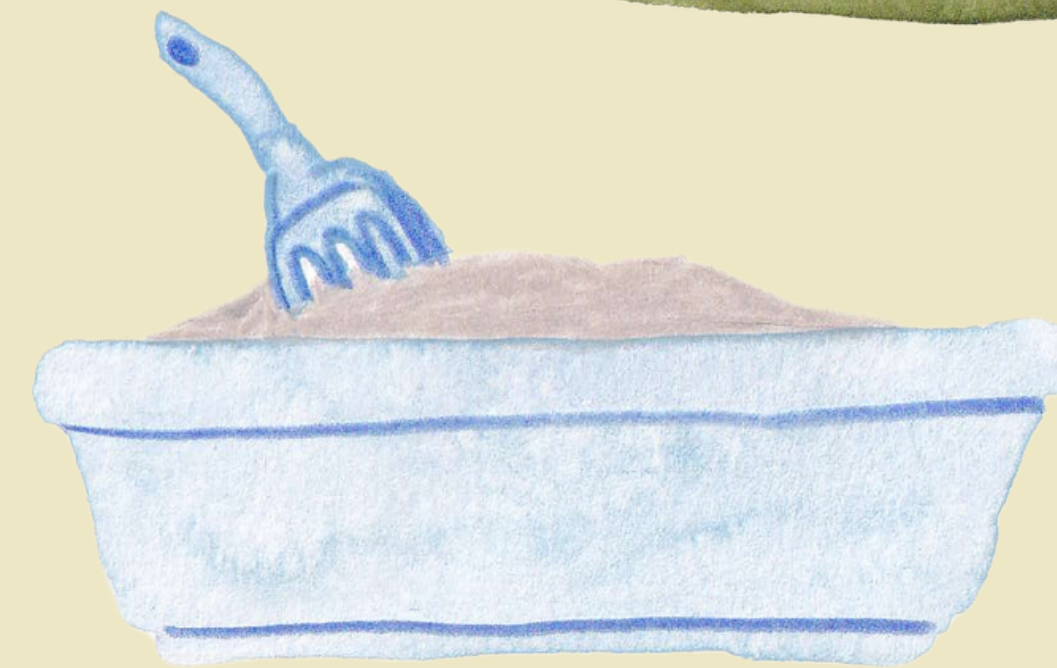
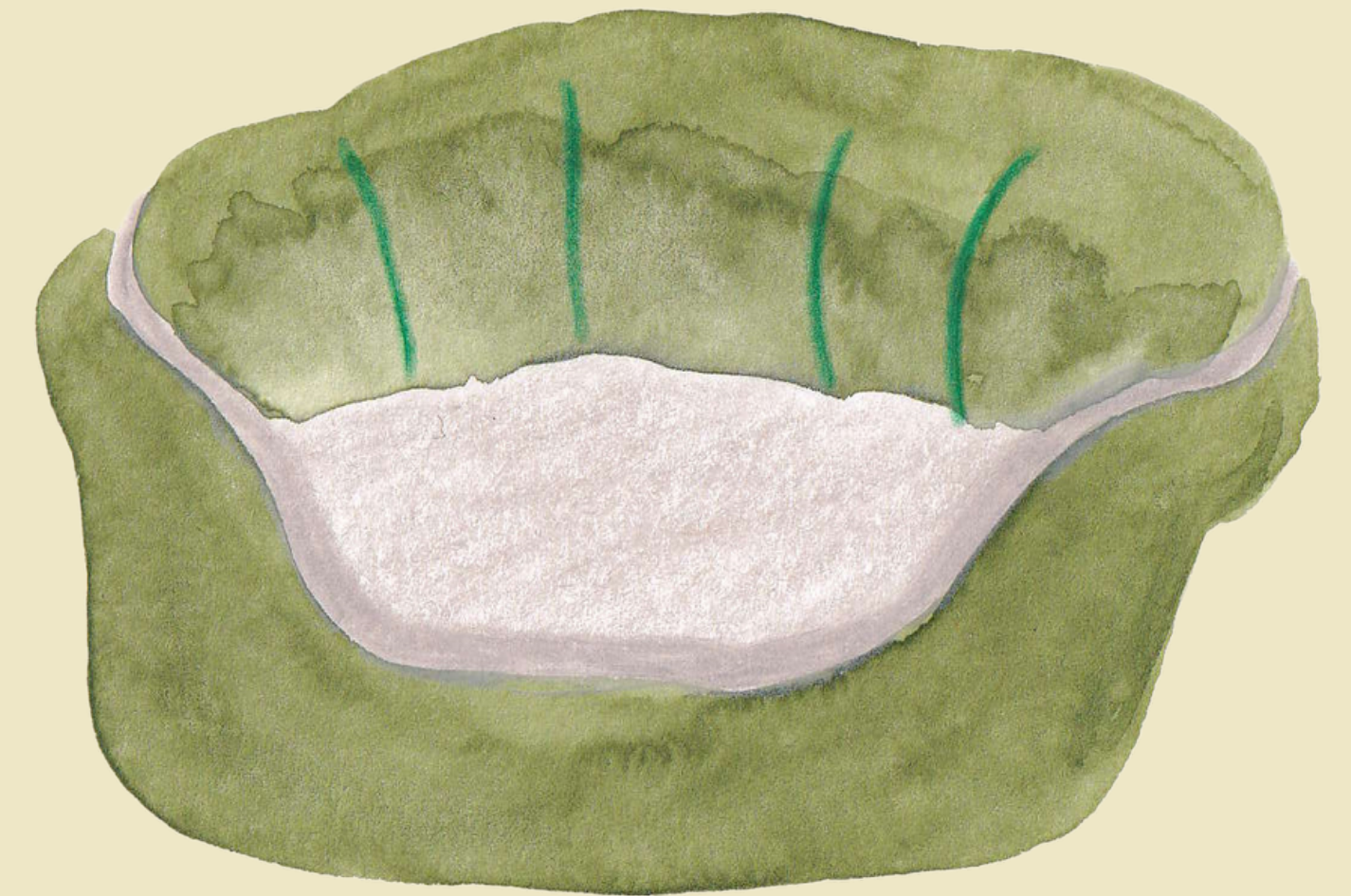


food and water



somewhere to hide

somewhere to rest



toilet

Introduction

Both feral and non-contained domestic cats are a significant threat to Woodland Birds. A 2020 report quantified that uncontained domestic cats kill on average 230 million native Australian animals each year, including 79.9 million native birds. According to Legge, S., Woinarski, J.C.Z., Dickman, C.R., Murphy, B.P., Woolley, L-A., & Calver, M.C. (2020), *We need to worry about Bella and Charlie: The impacts of pet cats on Australian wildlife*, "all we need to do is keep cats contained."

There has been extensive research into cat ecology and management strategies across Australia and the results overwhelmingly point to the overall benefits of cat containment. It has been shown that cats are able to live fulfilled and enriched lives contained in the home when provided with enough stimulation and have their basic needs met.

Domestic cats are often villainised for their contribution to species loss, however it is the responsibility of cat owners to ensure that their pets aren't a danger to the environment and wildlife. Legislation around the containment of domestic dogs has been active in NSW since the *Companion Animals Act 1998*, but regulations for cat containment are still being established. This resource acts as a tool to engage children, families and communities by providing an opportunity to open dialogue about responsible pet ownership and ways to implement change pertaining to cat containment strategies in the home.

Using Luna as a Guide



Luna the Stay-At-Home Cat can be used to model the transition between free roaming to containment for domestic cat owners. The resource is simple but the themes are paramount to the core issues surrounding cat containment.

Themes:

- Wildlife protection
- Habit redirection
- Pet safety
- Communication through behaviour
- Enrichment
- Environment suitability
- Structure and routine
- Companionship strength
- Quality of life

Luna narrates the transition from free roaming to containment through multiple illustrated short stories. Luna isn't depicted as a 'bad' cat, despite her destructive behaviours in the environment. Throughout the story, Luna is shown interacting with native birds, and their relationship improves as she adapts to containment. There is value in domestic cats watching and experiencing bird habits safely to promote cognitive stimulus.

Net keeps Luna in and wildlife out,
with ample freedom to roam about.



Critical Thinking

To use Luna as a tool for children and families, it's important to ask critical thinking questions to contextualise the story and its significance. Below are some examples of NSW curriculum aligned critical thinking prompts.

Questions	Luna the Stay-At-Home Cat
Literal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have you ever seen a cat outside?• What type of things have you seen cats do outside?• Have you ever seen a cat interact with wildlife?• Have you ever seen a cat kill a bird?• How many birds can you count in the story?• Have you ever seen a cat watching birds from the window?
Inferential	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why does Luna have to stay inside?• Why do you think birds are some of Luna's favourite things?• Why can't Luna play with birds outside?• Why is it better for Luna to watch the birds behind net instead of glass?
Evaluative	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What will happen to the birds now that Luna is contained?• How would you feel if you ever saw a cat kill and eat a bird?• How would you feel if a cat ever brought you a dead bird as a gift?• Do you think the birds will enjoy interacting with Luna through the net?• Do you think Luna's inside environment is as important as the outside environment?

Activities

Think about each scenario and how it could impact Woodland Birds. Consider if these scenarios might also impact any other types of wildlife. Together, discuss the potential consequences of each scenario.

Allowing pet cats to roam freely through the neighbourhood and environment

Leaving out bird seed in neighbourhoods with uncontained cats

Walking cats on a harness or lead

Not desexing or spaying pet cats

Putting a bell collar on your pet cat

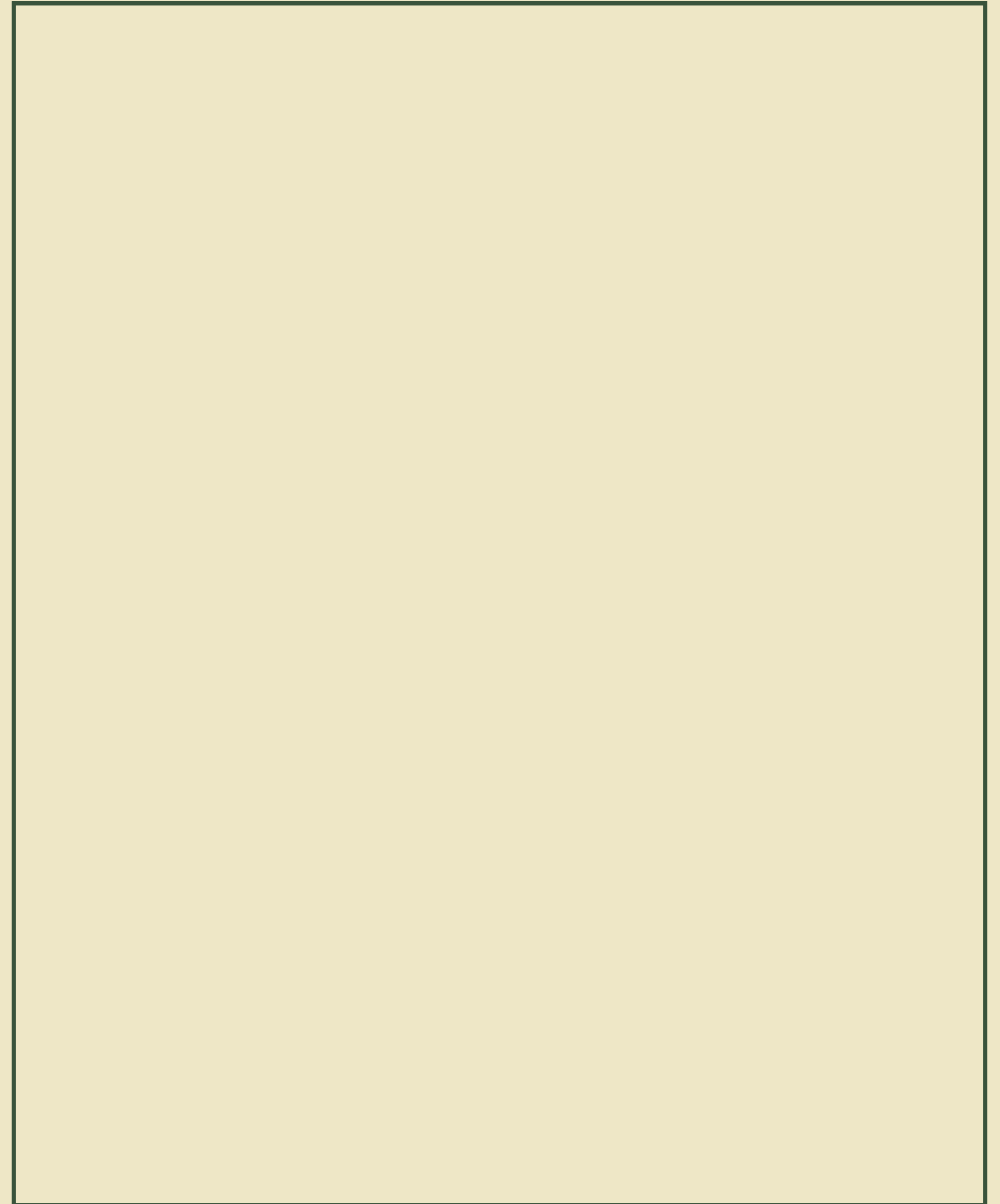
Containing cats without sufficient enrichment or stimulus in their inside environment

Feeding stray cats and encouraging them to keep visiting your yard

Rewarding cats for bringing home dead birds

Build an environment for a happily contained cat. Circle the things that you think a pet cat would like for their home and then draw the environment in the space provided. Imagine what type of things you would like if you were a cat.

- Sunshine
- Soft bed
- Box to hide in
- Tunnels and caves
- Poop
- Litter box
- Scratching posts
- Toys
- Essential oil diffuser
- Loud radio
- Chemicals
- Lounges
- Toxic indoor plants
- Citrus candles
- Baths
- Lots of people
- Mirrors
- Cat grass
- Leveled platforms
- Open access outdoors
- Netted catio
- Soft bed
- Electrical cords
- Windows



Additional Resources

The Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council was the first council in New South Wales to adopt a cat containment policy. The policy was adopted in April 2023 to achieve the following outcomes:

- To provide protection to native wildlife in close proximity to the identified cat containment areas by restricting movement of domestic cats.
- To apply restrictions to domestic cats in the identified cat containment areas to reduce customer complaints to Council regarding roaming cats.

Full details of the policy scope and legislative obligations can be found here:

<https://www.qprc.nsw.gov.au/Policies-Strategies-and-Plans/Adopted-QPRC-Policies>

The RSPCA has launched a new Safe and Happy Cats website following a successful cat containment campaign that provides a comprehensive resource collection for responsible pet owners. <https://safeandhappycats.com.au/> has videos, animations, articles and research that supports cat containment.

The Conservation Council of the ACT Region has also compiled an extensive resource collection of cat containment information as they actively campaign for stronger policies. These resources are available: <https://conservationcouncil.org.au/>

