

Privacy Management Procedures

Urban Cat Count in The City of Vancouver



Vancouver Bird
Advisory Committee



Part 1 – General

Name of Department/Project:	Stewardship Centre for BC Vancouver Cat Count		
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1. Description of the Initiative

Domestic cats (*Felis catus*) are abundant in urban areas and can have an adverse impact on urban wildlife and pose public health risks. A key component of understanding the impacts of cats, and developing humane, socially acceptable, and cost-effective management strategies, as well as the Vancouver Bird Strategy, involves counting the number of cats in the City of Vancouver.

To count cats, we will be deploying a network of trail cameras across The City of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Vancouver is ~ 114 km², has a population of 631,486, and is characterized by single-family residences, a large university, several parks and green spaces, and a large downtown core (3.7km²). We will be deploying trail cameras at 136 monitoring sites, for three weeks, within commercial, industrial, residential and parkland areas of Vancouver.

Trail cameras are non-invasive and take pictures of animals as they walk in front of the camera. This allows us to see where cats are when we don't see them. We will also be creating a photographic inventory of cats and measuring whether some areas of the city have more cats than others.

2. Privacy Considerations

Trail cameras are non-invasive and commonly mounted to stable vegetation or fixed infrastructure (trees, fence posts, telephone poles) and take photos based on a trigger mechanism. This trigger is activated by infrared heat and motion, allowing for trail cameras to function as a low-impact research

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tool to detect and collect images of animals that pass within the camera's field of view. Camera traps have been used around the world as an ethical means of remote wildlife observation and research.

Trail cameras will be installed on trees, fence posts and stable infrastructure within a residential area, urban parkland, industrial, and commercial areas. Cameras will be positioned low to the ground (~30 cm), reducing the likelihood of capturing people's faces or other identifying features. Camera placement will depend on the available vegetation and the property layout to accommodate considerations such as slope. Cameras will also be placed in low traffic areas to limit the potential for human residents to be captured within the camera's field of view. While these efforts generally prevent identification of individuals, faces, tattoos, and other identifiable features may, on occasion, be captured on the photos.

As such, all data will be processed under the direct supervision of the principal investigator, Dr. Elizabeth Gow. Cameras will be checked frequently, and the data will be transported on memory cards exclusively and securely in the care of project members. Images will be securely stored on hard drives or securely in the cloud (i.e., hard drives will be locked in an office or safely in a home cabinet), and all images of people will be discarded or obscured.

Dr. Elizabeth Gow and Jaylen Bastos will control access to the project data, with access privileges assigned only to those requiring data access, and those that have successfully completed the Tri-council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2: CORE, <https://tcps2core.ca/welcome>).

All Vancouver Cat Count members have agreed to and signed a blanket privacy agreement upon entry to the project, which asserts that:

1. Camera trap images will be handled with the utmost care and discretion, particularly as relates to images of humans. Access to images will be limited to those with a direct need for research purposes, to ensure custody and control of images is maintained.
2. Where possible, images containing identifying features (i.e. faces, tattoos) will be blurred using available automated tools.
3. Camera trap images containing humans will not be shared publicly, via social media (even if on a private account), or distributed under any circumstances, except for those outlined in 3a. Examples of social media where human images MAY NOT be shared include Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter.

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- a. Camera trap images containing only lab members may be shared, if permission is gained from all persons who are visible within the image.

4. Images of cats will be kept indefinitely, images of other animals, humans, and non-animals will be retained only if needed, and for no more than 5-years. This will be case by case dependent; however, we will strive to reduce the amount of private and identifiable data kept in all cases.

3. Scope of the Privacy Management Procedures (PMPs)

These PMPs cover the collection of remote imaging for the Vancouver Cat Count in The City of Vancouver. It does not consider implications nor provide recommendations outside of The City of Vancouver boundaries.

4. Elements of Information or Data

This project collects personal information such as camera location; these specific locations will not be shared publicly. Each camera location will be given a unique individual code with the specific locations (i.e., GPS coordinates) only occurring on datasheets required for analyses and the master sheet kept in a locked place by Dr. Elizabeth Gow and Jaylen Bastos. The project equipment (i.e., cameras) will collect colour or black and white (photography) images at medium resolution and store this data as .JPG files. The data collected is intended to characterize urban domestic cat use of residential, parkland, industrial and commercial areas of the city. There is a possibility that individuals may or may not be identifiable in project photographs. Photographs with identifiable individuals will not be made public and will be processed as above, with access limited to essential project members. The data acquired through this project will be entirely in the custody and control of principal investigator Dr. Elizabeth Gow, co-investigator Jaylen Bastos and the Stewardship Centre for BC. The Stewardship Centre's Vancouver Cat Count project will share summaries of analyses and outputs of their research with our project partners: Environment and Climate Change Canada, The City of Vancouver Bird Advisory Committee, and the University of Guelph. No personal information will be shared with these partners.

COVID-19 Procedures

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Part 2 - Program Area Signatures

Elizabeth Gow

May 20, 2020

Principle Investigator

Signature

Date

Jaylen Bastos

May 21, 2020

Co-Investigator

Signature

Date

DG Blair

May 20 2020

Stewardship Centre for BC

Signature

Date