

Dear South Okanagan Resident,

I am seeking your help with research using trail cameras to find out how many free-roaming cats there are in the South Okanagan Valley and what types of areas they are most likely to occur.

Free-roaming cats (feral or owned with unsupervised outdoor access) are the number one source of wild bird mortality, killing upwards of 350 million birds in Canada per year. When allowed to roam, cats are at high risks of injury, death or becoming sick. Cats can also create serious health risks to property owners, such as increasing your risk of being infected by parasites including Toxoplasmosis and Lyme disease carrying ticks.

As part of my Master's research at the University of British Columbia, I am setting up a network of trail cameras in the South Okanagan Valley to estimate free-roaming cat numbers. We are specifically setting up trail cameras in Okanagan Falls, Oliver and Osoyoos. Using computer programs, I will attempt to predict where cats and other mammals (e.g. coyotes, foxes, raccoons, bears, deer etc.) are most likely to occur based on demographics and land use, such as human population density, amount of green space (e.g. parks or woodlots), and farmland. We will also be completing bird point counts to generate a list of bird species that are at risk of encountering a cat and/or experiencing a threat or actual predation by free-roaming cats. I am asking for volunteer help to perform point counts and/or assist with setting up and monitoring trail cameras, as safety protocols prevent travelling to certain locations alone. We will be attaching a trail camera to fence posts or trees about 30 cm from the ground, for 4 weeks every 2-3 months for 10 months. This project begins March 1, 2022, and will continue until December 31, 2022.

Point counts are required to begin at least 30 minutes before sunrise and be completed by 30 minutes after sunrise. Point counts will consist of two 5-minute periods where you will need to record all birds seen and heard. Volunteers must be able to identify 90-100% of all species found in the Southern Okanagan Valley. All point counts will also be recorded using an Automated Recording Unit to confirm any unidentified calls.

I would very much appreciate your help completing this project, and if you would like more information please do not hesitate to contact me at the email.

Sincerely,

Olivia Wilson

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