

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 (Okanagan Falls, Oliver and Osoyoos) to estimate free-roaming cat numbers. 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 experiencing a threat or actual predation by free-roaming cats.

I am looking for volunteers to host trail cameras on your property for 4-week periods, four times between March and December. Cameras will be attached to fence posts or trees about 30 cm from the ground, pointing downward to capture images of pets and visiting wildlife. All images are carefully reviewed to note wildlife species and sort out any possible images of humans. My project follows strict safety and data security protocols, which you can review on the project website.

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

Sincerely,

Olivia Wilson

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