

Hawai‘i Cat Management



Funded by the American Bird Conservancy



Cat Management in Hawai‘i



Cats, while loved by many, play a role in threatening biodiversity through predation and the transmission of disease. Birds are especially vulnerable, particularly those within island ecosystems. In Hawai‘i, both unowned and owned cats can be found roaming freely on the landscape, making it necessary to encourage responsible cat ownership and advance legislative policy. However, this problem has persisted due to intense polarization that makes progress difficult on both fronts. With support from the American Bird Conservancy, Social Marketing at Griffith undertook a comprehensive formative research project to understand stakeholder perspectives and explore solutions.

Over the course of a year, the research team interviewed key experts, conducted a stakeholder survey, and hosted a co-design session involving people with diverse experience and expertise. Interviews provided important background and context and aided in the development of a survey that would explore Hawai‘i residents' attitudes, management and policy preferences, and the barriers they encountered tied to keeping cats indoors or contained when outdoors.

Survey results revealed that most people prioritized native wildlife over feral cats, with the majority supporting many responsible cat ownership behaviors such as sterilization. However, numerous challenges and barriers exist that prevent many people from actually carrying out such practices, such as financial and logistical constraints, housing restrictions, and views around cats' needs, rights, and relative environmental impact. The wide range of perspectives, coupled with the fact that cat owners and non-cat owners diverged significantly on many issues, underscores the complexity of the issue and the need for targeted and collaborative interventions. The co-design workshop offered the opportunity to generate specific recommendations, which will further inform the development of management strategies and communications approaches moving forward.

- **924 residents participated in the survey**
- **74.6% of respondents believe native wildlife is more valuable than feral cats**
- **9 individuals participated in the online co-design**