



# Keeping Your Cat Safe

By Kim Lawter

Indoor cat or outdoor cat? This is the question of many cat owners. These fascinating fluff balls make great pets, but should they be kept indoors or outdoors? My defining moment was when I first moved to Clifton. My beloved Allie was outside that evening and was killed by a fox. I was devastated. It took many years before we were ready for kittens again. The day Flora and Charlotte arrived we knew they would be strictly indoor cats.

The average pet cat kills up to 34 birds annually. Predation by cats is the second biggest driver of bird decline, after habitat loss. Cats typically live 13-17 years indoors while outdoor cats are lucky to live 5 years, with many suffering unimaginable deaths. The most common incidents are car accidents, animal attacks and poisons. For the ones that do survive, the owners are left with hefty vet bills. So let's save some money with ways to keep kitty entertained inside!

It is true most cats would love to explore the great outdoors unattended. So how do you keep kitty happy indoors? A few ideas are window perches, cat towers and lots of exciting toys. You can even grow an indoor cat garden filled with silver vine, cat thyme and catnip. These edible plants act as a stimulant, dramatically reducing stress levels by 80%.

If your cat does go outside, bring her inside at night. This is when the majority of fatalities happen. Tragedy can occur at anytime though. My daughter, Reid, took her cat out on our deck a few years ago. She heard loud flapping noises above her head and saw a hawk swooping down to give Charlotte a ride to the treetops. Reid grabbed Charlotte just in time and tossed her into the open door to safety.

Whether kitty is indoors or outdoors, get her a microchip in case she gets lost. A vet can easily insert this during a dental or spaying procedure. Also, keep her up to date on vaccines. Although rabies is rare, cats are the most common domesticated animal found with this deadly virus.

Not all cats have 9 lives like Bikram, the famous Clifton town cat, so it's up to us to keep them safe!

*"A lie is like a cat: you need to stop it before it gets out the door or it's really hard to catch".*

-Charles M. Blow

