

Mini Tiger Toys.

What does your cat do at night? My cat loves to run around the house at a hundred miles an hour in the middle of the night! I don't think it sleeps much at night because it sleeps a lot during the day. In fact, this is pretty normal for cats, they do a lot of their hunting at night, which is why we definitely should keep them confined to our house or an enclosure at night time. Some cats also hunt during the day, so the best way to keep our wildlife safe is to keep our cats confined 24 hours a day.

Some fast cat stats:

- Feral cats (the wild ones that have no homes) now live in 99.8% of Australia, so they are pretty much everywhere. This is around 6.3 million cats in Australia, at a density of one cat for every 4 square kilometres!
- Feral cats are presumed to be responsible for the extinction of about 20 native Australian animal species, and for putting the existence of many more under threat.
- Australia is currently ranked in the top 5 Countries for the extinction of animals and plant species in the world, and in the top 10 for endangered and threatened species, and Australia has the highest loss of mammal species anywhere in the world. 35 per cent of all global mammal extinctions since 1500 have been Australian (30 out of 84 world-wide extinctions).
- Australia has lost 29 mammals since European colonisation, and feral predators are implicated in 28 of these extinctions.
- This is an absolutely terrible record to have, and the impact of cats catching and eating wildlife has a lot to do with this. Australia is the only continent on earth other than Antarctica where animals evolved without cats, which is a reason why our wildlife are so vulnerable to them. We have also removed a lot of the habitat for native animals which they would usually hide in to protect themselves from cats.
- Cats were introduced to Australia with the first fleet, where they had been kept as ratters on convict ships. They were also imported by some settlers to help control the native rat and mice population.

- On one farm near Bourke, in outback New South Wales, settlers ordered hundreds of cats from England and then released them in an attempt to control mice numbers.
- On St Francis Island, off the South Australian coast, settlers imported cats to control the brush-tailed bettongs that were eating vegetables from the gardens. The cats completely eradicated the bettongs.
- More than 1 million native Australian birds are killed across the country by cats every day
- The journal Biological Conversation, estimates feral cats kill 316 million birds a year, while pet cats kill 61 million birds annually. More than 99% are native.
- Cats take a hefty toll on Australia's reptiles – killing an estimated 649 million of them every year, including threatened species
- An average feral cat kills 225 reptiles per year, that the average pet cat kills 14 reptiles per year. That means that Australia's 3.9 million pet cats kill 53 million reptiles in total each year.
- Cats have been known to kill 258 different Australian reptiles (snakes, lizards and turtles – but not crocodiles!), including 11 threatened species.

So this seems like a big issue, what can we do about it? We can take responsibility for our own cats and make sure they don't contribute to the problem. Under the Domestic Animals Act 1994, cat owners are required to confine their cats to their own properties, and not allow them to wander free. This means your cat needs to stay either in your house, or in your yards 24 hours a day. How do you think you might keep your cat in your yard? Can they jump your fence? If you tell your cat not to leave your yard, does it do as it's told?

Suggestions – build a cat run/aviary, so your cat can go outside but stay fenced in.

'But my cat will get bored inside' – that's what we're going to help fix with this activity. We're going to make toys for your Mini Tigers. According to the RSPCA and Zoos Victoria, cats can live happily in small spaces if they have lots of 'enrichment' or toys to play with.

Do you have any old pieces of material, rags, or old clothes you don't know what to do with? Rather than wasting them, or any other bits and pieces you might have lying around or are about to throw in the bin, we're going to use them to keep your cats entertained in your home so that they don't roam around outside and kill native wildlife, so in a way, you'll be saving wildlife by making cat toys!

Suggestions for your toys:

Plait: Get a piece of material, cut it into 3 strips but leave the top 2cm together. Tie the top 2cm in a knot. Plait the bottom and tie it in a knot at the bottom.

Shred: Get a piece of material, cut it into lots of thinner strips about half a centimetre or a centimetre wide and cut across the bottom. Cats will love to play with the 'shreds' if you jingle it in front of them. To keep your hands away from sharp claws, you can tie the shreds to a stick, or to the end of your plait, and use this to dangle your shred.

Get creative! These are some suggestions to start with, you can come up with new ideas if you want.

Cut your piece of material into a shape, such as a feather, or Stuff a sock with t-shirt material to make a ball, lumpy thing.



Knot tie thingys, or Upcycle your water bottles as well.



Final tip: Your dogs will love them too!