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Title

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Permalink

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Journal

Proceedings of the Vertebrate Pest Conference, 26(26)

ISSN

0507-6773

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Publication Date

2014

DOI

10.5070/V426110412

The Ecology of Feral Cats in Mesic, Australian Ecosystems

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ABSTRACT: The body of literature on feral cat (*Felis silvestris catus*) ecology in the arid- and semi-arid areas of Australia is increasing, but less is known about feral cats in mesic environments. Inherent differences between these habitat types, notably habitat complexity, are likely to be affecting the responses of cats to potential competitors and predators. This research seeks to address this dearth of information by investigating the ecology of cats in the mesic agri-ecosystems of north-east New South Wales, Australia. Camera traps will be used to conduct a capture-recapture study of feral cats to estimate cat density based on pelage pattern and morphology, and GPS collars will log information on cat movement. A particular focus of our work is to tease out interactions between feral cats and the endangered native carnivore, the spotted-tailed quoll (*Dasyurus maculatus*), to shed light on how these similarly-sized mesopredators coexist. Here we will present preliminary data on spatial and temporal use of the habitats by cats in complex habitats, and present hypotheses, based on the current body of predator interaction literature, that will be tested in the coming years.

KEY WORDS: Australia, camera traps, cat, *Dasyurus maculatus*, endangered species, *Felis silvestris catus*, feral cat, movement, population density, spot-tailed quoll

Proc. 26th Vertebr. Pest Conf. (R. M. Timm and J. M. O'Brien, Eds.)

Published at Univ. of Calif., Davis. 2014. p. 235.