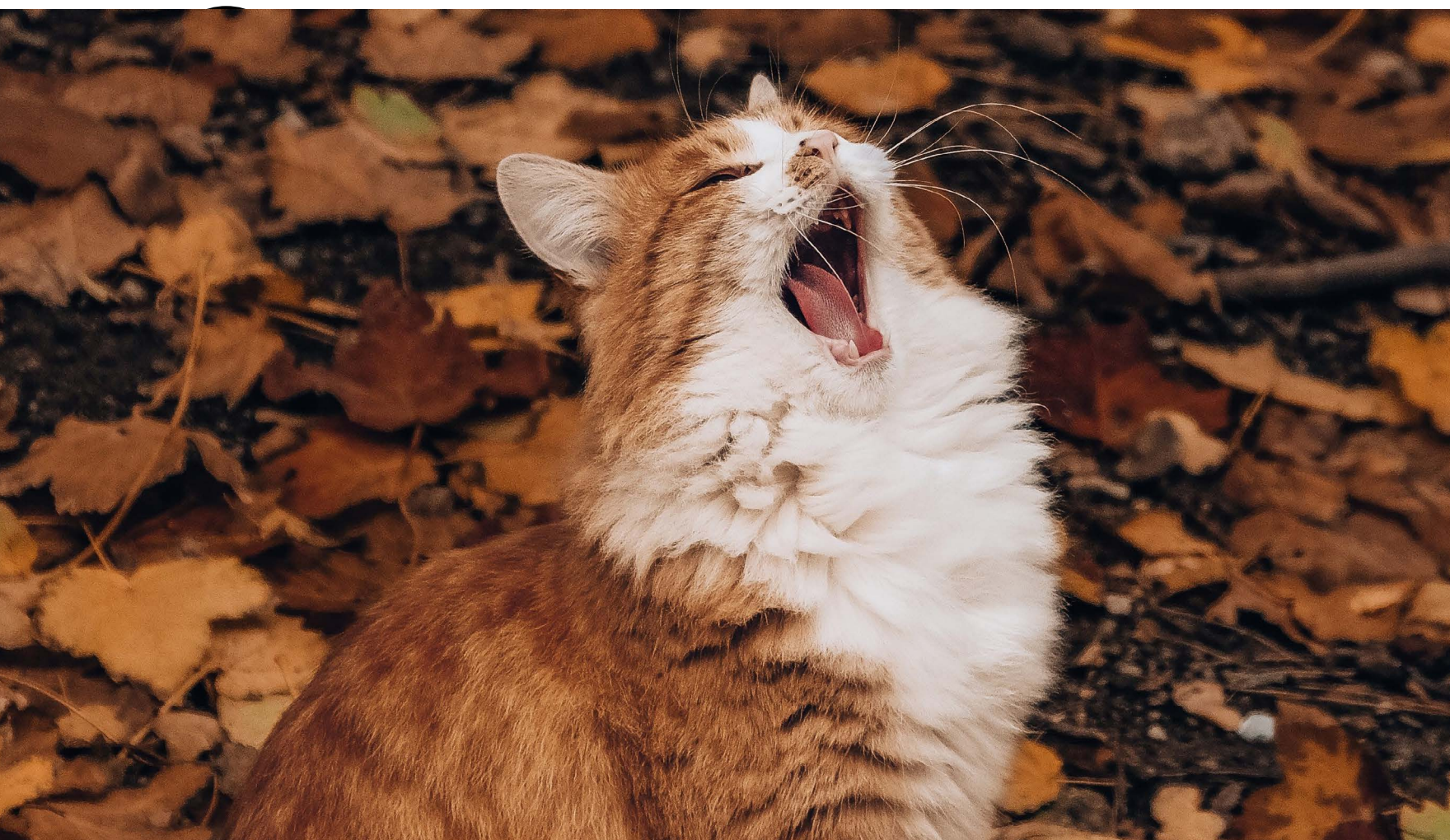




THE CAT THE



THE CAT



CAT THE

The cat (*Felis catus*) is a domestic species of small carnivorous mammal.[1] [2] It is the only domesticated species in the family Felidae and is commonly referred to as the domestic cat or house cat to distinguish it from the wild members of the family. [4] Cats are commonly kept as house pets but can also be feral cats; the feral cat ranges freely and avoids human contact.[5] Domestic cats are valued by humans for companionship and their ability to kill rodents. About 60 cat breeds are recognized by various cat registries.[6]

The cat is similar in anatomy to the other felid species: it has a strong flexible body, quick reflexes, sharp teeth, and retractable claws adapted to killing small prey like mice and rats. Its night vision and sense of smell are well developed. Cat commu-

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asocial species, it is a solitary hunter.
As apredator, it iscrepuscular, i.e. most
active at dawn and dusk. It can hear
sounds too faint or too high infrequen-
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It also secretes and perceivesphero-
mones.[8]
Female domestic cats can have kittens
from spring to late autumn, with litter
sizes often ranging from two to five
kittens.[9]Domestic cats are bred and
shown at events as registeredpedigreed
cats, a hobby known ascat fancy.Popu-
lation controlof cats may be achieved
byspayingandneutering, but their pro-
liferation and the abandonment of pets
has resulted in large numbers of feral
cats worldwide, contributing to the ex-
tinction of entire bird, mammal, and
reptile species.[10]

It
was
long



thought that cat domestication began

inancient Egypt, wher cats were ven-
eratedfrom around 3100 BC,[11] [12]
but recent advances in archaeology and
genetics have shown that their domesti-
cation occurred inWestern Asiaaround
7500 BC.[13]
As of 2021,there were an estimated
220 million owned and 480million
stray cats in the world.[14] [15]As of
2017,the domestic cat was the second
most popular pet in theUnited States,
with 95.6million cats owned[16] [17]
[18]and around 42 million households
owning at least one cat.[19]In theUnit-
ed Kingdom, 26% of adults have a
cat, with an estimated population of
10.9million pet cats as of 2020.[20]

Etymology and naming

The origin of the English wordcat,Old
Englishcatt, is thought to be theLate
Latinwordcattus, which was first
used at the beginning of the 6th cen-

ture.[21]It was suggested thatcattu-

sis derived from anEgyptianprecur-
sor ofCoptic ⲙⲓⲥⲁⲩ, ‘tomcat’, or
its feminine form suffixed with-t.[22]
The Late Latin word may be derived
from anotherAfro-Asiatic [23]orNi-
lo-Saharanlanguage. TheNubianword-
kaddiska’wildcat’ andNobiinkadīare
possible sources or cognates.[24]The
Nubian word may be a loan fromAra-
bicقَطّqatt~قِطّqitt.
However, it is “equally likely that the
forms might derive from an ancient
Germanic word, imported into Lat-
in and thence to Greek and to Syri-
ac and Arabic”.[25]The word may be
derived from Germanic and Northern
European languages, and ultimately
be borrowed fromUralic, cf.Northern
Samigáđfi, ‘femalestoat’, andHungari-
anhölgy, ‘lady, female stoat’; fromPro-
to-Uralic*kād’wä, ‘female (of a furred
animal)’.[26]
The Englishpuss, extended aspussyand-
pussycat, is attested from the 16th centu-
ry and may have been introduced from-

Dutchpoes or
fromLow Ger-
manpuuskatte,
related toSwed-
ishkattopus, or
Norwegianpus,
p u s e k a t t .
Similar forms
exist in Lithua-
nianpuizėandI-
rishpuisínor-
puiscín. The
etymology of this word is unknown,

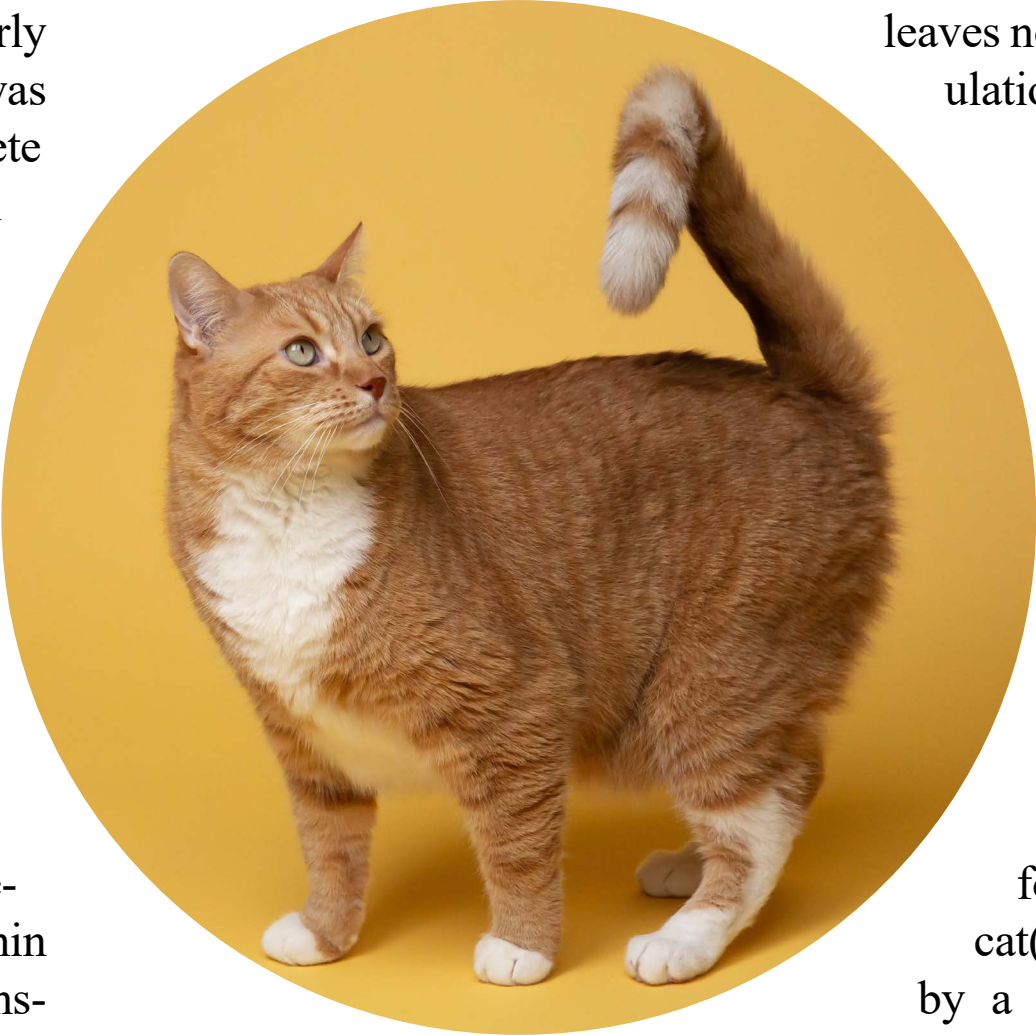
but it may havearisen from a soundused
to attract a cat.[27] [28]
A male cat is called atomortomcat[29]
(or agib,[30]ifneutered). A female is
called aqueen[31](or amolly,[32][us-
er-generated source?]ifspayed), espe-
cially in a cat-breeding context. A juve-
nile cat is referred to as akitten. InEarly
Modern English, the wordkittenwas
interchangeable with the now-obsolete
wordcatling.[33]A group of cats can
be referred to as aclowderor aglar-
ing.[34]

Taxonomy

Thiscientific nameFelis ca-
tuswas proposed byCarl Lin-
naeusin 1758 for a domestic cat.
[1] [2]Felis catus domesticuswas
proposed byJohann Christian Poly-
carp Erxlebenin 1777.[3]Felis dae-
monproposed byKonstantin Satuninin
1904 was a black cat from theTrans-
caucasus, later identified as a domestic
cat.[35] [36]
In 2003, theInternational Commission
on Zoological Nomenclatureruled that
the domestic cat is a distinct species,
namelyFelis catus.[37] [38]In 2007, it
was considered asubspecies,F. silves-
tris catus, of theEuropean wildcat(F.
silvestris) following results ofphylo-
geneticresearch.[39] [40]In 2017, the
IUCN Cat Classification Taskforce
followed the recommendation of the
ICZN in regarding the domestic cat as

a distinct species,Felis catus.[41]
Evolution
Main article:Cat evolution

Skulls of a wildcat (top left), a housecat
(top right), and a hybrid
b e -



tween the
(bottom center)
The domestic cat is a member of the
Felidae, afamilythat had acommon an-
cestorabout 10–15million years ago.
[42]ThegenusFelisdivergedfrom other
Felidae around 6–7million years ago.
[43]Results ofphylogeneticresearch
confirm that the wildFelisspecies
evolved throughsympatricorparapatric
speciation, whereas the domestic cat
evolved throughartificial selection.[44]

The domesticated cat and its closest
wild ancestor arediploidand both pos-
sess 38chromosomes [45]and roughly
20,000 genes.[46]Theleopard cat(Pri-
onailurus bengalensis) wastamedinde-
pendently in China around 5500 BC.
This line of partially domesticated cats
leaves no trace in the domestic cat pop-
ulations of today.[47]

Domestication

See also:Domestication of
the cat

A cat eating a fish under
a chair, amuralin an Egypt-
ian tomb dating to the 15th
century BC

The earliest known indication
for thetamingof anAfrican wild-
cat(F. lybica) wasexcavatedclose
by a humanNeolithicgrave inShill-
ourokambos, southernCyprus, dating
to about 7500–7200 BC. Since there
is no evidence of native mammalian-
faunaon Cyprus, the inhabitants of this
Neolithic village most likely brought
the cat and other wild mammals to the
island from theMiddle Easternmain-
land.[48]Scientists therefore assume
that African wildcats were attracted to
early human settlements in theFertile
Crescentby rodents, in particular the-
house mouse(Mus musculus), and were
tamed by Neolithic farmers. Thismutu-

alrelationship between early farmers and tamed cats lasted thousands of years. Asagricultural practicesspread, so did tame and domesticated cats.[13] [6]Wildcats of Egypt contributed to the maternalgene poolof the domestic cat at a later time.[49]

The earliest known evidence for the occurrence of the domestic cat in-Greece dates to around 1200 BC. Greek,Phoenician,-CarthaginianandEtruscantraders introduced domestic cats to southern Europe.[50] During theRoman Empirethey were introduced toCorsi-caandSardiniabefore the beginning of the 1st millennium.[51]By the 5th century BC, they were familiar animals around settlements inMagna GraeciaandE-truria.[52]By the end of the Western Roman Empire in the 5th century, the Egyptian domestic cat lineage had arrived in aBaltic Seaport in northern-Germany.[49]

During domestication, cats have undergone only minor changes in anatomy and behavior, and they are still capable of surviving in the wild. Several natural behaviors and characteristics of wildcats may havepre-adaptedthem for domestication as pets. These traits include their small size, social nature, obvious body language, love of play,

and high intelligence. CaptiveLeopardscats may also display affection-ate behavior toward humans but were not domesticated.[53]House cats often mate with feral cats.[54]

Hybridisation



Hybridisation between domestic and other Felinae species is also possible, producing hybrids such as theKellascatinScotland.[55] [56]

Development ofcat breedsstarted in the mid 19th century. [57]An analysis of the domestic catgenomerevealed that the ancestral wildcat genome was significantly altered in the process of domestication, as specific-mutationswere selected to develop cat breeds.[58]Most breeds are founded on random-bred domestic cats.Genetic diversityof these breeds varies between regions, and is lowest in purebred populations, which show more than 20 deleteriousgenetic disorders.[59] The-cat(Felis catus) is adomestic speciesof

smallcarnivorous mammal.[1] [2]It is the only domesticated species in the familyFelidaeand is commonly referred to as thedomestic catorhouse catto distinguish it from the wild members of the family.[4]Cats are commonly kept as house pets but can also befarm cat-sorferal cats; the feral cat ranges freely and avoids human contact.[5]Domestic cats are valued by humans for companionship and their ability to killrodents. About 60cat breedsare recognized by variouscat registries.[6]

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