







## Cat

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The cat is similar inanatomyto the other felid species: it has a strong flexible body, quick-reflexes, sharp teeth, andretractable clawsadapted to killing small prey like mice and rats. Itsnight visionand sense of smell are well developed.Cat communicationincludesvocalization-slikemeowing,purring, trilling, hissing,growling, and grunting as well ascatspecific body language. Although the cat is 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 infrequency-for human ears, such as those made bymiceand other small mammals.[7]It also secretes and perceivespheromones.[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 ascats fancy.Population controlof cats may be achieved byspayingandneutering, but their proliferation and the abandonment of pets has resulted in large numbers of feral cats worldwide, contributing to the extinction of entire bird, mammal, and reptile species.[10] It was long thought that cat domestication be-

gan inancient Egypt, wherecats were veneratedfrom around 3100 BC,[11] [12]but recent advances in archaeology and genetics have shown that their domestication occurred in Western 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 theUnited Kingdom, 26% of adults have a cat, with an estimated population of 10.9million pet cats as of 2020.[20]

## Etymology

The origin of the English wordcat,Old English-catt, is thought to be theLate Latinwordcattus, which was first used at the beginning of the 6th century.[21]It was suggested thatcattusis derived from anEgyptianprecursor ofCoptic ⲙⲓⲥⲁⲩ, ‘tomcat’, or its feminine form suffixed with-t.[22]The Late Latin word may be derived from anotherAfro-Asiatic [23]orNilo-Saharanlanguage. TheNubianwordkaddiska‘wildcat’ andNobiinkadisare possible sources or cognates.[24]The Nubian word may be a loan fromArabicⲙⲓⲥⲁⲩqāⲙⲓ~ⲙⲓⲥⲁⲩqīⲙⲓ. However, it is “equally likely that the forms might derive from an ancient Germanic word, imported into Latin and thence to Greek and to Syriac and Arabic”. [25]The word may be derived from Germanic and Northern European languages, and ultimately be borrowed fromUralic, cf.Northern Samigǣđfi, ‘femalestoat’, andHungarian-hölgy, ‘lady, female stoat’; fromPro-

to-Uralic\*kǎďwǎ, ‘female (of a furred animal)’. [26] The Englishpuss, extended aspussyandpus-sycat, is attested from the 16th century and may have been introduced fromDutchpoesor fromLow Germanpuuskatte, related toSwedishkattetus, orNorwegianpus,pusekatt. Similar forms exist in LithuanianpuizėandIrish-puisinorpuiscín. 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][user-generated source?]ifspayed), especially in a cat-breeding context. A juvenile 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 acowderor aglaring.[34]

## Taxonomy

Thescientific name*Felis catus*was proposed byCarl Linnaeusin 1758 for a domestic cat. [1] [2]*Felis catus domesticus*was proposed by-Johann Christian Polycarp Erxlebenin 1777. [3]*Felis daemon*proposed byKonstantin Satuninin 1904 was a black cat from theTranscaucasus, later identified as a domestic cat.[35] [36]

In 2003, theInternational Commission on Zoological Nomenclatureruled that the domestic cat is a distinct species, namely*Felis catus*.[37] [38]In 2007, it was considered asubspecies,*F. silvestris catus*, of theEuropean wildcat(*F. silvestris*) following results of-phylogeneticresearch.[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 between the two. (bottom center) The domestic cat is a member of the Felidae, afamilythat had acommon ancestorabout 10–15million years ago.[42]Thegenus*Felis*divergedfrom other Felidae around 6–7million years ago.[43]Results ofphylogeneticresearch confirm that the wild*Felis*species evolved throughsympatricorparapatric speciation, whereas the domestic cat evolved throughartificial selection.[44]The domesticated cat and its closest wild ancestor arediploidand both possess 38chromosomes [45]and roughly 20,000 genes.[46]Theleopard cat(*Prionailurus bengalensis*) wastamedindependently in China around 5500 BC. This line of partially domesticated cats leaves no trace in the domestic cat

populations of today.[47]

## Domes

See also:Domestication of the cat

A cat eating a fish under a chair, amuralin an Egyptian tomb dating to the 15th century BC The earliest known indication for thetamingof anAfrican wildcat(*F. lybica*) wasexcavatedclose by a humanNeolithicgrave inShillourokambos, southernCyprus, dating to about 7500–7200 BC. Since there is no evidence of native mammalianfaunaon Cyprus, the inhabitants of this Neolithic village most likely brought the cat and other wild mammals to the island from theMiddle Easternmainland.[48]Scientists therefore assume that African wildcats were attracted to early human settlements in theFertile Crescent-by rodents, in particular thehouse mouse(*Mus musculus*), and were tamed by Neolithic farmers. Thismutualrelationship between early





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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 communication includes vocalizations like meowing, purring, trilling, hissing, growling, and grunting as well as cat-specific body language. Although the cat is a social species, it is a solitary hunter. As a predator, it is crepuscular, i.e. most active at dawn and dusk. It can hear sounds too faint or too high in frequency for human ears, such as those made by mice and other small mammals.[7] It also secretes and perceives pheromones.[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 registered pedigree cats, a hobby known as cat fancy. Population control of cats may be achieved by spaying and neutering, but their proliferation and the abandonment of pets has resulted in large numbers of feral cats worldwide, contributing to the extinction of entire bird, mammal, and reptile species.[10] It was long thought that cat domestication began in ancient Egypt, where cats were venerated from around 3100 BC,[11] [12] but recent advances in archaeology and genetics have shown that their domestication occurred in Western Asia around 7500 BC.[13] As of 2021, there were an estimated 220 million owned and 480 million stray cats in the world.[14] [15] As of 2017, the domestic cat was the second most popular pet in the United States, with 95.6 million cats owned [16] [17] [18] and around 42 million households owning at least one cat.[19] In the United Kingdom, 26% of adults have a cat, with an estimated population of 10.9 million pet cats as of 2020.[20]

Etymology and naming

The origin of the English word cat, Old English *catt*, is thought to be the Late Latin word *cattus*, which was first used at the beginning of the 6th century.[21] It was suggested that *cattus* is derived from an Egyptian precursor of Coptic ⲥⲁⲩ, ‘tomcat’, or its feminine form suffixed with -t.[22] The Late Latin word may be derived from another Afro-Asiatic [23] or Nilo-Saharan language. The Nubian word *kaddiska* ‘wildcat’ and Nobiin *kadis* are possible sources or cognates.[24] The Nubian word may be a loan from Arabic قطة *qita*. However, it is “equally likely that the forms might derive from an ancient Germanic word, imported into Latin and thence to Greek and to Syriac and Arabic”.[25] The

word may be derived from Germanic and Northern European languages, and ultimately be borrowed from Uralic, cf. Northern Sami *gáđfi*, ‘female stoat’, and Hungarian *hölgy*, ‘lady, female stoat’; from Proto-Uralic *\*kädwä*, ‘female (of a furred animal)’.[26] The English *puss*, extended as *pussy* and *pussycat*, is attested from the 16th century and may have been introduced from Dutch *poes* or from Low German *puuskatte*, related to Swedish *kattetus*, or Norwegian *pus*, *pusekatt*. Similar forms exist in Lithuanian *puizė* and Irish *púisín* or *púisín*. The etymology of this word is unknown, but it may have arisen from a sound used to attract a cat.[27] [28] A male cat is called a *tom* or *tomcat* [29] (or *agib*, [30] if neutered). A female is called a *queen* [31] (or *amol-ly*, [32] [user-generated source?] if spayed), especially in a cat-breeding context. A juvenile cat is referred to as a *kitten*. In Early Modern English, the word *kitten* was interchangeable with the now-obsolete word *catling*. [33] A group of cats can be referred to as a *clowder* or *aglar*ing. [34]

Taxonomy

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Evolution

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Skulls of a wildcat (top left), a housecat (top right), and a hybrid between the two. (bottom center)

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Domestication

See also: Domestication of the cat

A cat eating a fish under a chair, amural in an Egyptian tomb dating to the 15th century BC

The earliest known indication for the taming of an African wildcat (*F. lybica*) was excavated close by a human Neolithic grave in Shillourokambos, southern Cyprus, dating to about 7500–7200 BC. Since there is no evidence of native mammalian fauna on Cyprus, the inhabitants of this Neolithic village most likely brought the cat and other wild mammals to the island from the Middle Eastern mainland.[48] Scientists therefore assume that African wildcats were attracted to early human settlements in the Fertile Crescent by rodents, in particular the house mouse (*Mus musculus*), and were tamed by Neolithic farmers. This mutual relationship between early farmers and tamed cats lasted thousands of years. As agricultural practices spread, so did tame and domesticated cats.[13] [6] Wildcats of Egypt contributed to the maternal gene pool of 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, Carthaginian and Etruscan traders introduced domestic cats to southern Europe.[50] During the Roman Empire they were introduced to Corsica and Sardinia before the beginning of the 1st millennium. [51] By the 5th century BC, they were familiar animals around settlements in Magna Graecia and Etruria.[52] By the end of the Western Roman Empire in the 5th century, the Egyptian domestic cat lineage had arrived in a Baltic 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 have pre-adapted them for domestication as pets. These traits include their small size, social nature, obvious body language, love of play, and high intelligence. Captive Leopardus cats may also display affectionate behavior toward humans but were not domesticated.[53] House cats often mate with feral cats.[54] Hybridisation between domestic and other Felinae species is also possible, producing hybrids such as the Kellas cat in Scotland.[55] [56] Development of cat breeds started in the mid 19th century.[57] An analysis of the domestic cat genome revealed that the ancestral wildcat genome was significantly altered in the process of domestication, as specific mutations were selected to develop cat breeds.[58] Most breeds are founded on random-bred domestic cats. Genetic diversity of these breeds varies between regions, and is lowest in purebred populations, which show more than 20 deleterious genetic disorders.[59]

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