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Environment

Ballarat conservationists push for 24-hour cat curfew amid soaring native animal deaths



By [Malvika Hemanth](#)

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📷 Brushtail possums were among the 326 cat related animal deaths recorded from May 2022 in the Ballarat region. Picture by Shutterstock.

Ballarat conservationists are pushing for more stringent pet rules amid soaring deaths of native fauna inflicted by domestic animals over the past five years.

Since 2018, Wildlife Victoria revealed the number of cat and dog attacks on wildlife in the region had risen by more than 300 per cent with the amount of calls reporting incidences jumping from just 22 in 2018 to 90 in 2022.


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native birds which represented 51 per cent of all calls, followed by ringtail possums at 42 per cent.


Ballarat Wildlife Rehabilitation and Conservation (BWRC) president Jessica Robertson, who is also a Wildlife Victoria rescuer, said the statistics were cause for "extreme concern".

She said the numbers were also likely to be higher than what had been tabulated by Wildlife Victoria as cases were often dealt with by advocates such as herself.

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"Our network of rescuers and carers respond to calls from local Vets, BADGAR (Ballarat and District Greendale Animal Rescue), the Ballarat Wildlife Park and members of the public," Ms Robertson said.

Jennifer Greenhalgh, an integral member of BWRC and one of the group's main carers, collected data on domestic animal attacks from May last year.

She found, since this time up until the end of January this year, there had been a total of 326 cat related animal deaths.

This figure comprised ringtail possums, greater gliders, which were listed as endangered last July, and microbats.

Dogs were also culprits accounting for 29 animal deaths including koala, brushtail and ringtail possums, lizards and swans.

Ms Robertson said the only way forward was for the City of Ballarat to implement a 24-hour cat curfew along with more dire consequences for dog owners.

"The chances of death after a cat attack are almost certain. Their saliva is also very toxic to wildlife so once this gets into the bloodstream, animals cannot be saved even with antibiotics," she said.

"Cats and dogs should be contained on their own properties and if they can't be they should be inside at all times.

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 Ditchy's view.

Ms Robertson said she encouraged those worried about the issue to write to their local councillors.

"This is a serious problem for biodiversity in this town and urgent action from council is needed," she said.

"I've met with council officers to discuss strategies to mitigate some of these issues but support from councilors is needed."

The City of Ballarat introduced a night time cat curfew in 2009 where cats must be contained on properties from sunset to sunrise. If cats are not confined to their properties they are at risk of being trapped and handed in to the pound whereby owners will be asked to pay costs associated in reclaiming their cat.

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The council's website wrote "a fine may be issued for not complying with the curfew".

City of Ballarat director development and growth Natalie Robertson said there would be an opportunity for residents to have their say on the council's cat curfew policy, which forms part of their Domestic Animal Management Plan, this November.

Ms Robertson said the council was "engaging and liaising with a range of key stakeholders and community groups" including BWRC

may assist in the protection of native animals and wildlife .

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Hepburn Shire Council has committed to implementing a four-year-plan for domestic animals including developing a cat curfew by the 2022/23 financial year.

Moorabool Shire Council introduced a cat curfew of 6pm to 7am and during daylight savings 8:30pm to 7am in 2021. Golden Plains Shire has yet to form a curfew policy.

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Malvika Hemanth
Journalist



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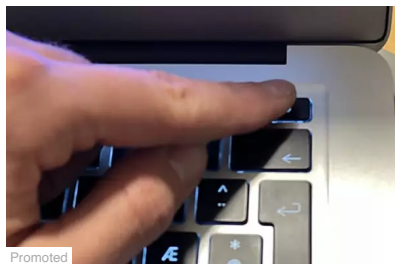
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