

Patuxent Wildlife Research Center

Managing Free-Roaming Cats at the Patuxent Research Refuge



The Challenge: The objective of this study is to develop and test non-lethal trapping schemes that will maximize success trapping cats by minimizing non-target catches on National Wildlife Refuges. Currently the work is focused at the Patuxent Research Refuge. Analyses are on-going to identify the most effective trapping scheme that is within the bounds of a Refuge's resources.



The Science: Free-roaming cats (*Felis catus*) are non-native predators of small mammals, songbirds and gamebirds, reptiles, amphibians, and insects. They are also competitors of native predators and vectors for diseases. Therefore the US Fish and Wildlife Service has the authority to remove cats from National Wildlife Refuges. Presently cat trapping on Refuge lands is usually conducted with food baits that also attract native scavengers and they, in turn, interfere with cat trapping. Non-target native mammals can quickly consume the resources that are devoted to cat removal and an improved, targeted trapping scheme would limit the drain on Refuge resources.



The Future: This study is a collaboration between the USGS, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Park Service. The research to date is narrowing down the most efficient trapping scheme. Additional work is planned to test the operational effectiveness of the trapping scheme at the Patuxent Research Refuge. Our findings will be a valuable tool for federal land managers in several agencies.