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A Plan to Save New Zealand’s Birds: Get Rid of Cats

By **Gerry Mullany** January 23, 2013 12:53 am

HONG KONG — A prominent New Zealand economist has set off a storm by suggesting that cats should eventually be eliminated from his country, claiming that they are posing a dire threat to native bird species.

Gareth Morgan, an economist and environmentalist, says that the cat is actually a “friendly neighborhood serial killer” when it comes to birds, and his Web site suggests that New Zealanders should gradually reduce the local feline population by having all cats neutered, and that when cats die, their owners should not replace them.

This problem, he says in his anti-cat site *Cats to Go*, is that cats are gradually endangering New Zealand’s rich avian diversity, having helped kill off nine native species while endangering 33.

New Zealanders, it turns out, have an affinity for what Mr. Morgan calls “that little ball of fluff” that “is actually a natural-born killer.” The New Zealand Pet Food Manufacturers Association, which of course has a stake in such statistics, reports that 48 percent of New Zealand’s households have cats, “making it the highest cat ownership rate in the world.”

The impact of the feline threat to bird life has been documented by a study from the

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