

STUDIES ON THE SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND COMMUNICATION IN STRAY CATS ON
RAIPUR (C.G)**Sumedha Banerjee**Research Scholar, Department of Zoology, Bharti
Vishwavidyalaya, Durg**Saman Siddiqui**Associate Professor, HOD Zoology, Bharti
Vishwavidyalaya, Durg**ABSTRACT**

When conditions allow, feral cats develop complex, maternal groups referred to as colonies. Adult females in the colony participate extensively to care for and raise kittens, which includes cooperative nesting, grooming, and guarding. Males might have home ranges that overlap with numerous colonies or they can be tightly linked with a specific colony. Within a colony, male and female cats may have favoured conspecifics with whom they prefer to engage in particular affiliative activities. Between the ages of two and seven weeks is when kittens are most susceptible to social learning. However, intraspecies social play increases after this time, and older kittens and juveniles have shown signs of social learning. To ensure that domestic cat kittens develop proper, species-specific social behaviours, it is crucial that they are raised in a social milieu that offers interactions with both adults and other kittens.

Keywords: Cat, kittens, behaviour, communication, learning.

INTRODUCTION

Felis silvestris libyca, an African wild cat, is the progenitor of the domestic cat. It develops a queen and her offspring as the centre of a social community. *Felis silvestris catus*, an African wild cat, and domestic cats, both of which reside with their mothers for many weeks after birth, raise their young until they are old enough to have learned how to hunt on their own. When the kittens reach adulthood, the family group will separate if they were reared in a situation where food supplies were widely dispersed or there weren't enough to feed many adults. A lone cat looking for a concentrated resource, such as the trash from a fishing boat, will face stiff opposition from a group of related and familiar adults (Macdonald 1983; Frank 1988; Macdonald & Carr 1989). The initial stage in the development and organisation of social behaviour in domestic cats is the development of groups of related and known individuals around food sources.

The majority of cat owners have two or more cats. Aggression and conflict over resources like food, resting places, and litterboxes might result from a failure to grasp what would encourage friendly, cooperative behaviour and what will promote aggressive behaviour. Therefore, it is crucial that we comprehend the cat's social structure, connections, and communication.

METHODS:

- **Vocalisation:** Depending on their breed, their state of mind, and who they are speaking to, cats vocalise in a variety of ways.
- **Purr:** The purr is a steady, gentle, vibrating sound that most cat species produce in their throats. Domestic kittens begin to purr at just two days old. Although it's common knowledge that purring is a sign of happiness, cats occasionally purr when they're sick, nervous, going through terrible situations, or even when they're about to pass away.
- **Meow:** The most common vocalisation of adult cats is the "Meow" or "Miaow" sound. It might be insistent, pleading, friendly, bold, welcome, attention-seeking, aggressive, plaintive, friendly, or complaining. Meowing is not a form of expression used by adult cats. Only while chatting to their human caretakers do, they meow.
- **Chirping and Chattering:** When monitoring or hunting prey, cats occasionally produce eager chirping or chattering noises. When seeing birds or squirrels, cats frequently chirp. They will occasionally chirp to draw their guardian's attention. These can be anything from soft clicking to loud, persistent chirping that is occasionally accompanied by a meow.
- **Trilling:** Cats who are glad to see their human or feline pals may trill.
- **Humming:** Some cats may hum to attract their owner's attention, when they are nervous, when they are hungry, or when they want to play.
- **Growl, Snarl, Hiss, and Spit:** The growl, snarl, and hiss are all signs of aggressive behaviour, whether it be offensive or defensive. They frequently come with a postural display meant to visually influence the perceived danger. Cats hiss to ward off intruders into their area as well as when they are startled, frightened, enraged, or in pain. An assault may follow if the hiss and growl warning does not eliminate the threat. Hissing is a longer sound, while "spitting" is a louder, more forceful variation.

- **Body Language:** Cats use their tails, ears, eyes, and attitude to communicate in their own unique ways. Cats in a comfortable position with their tails lifted high (plumbing), eyes soft, and ears forward exude happiness and security. A warning signal is a twitching tail. Ears back, eyes closed, and back hunched signify.

SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR OF CATS

According to Immelmann and Beer (1989), a species is said to be social if its members "live in stable pairs, families, or larger groups, as a result of which social behaviour constitutes a major proportion of their total activity." Several researchers have spent the last 25 years studying colonies of free-living or feral cats that have a complex social structure, relatively constant membership over time, individual recognition, and a range of social interactions (e.g., Dards 1978; Macdonald & Apps 1978; Dards 1983; Natoli 1985a, 1985b; Macdonald et al. 1987; Kerby & Macdonald 1988; Natoli & De Vito).

Cats are quite friendly in the correct circumstances, despite the fact that many people think of them as solitary creatures. Although many indoor cats get along well in groups, some may prefer to live alone. As long as they can find adequate food, cats living outside will establish dependable groups.

SOCIAL LEARNING:

Cats are highly skilled observers, according to laboratory research. By seeing another cat perform the activity, for instance, cats may learn arbitrary activities that do not need the survival abilities of their ancestors (see, e.g., Chesler 1969). The capacity to quickly pick up hunting techniques from their mother is obviously crucial for kittens. When the kittens are around four weeks old, the feral queen starts bringing live prey to the nest after bringing dead prey (Baerends-van Roon & Baerends 1979). The queen will frequently show hunting methods to her young after releasing live prey in their midst. The kittens will eventually practise these skills under their mother's guidance.

The queen, or mother cat, and her offspring make up the basic social unit of cats. Although some kittens will occasionally nurse much later if given the chance, weaning typically occurs between 5 and 8 weeks. This presumably has less to do with nutrition and more to do with social behaviour. For the first 12 to 18 months of their lives, kittens in outdoor cat colonies will either

stay with their mothers or join her larger social group. Male kittens tend to abandon the group more frequently than females do. In such groupings, there can be several generations of related females, and they may all take care of the young.

The amount of food readily accessible frequently affects the size of cat colonies, also known as groups. Most domestic cats hunt by themselves. Cats are widespread all over the world, which may be because their prey species include animals that people view as pests, such as rats and mice. The same kind of prey that their mother sought is what kittens learn to like and to hunt. Cats kept as pets learn to favour particular food textures. If you want your cat to eat a variety of meals as an adult, start giving it different foods while it's a kitten.



Figure 1: Different Behaviours of cat

Although breeding is hindered in bigger social groupings, sexual maturity occurs early (6 months), either directly (by male cats disrupting other males who are trying to mate), or indirectly (by the society as a whole). Females cycle around every three weeks if they are not bred, often from winter to summer.

Being aloof, timid, or shy are genetic traits that are frequently inherited from the father. However, kittens touched by people between the ages of 2 and 7 weeks are friendlier, more extroverted, and maybe less aggressive. The paternal influence on a child's propensity to explore can be augmented by the effect of early human handling. Kittens begin to transition from social play, which includes biting and play fighting, to more predatory play, which includes stalking and pouncing, at around 12 to 14 weeks of age. Early weaning will speed up this transformation.

Hormones have an impact on a variety of behaviours, including fighting with other cats, wandering, and urine marking. In most circumstances, neutering male cats will lessen or even eliminate their occurrence. Cats mark with urine, faeces, and unique scent glands under the chin and on the paws because they are strongly impacted by the function of scent in their surroundings.

RELATIONSHIPS AND BEHAVIOURS OF AFFILIATION

Cats may develop strong bonds with other cats inside a colony, as was previously described. They display a range of affiliations. actions include as stroking noses, playing and sleeping together, and all grooming.

NASAL CONTACT

An introducing gesture that is most frequently seen between preferred companions is touching noses (Wolfe 2001,). Male and female are Equal likely to contact noses with people of the same species or another (Sung 1998).As a result, interpersonal interactions other than gender affect how often people touch their noses.

PLAYING

Cats often engage in play, which is a well-known activity. Although it peaks between four weeks and four months of age, it persists until adulthood.Cats come in a wide variety of personalities,

some of them are quite lively. Playing on their own with any toys they can find, playing with other animals in the house, and playing with their owner. However, some mature cats hardly ever engage in play. This diversity is presumably influenced by a mix of genetics, experience kinds, and the timing of specific play events. There haven't been any long-term studies done to yet to examine how early experiences and their timing affect how fun individuals are as adults.

It is noteworthy that play continues between adult wild cats that are undernourished. Playing needs burning calories, thus it seems sense that under these conditions play wouldn't take place. The fact that it does raises the issue of its applicability to social learning and the creation and upkeep of interpersonal ties.

CONCLUSION

Given the right conditions, the domestic cat is a species that may create intricate, matrilineal social groupings. Relevance of relatedness, familiarity, and personal histories to questions of social bonding, affiliative conduct, and the hierarchy's stability or instability, as well as the prevalence of aggressiveness. As within-species social play peaks several weeks later, learning of social conduct happens between the ages of 2 and 7 weeks (the sensitive time for socialisation to humans) and beyond. Interspecies social bonding is based on social behaviour that are displayed within the species and are aimed towards people and other animals.

While our knowledge of cats' social behaviours and requirements has significantly expanded over the past 20 years, many issues still go unanswered. If we want to retain cats as companion animals, we must learn more about their social requirements so that we can provide for them in a way that maximises their welfare.

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