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The features marked with a star (\*) are based entirely on material taken straight from standard research (and other Official and Therefore Always Correct) literature. Many of the other articles are genuine, too, but we don't know which ones.

ANNALS OF

# IMPROBABLE RESEARCH



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### Where There's More

There's always new improbable — it's not what you expect! — stuff on the **Improbable Research blog** at [IMPROBABLE.COM](https://improbable.com)

### On the Front Cover

Photo of a squirrel that died after getting its head stuck in a ball. This taxidermy specimen is stored in the Det Grønne Museum in Auning, Denmark. Photo: Kees Moeliker.



### On the Back Cover

Photo of an abandoned bird's nest in the mouth of a large stone sculpture of a human face hanging on the wall of "Michalangelo's Cloister" in the Museo Nazionale Romano in Rome, Italy. Photo: A.S. Kaswell.



### Some Coming Events

*The Covid-19 pandemic has introduced excitingly boundless uncertainty as to whether, when, and where public activities will happen in the near future.*

*(See [IMPROBABLE.COM](https://improbable.com) for details of these and other events.)*

#### September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024

— The 34th First Annual Ig Nobel Prize Ceremony (and webcast).  
MIT, Cambridge,  
Massachusetts, USA



#### September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024

— Ig Nobel Face-to-Face,  
MIT Museum, Cambridge,  
Massachusetts, USA



#### November (day TBA) 2024

— Ig Nobel Face-to-Face  
Miraikan Museum, Tokyo, Japan



#### February 2025

— AAAS Annual Meeting,  
Boston, Massachusetts, USA



#### Spring 2025

— Ig Nobel EuroTour



#### May 23<sup>rd</sup>-26<sup>th</sup>, 2025

— Balticon,  
Baltimore, Maryland, USA



# CURIOSITY AND CATS

## *Wonderings about wondering and cats*

compiled by Stephen Drew, *Improbable Research* staff

### Will Curiosity® Kill the Cat?

"Will Curiosity® Kill the Cat?  
Technoscience and Free-Living Cats  
'Down Under,'" Garrett Bunyak,  
*Humanimalia*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2019, pp.  
203-231. The author reports:

Eradicat® is a twenty-first century technoscientific implosion of kangaroo flesh, chicken fat, flavor enhancers, nationalist zeal, and sodium monoflouracetate. With the stated goal of protecting bird populations, toxic Eradicat® sausages and the similar Curiosity® bait are designed to kill free-living cats with poisons such as the synthetic Compound 1080 (sodium monoflouracetate), a chemical offspring of World War II developed in the United States in response to Allied forces encountering rat-borne diseases....

The paper follows the accounts of scientists including biologists, naturalists, and ecologists to reveal legacies of colonialism, imperialism, and human exceptionalism that haunt and naturalize these lethal entanglements of scientists, kangaroo flesh, sentiments, poisons, birds, and cats.

### Curiosity Killed the Cats: Vivisections

"Curiosity Killed the Cat: Attitudes Towards Vivisections, c. 1660-1820," Amber Fill, dissertation, University of Victoria, 2024. The author explains:

I would like to pay respect to every animal who was victim to the culture of vivisections in this period of study. During my research process, I sifted through a tremendous number of horrific experiments. The animal subjects experienced an insufferable amount of pain and anguish. It is my hope that this thesis, and my continued study in this field of history, works to ensure that their stories and sacrifices are remembered through a place in the historic record.

### Will Curiosity Kill the Feral Cats?

"Will Curiosity Kill the Feral Cats?" Claire Miller, *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*, vol. 8, no. 3, April 2010, p. 118. The author explains:

Fastidiousness and inquisitiveness — these two characteristic feline traits may prove the undoing of feral cats on Kangaroo Island, off the South Australian coast, where devices that feature sounds and fluttering objects, designed to catch a cat's attention and entice it to enter an artificial tunnel, are undergoing field trials. Internal sensors detect the animal's shape once inside the tunnel and — if recognized as a cat — spray a toxic substance on its belly. As the cat licks itself clean, the toxin, para-aminopropiophenone, humanely euthanizes the animal.

**Garrett Bunyak**

### **Will Curiosity® Kill the Cat?: Technoscience and Free Living Cats "Down Under"**

Eradicat® is a twenty-first century technoscientific implosion of kangaroo flesh, chicken fat, flavor enhancers, nationalist zeal, and sodium monoflouracetate. With the stated goal of protecting bird populations, toxic Eradicat® sausages and the similar Curiosity® bait are designed to kill free-living cats with poisons such as the synthetic Compound 1080 (sodium monoflouracetate), a chemical offspring of World War II developed in the United States in response to Allied forces encountering rat-borne diseases (Ward and Spencer). Justus Ward, a pharmacologist for the U.S. government, quickly wrote in 1947 of "one of the most serious disadvantages of the poison" being that "dogs and cats are killed by eating sick or dead rodents killed by 1080" (1430). Over the next several decades, partly in response to concern for endangered bird populations, compound 1080 would be weaponized to kill free living cats marked as "alien," "invasive," and "feral." This genealogy of a contemporary war against cats traces changing



*Garrett Bunyak, author of the study "Will Curiosity® Kill the Cat? Technoscience and Free-Living Cats 'Down Under'."*  
Drawing by Nan Swift.