

## Chapter 10 OF THE (WILD) CAT AND ITS NATURE

The cat is a common beast enough therefore I need not tell of his making, for there be few men that have not seen some of them. Nevertheless there be many and diverse kind of cats, after some masters' opinions, and namely of wild (cats). Especially there be some cats as big as leopards and some men call them Guyenne loup cerviers<sup>98</sup> and other cat-wolves, and this is evil said for they are neither wolves nor cerviers nor cat-wolves. Men might (better) call them cat-leopards than otherwise, for they draw more to a leopard kind than to any other beast. They live on such meat as other cats do, save that they take hens in hedges<sup>99</sup> and goats and sheep, if they find them alone, for they be as big as a wolf, and almost formed and made as a leopard, but their tail is not so long. A greyhound alone could not take one of them to make him abide, for a greyhound could sooner take and hold fast and more steadfastly a wolf than he could one of them. For he claws as a leopard and furthermore bites right (hard). Men hunt them but seldom, but if the hounds find peradventure such a cat, he would not be long hunted for soon he putteth him to his defence or he runneth up a tree. And because he flieth not long therefore shall I speak but little of his hunting, for in hunting him there is no need of great mastery. They bear their kittens and are in their love as other cats, save that they have but two kittens at once. They dwell in hollow trees and there they make their ligging<sup>100</sup> and their beds of ferns and of grass. The cat helpeth as badly to nourish his kittens as the wolf doth his whelps. Of common wild cats I need not to speak much, for every hunter in England knoweth them, and their falseness and malice are well known. But one thing I dare well say that if any beast hath the devil's spirit in him, without doubt it is the cat, both the wild and the tame.

<sup>98</sup> According to the Shirley MS. this passage runs, "Men calleth him in Guyene loupeceruyers." See Appendix: Wild Cat.

<sup>99</sup> Shirley MS. has "and egges," instead of "in hedges," which is the rendering G. de F. gives.

<sup>100</sup> Bed or resting-place. See Appendix.

