

## Feral Cat Notes

Feral cats are a major issue in all communities. Wherever people abandon unaltered cats, feral colonies arise as homeless cats raise kittens without human contact. They're harmless, they fear people and stay out of sight.

Some say they destroy bird populations. However, a 1994 Worldwatch Institute study showed that some populations of the world's 9,000 bird species have fallen due to habitat loss, overtrapping, drought and pesticides. Cats were noticeably absent as a factor. More than sixty studies of feral cats on different continents reached three main conclusions. First, they're opportunistic feeders, eating what's most easily available. As scavengers, many rely on garbage and handouts. Second, they're rodent specialists; birds are a small part of their diet when they rely solely on hunting for food. Third, cats can prey on populations without destroying them.



The biggest problems feral colonies present would be noise, mess or sheer numbers. Their cries might disturb neighbours when they fight or mate; they scent-mark their territory; and colonies grow rapidly as this year's kittens produce kittens themselves before the year ends. The solution is TNR (Trap-Neuter-Release). Altered cats are no longer driven to defend territory and mating rights by fighting or spraying. Colony numbers drop by attrition once they stop reproducing.

Some people still believe the best solution is eradication. Yet studies have shown that when cats are removed, new ones fill the gap, drawn by available resources. Eradication would only work if everyone stops losing or abandoning unaltered pets - a utopian scenario that will probably never happen.

## Lucky 2,000<sup>th</sup>

Barry became our 2,000th adoption on October 24. He proved it's possible for a shy cat to make a great family member. He was the last of four siblings to accept human contact, and he was the last to be adopted.

The four kittens were born without a home in the summer of 2008 and came to us in October. People had fed them so it didn't take long for the boldest to accept us. That was Jerry who was adopted in January 2009. Demure little Jen was the next to be adopted in August 2009. Then Ben was adopted in April 2010.

Bashful Barry loved it when we petted him but he never asked for pets, and adopters always overlooked him. Finally his turn came. He'd been with us for so long... would he embrace his new home?

His adopter wrote, "You are very right about Barry being so shy and we've noticed such a huge difference (for the positive) in his coming out of his shell. For the first couple of days, he wouldn't even look at us when we peeked at him under my son's bed. My son stayed in his room quite a bit, talking to him every once in a while to let him know that he was okay. It was a remarkable transformation. Within a couple of days, Barry could be coaxed out from under the bed. As of Saturday, he was coming out of the bedroom to explore. He did so staying close to me. By Sunday he



was checking things out without my needing to be with him, and this morning he came out to give me morning greetings completely unprompted."

A week later, Barry's new person wrote, "We simply can't thank you enough for allowing Barry into our lives. He's almost like a custom-made-to-order cat for us. His personality, demeanor and love of cuddling fit our liking to perfection! There is no way I would ever have guessed him to be any bit feral at all!" Barry proves that you can't write off even the most timid cat!

## Katie's Place Animal Shelter

Katie's Place, established 2001, is a nonprofit, no-kill, volunteer-run shelter in Maple Ridge. We rescue, alter and adopt out homeless small animals.

**Phone:** 604-463-7917

**Email:** [katies.place@shaw.ca](mailto:katies.place@shaw.ca)

**Shelter address:** 10255 Jackson Road,  
Maple Ridge

**Mailing address:** 20803 Camwood Avenue,  
Maple Ridge, B.C. V2X 2N9

**Open Hours:** Sat. & Sun. 12:00 noon - 2:00 pm

**Website:** [www.katiesplace.petfinder.com](http://www.katiesplace.petfinder.com)

**Charitable Registration**

**Number:** 86250 6037 RR0001

# Katie's Place Animal Shelter

JANUARY 2011

## Should Auld Acquaintance be Forgot

Katie's Place has taken a lot of "auld" cats. In 2010, 71 seniors (age 10 or older) were in our care. Twenty-eight found new homes and 30 are at the shelter or in foster care, hoping for homes. Thirteen reached the end of their road and passed away.

Improved diet and veterinary care have given many cats a life span of 20 years or longer. That means a greater commitment for adopters. Some kittens born this spring will still be alive in 2031. Even if you've considered where you'll be then, life takes unexpected turns. Plan for the worst case scenario. (See the sidebar on planning.)

Ten senior cats came to us when their elderly people could no longer keep them. Seven came to us when their person passed away. These old pets lost the only people who loved them and the only place some of them ever called home.

Missy took the loss hard when her person passed away. She lost a lot of weight despite seeming cheerful. Luckily, she found a home. Murray was devastated when his person passed away. It took him a while to accept our friendship. Now he stays on a perch away from the other cats and he lives for the moments when somebody gives him a fuss. Pauline lost her home when her elderly person had to move. The old cat was painfully shy and still doesn't ask for attention although she soaks it up with urgent loneliness when it's offered.

Senior cats offer as much as any kitten. At 15, Jimmy was affectionate and lively and he found a new home. Thirteen-year-old Keiko is playful and a joy to her person. Still waiting for his chance, 10-year-old Royce's face lights up when he gets some pets. Eleven-year-old Marielle accepts pets so eagerly that she nearly falls off her perch.

Marielle lost her home for litter pan indiscretions. It was a busy household with other cats, a puppy, and several children. A cat well matched to a new home rarely repeats habits from the past. Fifteen-year-old Jag and 10-year-old Asha lost their homes for litter pan issues; both are fine in their new homes. Asha's new person reported, "Never did have an issue with the litter box, she is as close to perfect as it gets." Eleven-year-old Colette was a spitfire at the shelter who kept everyone on their toes. She hated other cats and she wasn't too happy with us sometimes. A kind person gave her a chance and their last report said, "Colette is turning into a playful, purry kitty." Even an old dog - or cat - can learn new tricks!



Pauline reaches out to make us stay.



Murray basks in attention.

## Plan for the Future

In the short term, talk to friends or neighbours about stepping in. Leave them a house key and keep a card in your wallet requesting they be contacted in an emergency.

Legally animals can't own property so you can't leave them anything in your will. However, you can bequeath them to someone. Pets are often brought to the shelter by people to whom they were entrusted so appoint someone who can and will keep them for their anticipated life span. Create an obligation to care for your pet by making a conditional bequest. Bequeath them something on the condition that they provide the care you expect.

You could create a trust for your pet's care. It can take effect while you're alive or, through your will, when you pass away. You could buy a life insurance policy and name the trustee as the beneficiary. Trusts are tricky to set up when the beneficiary is not a human; explain to your lawyer what you want.



# Our Furry Friends

We've seen some small miracles and enjoyed some triumphs.

## Amy & Scotlyn

Amy and Scotlyn refused contact with anyone for years. Scotlyn arrived in shelter care in early 2008. Amy came to us in 2006. Late last summer, they both suddenly became affectionate. Slow and gentle reassurance over months finally paid off. They don't greet us at the door but if we go to them, they respond eagerly. Amy, particularly, had been shy all her life. She lived in a home for about five years where they gave up on her and let her live under the couch until they had to move. Now these two could find homes.



## Charlotte

Charlotte went from 'shelter cat' to 'working cat'. One of the volunteers visited her in her new job at a wild bird store. Her job is rodent control. They had a mouse problem with all the bird seed they stock but they haven't seen a mouse since she's been there. She likes playing in piles of papers from unpacked stock (on her coffee breaks). The volunteer who visited her reported, "She's very friendly with people and enjoys attention. She gets lots of attention all day and they love her. Charlotte has bloomed! She seems really happy! At the shelter she never seemed to crave attention and was always sort of standoffish but she has found her niche."



## Kookamonger

Some of our seniors also found new homes over the last few months. Twelve-year-old Kookamonger's adoption was a blessing since this sensitive cat was devastated to lose her home. She was eventually able to show us her affectionate nature. Yet she never really relaxed among the other cats. Now she's an only cat, so she'll be happier. Senior pets can be a joy in new homes. Keiko's adopter wrote, "She is such an affectionate cat, purrs as soon as you touch her. For 13 years old, she sure can chase a small ball around the living room. She is an absolute delight." So there's hope for cats like 10 year old Murray, 14 year old Lollipop and 16 year old Lucy.



## Emma

Emma and her babies were found by someone who was moving into a new residence. This momma cat was in an empty home with seven two-week-old kittens in a drawer and a pile of cat kibble in a corner. The little family went into foster care. Once the babies were independent, Emma came to the shelter. She was such a loving, dainty, perky little cat, it's hard to understand how anyone could abandon her! She found a new home. Her babies are still fostered but four have been adopted as of this writing.



## Sol

Sol had been kept in a dark garage until he was badly matted and could barely open his eyes in the light. When he was adopted, his new family noted that he showed signs of having been abused. The sound of someone at the door terrified him. He blossomed in a loving new home and recovered his joy and confidence. We recently received another update: "His new game is to stalk us and then leap at us. It's hilarious. He is spoiled absolutely rotten. I have to admit, I wasn't sure before we adopted him if he would have enough personality for us, but I couldn't have been more wrong. This cat now has one of those larger-than-life personalities." This last Christmas was surely the happiest one Sol ever had!



## Calvin

Calvin is probably the most lovable cat you will ever meet. He calls to us and then he climbs into our arms to cuddle and to perch on our shoulders. He'd stay there if we let him. All the volunteers adore him. He's so lovable that he's been adopted twice. But he was returned for keeping them up at night by meowing. One thing we've learned is that there's a niche for everyone. Calvin just needs someone who wants a pet with personality enough to fill the house.



## Rockwell

Rockwell's noble spirit was never noticed at his old turf. Homeless, he was the neighbourhood pest. One person went so far as to drive him into the countryside to dump him. He made his way back to the only home he knew and the next person brought him to us. He didn't project a particularly appealing image to us either. He was plain black and he huddled in a corner. Finally he realized he was safe. He began to show his true self, and the "unappealing" cat became endearing. He glows with pleasure at getting attention although he doesn't ask for it. He's also patient and kind to other cats and was seen giving a youngster some comforting licks one day. Rockwell is a gem waiting to be discovered.



## Cameron

Cameron wanted nothing to do with us after he was captured and brought to the shelter. Yet he watched us with calm, intelligent eyes. After a while, he'd reach back to touch our hand if we reached toward him slowly. This boy isn't feral but he's not quite friendly yet either – not with us anyway. He's very popular with the other cats. Even cats who generally prefer humans have been drawn to Cameron. One day he'll make a great companion in the right home.



## Timex

December was a miracle month for one little brown tabby named Timex. She first came into shelter care as a homeless cat in November 2007 and she waited at that shelter for a home until they ran out of room the following summer. She came to us then and we were sure this lovely little cat would soon be adopted. That was in June of 2008. The months turned to years, and Timex adjusted to life among many other cats. She wasn't really happy though and that made her run out of patience too quickly during the bustle of Open Hours. She needed a home because she couldn't fully relax at the shelter. But keeping her guard up made her unattractive to adopters – Catch 22! Somebody noticed her on the web however, and they noticed how long she'd been waiting for a home. On December 11, they came and adopted her. Timex is enjoying life in a real home for the first time in more than three years.



*Each week, we're delighted when adopters give two or three more waifs another chance to belong and be loved.*

## Adoptions Increased

In 2009, 236 animals found new homes; in 2010, we passed that number in mid November! It was a lucky year for some of our special needs pets. Thirty-seven hard-to-place cats found homes (seniors or cats with Feline AIDS or Feline Leukemia). No vacated spots remained empty for long though. We rescued nearly 350 animals in 2010. Since opening our doors in 2001, we've rescued more than 2900 animals and we've found homes for more than 2000.

Those adoptions are all the more remarkable since we give priority to desperate cases, animals for whom we are the last hope. These are elderly, timid, ill and injured pets, and feral cats. (Most only need a chance to recover from their traumas to become robust, loving family members again.) Several of our animals live in permanent foster care. Several passed away, safe at last and loved to the end. Many feral cats were altered and went to monitored feral colonies. More than 100 animals live at the shelter at any one time. The great majority are lovable pets who are ready and eager to meet adopters. We're hoping 2011 will be their lucky year.

## In Memoriam and Tribute

*We gratefully acknowledge gifts to Katie's Place*

*from Jersey, Bailey, and Gracie in memory of  
Flora Elliott*

*from his friends and family in memory of  
Steve Langis*

*anonymously in memory of  
Steve Langis*

*from Axis Installations in memory of  
Karen Posnick*

*from Mary Ridd in memory of  
David Ridd*

*from Gerry and Wendy Gillan in memory of  
Jamimah*

*from Patricia Creed in honour of  
Beverley Contreras*

