



Catalyst for Cats

A Non-Profit Organization Dedicated to Altering the Future for Ferals

NEWSLETTER

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Our Mission:

As a feral cat organization our primary purpose is to spay and neuter feral and abandoned cats, and to socialize and find homes for rescued kittens. These services are designed to address the feline overpopulation problem and to prevent cruelty to animals by preventing the birth of unwanted and uncared for cat and kittens.

From the Founder

It all started twenty years ago with our first TNR

Change. It's a timely word. Twenty years ago this spring I trapped my first cat. I dedicate this issue to the changes that have taken place regarding the strays and ferals since that time.

My daughter told me about a group of stray cats behind a shopping center in Santa Barbara. I'd been bothered by the plight of mothers being burdened with litter after litter of unwanted kittens as long as I can remember, but had no idea how to proceed. I mentioned the stray cats to a co-worker. He suggested I call St. Francis Pet Hospital and ask for a blonde woman who frequently brought her cats to the clinic. I called the clinic and they put me in contact with the "blonde woman." Her name was Berka Smock.

Berka scouted the area behind the shopping center immediately after my call and noticed a feeding station had been set up. That very night, with a trap set, we sat in the car nearby and waited.

It didn't take long before we had one. Berka rushed over and covered the trap to calm the cat. Using only a one-door trap, she transferred our catch into a holding cage, leaving the trap free to try for another. She was an expert at transferring ferals to holding cages—I never did master that technique.

I remember a gray cat that hid under cars in the

garage apartment behind the shopping center, and the manager saying "That cat! She keeps having kittens," as though it was her fault.

Berka and I met behind the shopping center every weekday night after work. We'd laugh about sitting in the cold and dark, snacking on fries, elated when the trap went off. The following day, St. Francis Pet Hospital would spay or neuter what we caught. After

recuperation we returned the cats to the feeding station.

It thrilled us that we captured them all before they dropped any litters.

It was a new, exciting,

and most satisfying experience for me, and I felt I'd found my "calling."

At that time the vet notched one ear. Nowadays the ear is tipped and is recognized as the universal sign that a cat has been "fixed."

We didn't have a name for it then, but it became known as Trap, Neuter, and Release. Later it became known as Trap, Neuter, and Return—now commonly just TNR. This program was in its infancy in 1990.

About this time Alley Cat Allies came into being, with Becky Robinson and Louise Holden as Co-founders. They provided guidelines on how to help feral cats, and the program expanded into thousands of grass roots organizations that now do TNR. It indeed

Continued page 4

In Appreciation

We are very grateful to those who participate in our goal of preventing feline overpopulation. Unless you are “into” animal rescue no one understands the amount of time and effort our volunteers contribute. Our volunteers are the ones who “make it happen.” It is a true labor of love and often personal sacrifice, and we thank you all enormously. The reward is the satisfaction they get from helping the animals in whatever way they can. We rely on you, our volunteers, who give from the heart. Some are mentioned, but all are appreciated.

Belinda Burns – our Santa Ynez liaison. She coordinates the volunteer feeders for the Santa Ynez Valley as well as doing most of the trapping. On weekends she feeds colonies and has now extended her efforts in spearheading relocating cats on Saturdays, thus saving lives of many ferals, who would otherwise be killed.

Barbara Hilaire – for her unwavering and generous support of our program.

Teresa Mitton – for her generosity with spay/neuter of both dogs and cats in the North County.

The Santa Barbara Humane Society – for their assistance in adopting out our older felines.

C.A.R.E for Paws – for their assistance with spay and neuter at several clinics throughout the county for the public as well as *Catalyst for Cats*. They also assist with dog neutering.

Moby – for his kindness in giving such loving care to his IV colony of ferals and strays. All have been named and they greet him every morning.

Sue and Hal Stevenson – for the many hours spent over the years on folding and labeling our newsletters, and **Gerry Place** for her time and patience in dealing with the Bulk Mail Processing Center. Because it is becoming increasingly difficult to keep up with the constantly changing rules for using bulk mail, our board has decided to make use of a mail service provider to take over the mailing after all these years.

Lorraine Cestone – for taking over the mailing list from **Corrine Gallagher**, who has done it since the very beginning. Thank you, Corrine, for your many years of faithful volunteering.

Fix Nation – So far this year we have made three trips to Fix Nation in Burbank with a van of feral cats to be spayed and neutered. **Allison Coleman**, **Amy Orozco** with her Alonzo, and **Michael Fountain** volunteered

to make the arduous day-long journey, leaving early in the morning and returning after dark. Thank you all very much.

Danna Fregoe – for sewing covers to fit our traps. Once the cats are trapped we cover them immediately in order to calm them down.

The Story of One Colony (and Two Volunteers)

While checking out a report of a stray in Santa Maria, **Lavi Gonzales** and her daughter **Monica** came upon a yard full of cats a few houses away. As it turned out the owners of the property had been contacted by Animal Control a couple of times previously because neighbors had complained about the multitude of cats. After checking with Animal Control we set out to TNR this entire colony of feral cats.

It doesn't take long for breeding cats to multiply prodigiously. Last year the colony consisted of even more cats, but the males had moved on to find other felines to breed with. This is nature's way of avoiding inbreeding. Sometimes the females will move on to nearby properties to bear their kittens for safety reasons.

After a couple nights of concentrated trapping, all nine cats were caught. That always makes us happy.

After being spayed and neutered, vaccinated, wormed, treated for fleas and recovered from surgery, they were returned. One of the cats had to have an eye removed, but should do well after recovery. Luckily, none of them had dropped litters before trapping.

With a couple days of work, life improved enormously for everyone concerned: the cats, the feeder, and the neighbors. Caterwauling and the sight of an endless parade of unwanted, all too often sick (or worse) kittens is now at an end. I contacted the feeder to check on the cats' welfare, and she said, “They are doing great!”

Both Lavi and Monica work, yet, spend hours each week feeding, trapping and fostering. They are indeed dedicated to helping the felines as well as any other animal needing help.

We often hear, “Why do you do this and how can you keep doing it?” The answer lies in the happy ending for this colony.

We do it over and over again; improving the lives of the cats and preventing unwanted kittens from being born is reward enough.

Tricks of the Trade

Skilled fostering ensures a good start in life for the first kittens of the season

By Marci Kladnik

My phone rang on the morning of March 26. It was Randi saying that the Santa Maria Animal Shelter had a feral mom with five newborn kittens. They were going to put them all down, unless a foster could be found.

Gee, now why do you think she was calling me with this story? Knowing what a pushover I am for the difficult cases, she was hoping that I'd step up and volunteer to take them on. Of course I caved in immediately as I love a challenge.

The story went that mom was trapped on the grounds of Ontiveros School in Santa Maria and brought to the shelter on March 16. Unfortunately, she was not spayed immediately, and gave birth in less than a week to five beautiful babies. We're thankful that *Catalyst* was called as an option to killing the whole family.

I was at the shelter before closing that same day, and watched as they separated the mom from her kittens using a stick with a plastic hand attached to one end.

Removing the whole bed box from the cage, the kittens were transferred to a carrier, blanket and all. Mom was then prodded into another carrier and handed to me. I was told she was very feral, and I was glad that they had separated the family. It would make it much easier for me to set them up in the cage I had made ready in my garage.

I talked the shelter out of a large bag of kitten kibble and another of litter, and drove home with the added promise that the whole family would be spayed/neutered for free when the time came.

Having just acquired a beautiful large cage donated by Lynn Starling and Barbara West, I was able to set up a 6' x 30" x 24" area for mom and litter. Wanting to have access to the kittens, I made a bed box from the bottom of a disassembled small carrier. I deposited the tiny kittens in it, then picked up mom's carrier.

Luckily, the whole crate fit through the cage door, and I placed it inside the cage with the opening facing the kittens. Momma only hesitated a few moments before silently slinking over to take possession of her family.

I covered the end of the cage where they were with a sheet and retreated to the house to give them some



Fresh Eyes: Just a few days after opening their eyes for the first time, the three boys and one girl are watched over by their wary mother, a feral trapped in Santa Maria. After mid-May, the kittens should be available for adoption, and mom will be looking for a comfortable barn situation.

settling-in time.

The next few days went smoothly, as momma allowed me to carefully reach in and pick up her babies, one at a time, to examine them. She didn't seem all that feral to me. What sweet little kitten faces they had, all with their eyes still tightly closed. Three boys and two girls, I determined.

As the kittens grew, opening their eyes on schedule when they were nine days old, momma started becoming very protective, hissing, growling, and spitting at me whenever I approached the cage. Sadly, I had to start using a stick as a precaution when her feralness became quite apparent.

For several days she would not allow me access to the kittens, even if I prodded gently with the stick to try and get her to move to the hidey box at the other end of the cage. She would not leave her babies and I really needed to examine one of them, as there appeared to be some problem with an eye.

Then overnight, she transferred them all to the hidey box, and climbed in with them. Now I had no access to them at all, and could barely even see them. I just had to wait momma out, as I knew that eventually I'd catch her outside the box.

When that day came, I was ready. Stick in hand, I opened the door and she slunk to the old bed at the

Continued page 4

Feral cats removed from San Nicholas Island

By Christy Thies

In January of this year the Department of Fish and Game invited the public to a presentation in Santa Barbara and Ventura regarding an update of their policy of removal of feral cats from San Nicolas Island. A film was shown, including a graph of the number of cats captured, the time of year of capture, and a map showing the location of the cat colonies throughout the island.

San Nicolas Island, part of the greater Channel Islands off the Ventura County coast, is a model of natural selection. On the isolated, 22 square mile island, flora and fauna had been allowed to adapt to its unique environment for centuries. Yet, the ecological balance is fragile: the island cats, introduced by human inhabitants as pets more than 50 years ago, were allowed to multiply and become wild through successive generations.

When the now-feral cats had to compete for survival with the island's only other predator, the Channel Island fox, it was bad news for their prey. The island's

Catalyst History

From page 1

has become a growing movement nationwide and worldwide.

Starting in the city of Santa Barbara, we slowly expanded our work until today we cover the whole County. We are making great strides in improving and changing lives for the better, as well as preventing thousands of unwanted kittens from being born.

In the next newsletter, I'll mention more of the changes that have developed over the years.

Despite the many challenges of last year, we "fixed" over 600 felines and helped many others with our Tiny Tim Fund for medical care.

It's now the beginning of what we call "Kitten Season," when our most difficult work begins. We hope for your support. We owe so much to our donors who make it possible to sustain our work, as well as the volunteers who participate in the "hands on" approach of improving the lives of ferals. You are all a part of our goal of making "every cat a wanted cat" and you have our sincere appreciation.

Randi Fairbrother

other endemic species—including the western gull, snowy plover, Brandt's cormorant, night lizard and deer mouse—all took a decided decline since the cats' "invasion" of the island

After nearly two years of haggling, the Department of Fish and Game proceeded with their plan of removing the felines. It seemed like a simple solution at the time: federal guidelines favor preserving the endangered "native" species of the island over a non-native "invasive" group, like the feral cats. The verdict? In the summer of 2008, Navy biologists teamed up with the Fish and Wildlife Service to eradicate the 100 or more feral cats inhabiting the island by trapping and killing them. Yet, the outcry from national animal advocate groups, such as Alley Cat Allies, Humane Society of the United States, PETA and our local grassroots organizations prompted an alternative, just

Continued page 5

Kittens in a box

From page 3

other end of the cage. I slipped a center wire barrier into the cage, securing it with the prodding stick, and viola! I had complete safe access to the litter.

I quickly removed the kittens and examined them, all the while with mom growling and watching intently from the other end.

Using warm water and a cotton ball, I gently cleaned the eye in question, and opened it. I was happy to see no evidence of infection, but treated it with some ointment to be on the safe side.

I then put all the kittens back into the box, removed the barrier, and backed away from the cage leaving them alone once again.

It has now become routine. Momma still is not pleasant when I come to examine her babies, but seems to accept the fact that I'm going to and that I won't hurt them.

I have to laugh, however, because it appears she is not happy with the kittens when they respond to my come hither signals. I'm glad they ignore her and mew at me anyway.

Around May 17, this family will be available for adoption. We will be looking for a barn situation for the solid black mom. Four of the kittens are gray tabby, while the fifth is a tuxedo—take your pick!

Island cats captured, neutered, given time to adjust

From page 4

as strikingly simple: remove the cats *without* killing them.

At first trappers tried using humane traps, but this method was deemed unsuccessful, therefore abandoned. Padded leg traps were decided upon as the preferred method. The traps were checked each day and the cats taken to the veterinary station set up on the island where the cats were examined, weighed, tested for leukemia and FIV — none tested positive — and general condition. They were surprisingly healthy.

As of July 2009, the captured cats were taken a few at a time to an mainland sanctuary. The logistical and financial challengers were met by generous support from the charity website DoGreatGood.com. At the Fund for Animals Wildlife Center in Ramona, CA, volunteers installed a 100' x 100' chain link fence to house at least 100 cats. The habitat is now complete with trees, rocks, bushes, scratching posts, toys, beds, and hiding places.

Once a cat arrives by plane to the Wildlife Center, it goes through a short “adjustment period.” During this time the cat is given medical attention as needed, spayed and neutered, and after the quarantine period is over, released into the large area with the other cats.

“The adult feral cats have only known freedom and we feel it is in their best welfare to allow them to live out their lives in a lifestyle to which they are accustomed,” says Nancy Peterson, who works for the Humane Society and saw the sanctuary in full swing in November.

Cats will continue to arrive at the shelter indefinitely until the last of the cats is off the island, ensuring that this problem will see its last day. Navy personnel on the island will continue to make note of sightings, though the island fox’s breeding and kit-raising time has temporarily suspended the trappings.

There is much hope in the community that this project will mark a useful precedent for the usual shoot-first-and-ask-questions-later approach to wildlife and “invasive” species that exist through no fault of their own. Just nine months since they began arriving, the ferals have adjusted to the good life.

When the cats were released, several ran up to each other and started grooming one another,” says Peterson.” The climate in Ramona isn’t much different



Christine Jensen/The HSUS

Relocated: San Nicholas Island ferals, humanely transported to a wildlife center in Ramona, CA, were surprisingly healthy.

from San Nicolas Island, but instead of struggling to survive, the cats relax in the sun, groom, eat, play and seem very relaxed. When I visited in November for the dedication, only a few were hiding from us newcomers.”

Comments: by Randi Fairbrother: The removal of the San Nicolas Island cats has concerned me, so I attended the presentation and asked several questions.

I was told that the trapping took place during “kitten season” because they did not want to disrupt the fox breeding season. The 12 kittens born on the island during relocation were housed with their mothers until weaned, socialized, and adopted.

While none of the cats were injured in the padded leg traps, several of the foxes were, because the cats’ bones are stronger than the bones of the foxes. These were cared for at the clinic and released.

Christy Thies, a UCSB student, called Catalyst to volunteer. I asked her to research the San Nicolas Island cats. Thank you Christy for a job well done.

Tributes & Memorials

Honoring or remembering a special person or pet provides a means for the donor to recognize the richness and happiness brought to someone, and allows *Catalyst* to improve the lives of cats less fortunate. Donations have been made....

In Honor of:

All the homeless, unwanted, and unloved cats – by Eileen Carroll

Sarah A. Bell, my mother's 93rd birthday – Charlene Maltzman

Victoria Blunt – by Michelle Garbarino – a Christmas gift

The wonderful *Catalyst* volunteers – by Mary Roscoe

***Catalyst for Cats*'** work with the feral cats in Los Alamos – by Monna L. Dingman

Randi Fairbrother – by Bill Long

Randi Fairbrother – by Lois Robinson

Lucky – by Patricia Johnson

Marci Kladnik, for all her help – by The Rock Depot

Monty – by Karen Jostes

Nadine, an Israeli cat – by Adil and Nancy Yaquib

Mr. and Mrs. William Nelson – by Gary Peterson

Patches – by Sheri Ponack

Penny – by Margaret Jones

Randi – by Mauren Grube

Your work – by Elly Wyatt

In Remembrance of:

Isabel Beck – by Donna Donnelly

Blue Bell – by Dr. Bud and Lynda Stuart

Mr. B. E. (Blue Eyes) – Candace Rioux

Boots – by Barbara Evans

John M. Carmon – by Despina O. Danos

Charlie – by Pat Dowell

Cookie – the “Goodbye Girl” – by Diane and Stefan Mazur

Coreyander – by Marie Sottosanti

Cuddles, in loving memory – by Charlene B. Little

JoAnn Cason Evans, mother of Teresa – by Tom and Teresa Hall

Fred – by Jill and Truett Thach

Lillis Gibson – by Barbara Hilaire

Gregind – by Diane T. Sidon

Kringle and Domino – by Lois Waldref

Inky – by Karen Jean Littlejohn

Mammacita, a *Catalyst* cat who became a beloved

companion – by Naomi Green

Michael Darren Kelm – by Bonnie Kelm

Midnight, our friend for 16 years – by Rita Rink

Partner (lab-pit) wonder dog – by Ennest L. Bevilacqua

Ping – by Marlin and Deborah Lynch

Princess – by Rita Fleming

Rascal – by Deby Laranjo

Romeo, Allison's beloved companion – by Romani Reavely

Scout – by Rosemary Williams

Shadow, died at age 21, March '09 – by Blake Ponomarenico

Sweet Pee and Quatro – by Bud and Lynne Borderre

Tom Snow, Lindsay, Al and Sophie – by the Salotti Family

Fred Trevillian, a mainstay in our tennis group and a good friend of many years – by Randi Fairbrother

Sheila Pratt – a very special friend to feral cats. In 1997 Sheila was instrumental in stabilizing her whole neighborhood of breeding cats and lovingly cared for them. Ernest, her husband, will continue to care for the two remaining cats in the colony.

Landa's husband, **Nick Parisi**, passed away suddenly on Dec. 15. Landa has been on our board for many years. Nick introduced Landa to the world of cats. Together they fostered and socialized dozens upon dozens of feral kittens. Nick was lots of fun, always joking, and he contributed to our fundraisers by performing magic tricks, to the delight of many. We are very sorry to lose him. – by Kari Alagozian, Elaine U. Dreyfuss, Randi T. Fairbrother, Lisa Hughey and Liz Hughey (“He was kind, *so* good-humored, and we will miss him.”), Marci Kladnik (for the Tiny Tim Fund), Tresha Sell, Carole and Larry Rubottom, and Joe Thomas.

Cats come with claws!

Never declaw a cat! Declawing often results in irreversible physical and psychological damage. An excellent scratching post is available from **Felix Company (206) 547-0042**. Ask for their catalog. The **#1** (large) is a good selection.

Updates: *Catalyst Action & Related Issues*

Spay Days

The first spay day of the year was held Jan. 24 at the Santa Maria Animal Shelter. Most of the colonies primed for trapping were fed on open, uncovered patio areas, and thus our trapping efforts were severely curtailed because of the heavy rain storms that week. In general, cats prefer to stay warm and dry during the rain. We did, however, manage to neuter 10 males and nine females. Thanks to the vets, Drs. Ron Faoro, Amanda Lumsden (welcome to Santa Barbara) and Frank Stanton, as well as the dozens of volunteers.

A month later on Feb. 28, we held another spay day. This time the weather cooperated a bit more, and our final count of 14 males and 19 females (nine of whom were pregnant), thus preventing the birth of many unwanted kittens. The survival rate for litters born to feral moms is less than 50% and is enormously stressful for the mother trying to sustain nourishment for both herself and her kittens. The result is what we (and all the rescue groups) deal with the many long months of kitten season. It's how we spend our spring, summer and into fall.

Our appreciation to Drs. Ruth Corbo, Brenda Forsythe and Frank Stanton, and again to all the volunteers who gave up their day.

Grants

We received a grant from the Wendy P. McCaw Foundation for food, supplies and veterinary care. We are most appreciative for the kindness and understanding of our needs in addition to spay and neuter expenses.

The Ronald and Phyllis M. Bruce Trust for the Protection of Animals granted us money's for spay/neuter expenses.

We are honored by these kind and generous donations that advance the welfare of our county's ferals.

TNR Ruling in Los Angeles

On Dec. 4, 2009, Superior Court Judge Thomas McKnew ruled that the City of Los Angeles' Animal Services can no longer provide information about Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) or funding for spay/neuter services without first satisfying a California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

This came about through the action of a group of conservancy organizations that are concerned about declining songbird populations and the potential

impact of feral cats on the environment. They sued the City for non-compliance with CEQA, and the court found in their favor.

The ruling applies only to the City of Los Angeles and does not affect private individuals or rescue groups.

For many years the City of Los Angeles has been a model of humane feral cat care for cities nationwide. The City recognized Trap-Neuter-Return as an effective tool in its commitment to becoming "no-kill," and the community embraced it. Last year more than 16,000 feral cats were neutered with the help of volunteers and non-profit groups.

With this ruling Judge McKnew turned the clock back two decades. Many more cats will be surrendered to the shelters, only to be killed, and many more feral kittens will be born this spring. TNR has proven to be the only effective and humane way to deal with the feral feline overpopulation problem. Loss of habitat, pollution, and pesticide use are the leading cause of wild bird decline. Controlling the population of feral cats is advantageous to cats, birds, the environment, as well as the public at large.

The Community Cat Coalition of Los Angeles has been organized to work towards reinstating support for TNR within the framework of the CEQA requirements. It comprises representatives from respected animal welfare organization such as Actors and Others, Best Friends Animal Society, Feral Cat Caretakers' Coalition, Fix Nation, Found Animals Foundation, Kitten Rescue and Stray Cat Alliance.

The City Attorney had decided the best course of action is *not to appeal*, but to work with the city to develop a TNR policy while observing CEQA requirements.

For more information and to sign the petition see the Web sites for Fix Nation or Alley Cat Allies.

Membership Renewal

As a reminder about annual membership contributions, a notation has been put by your name on the newsletter mailing label. We appreciate your interest and any donation you feel you can make.

Note to Supporters

Catalyst for Cats wants donors to know that we do not share our mailing list with anyone or any other group.

Wish List

Catalyst needs the following in order to carry on its charitable and educational goals. If you can help, please call 685-1563:

- Trappers, transporters and feeders for Santa Maria/ Guadalupe areas
- Safe relocation sites for mousers. They will earn their keep. We try and socialize our older kittens because we prefer they have loving homes, but depending on circumstances and personalities it's not always possible. Sometimes we realize they must go to a relocation site more suitable to their temperament, such as a barn situation. With time they still have the potential to warm up to the caregivers. When they do, it's satisfying for everyone.
- More people who understand the importance of spaying and neutering.
- Cat food for our many, many colonies we subsidize. We spend thousands of dollars helping to feed the many colonies we subsidize. For dry food we prefer meat flavors of Purina or Friskies — not the fish flavors.

Remember Rae?



We've been tracking Rae for years. TNR'd several years ago, she joined her feeder's family of indoor cats at about age 10, then escaped with the help of other felines in the household. She's been watched over and photographed but never house-bound again. (See our previous newsletter for the whole story.) Rae is now about 14 and looks pretty fit and healthy, wouldn't you say?



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**Every litter adds to the problem
Every spay/neuter adds to the solution!**