



CAT TALES

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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

by Donald Turner

First, I would like to thank all volunteers with the Cat Action Team. Without your dedication and hard work, this organization would not exist.

This is our eleventh year of operation and we are proud that over 6,000 cats have been spayed or neutered in the clinics we organize. We still have over 1,000 cats on our waiting list but we can see we are making a difference.

2011 has been declared the International Year of the Cat, and as the work of CAT continues to expand, we are finding it necessary to develop a more efficiently organized structure. Pat Srebrnik is compiling colony information statistics so that can we do a better job of distributing our existing food supply; Pat is also searching for new donors of food. Krista Adams and Glenda Carver are working together to provide cat shelters for needy colonies. Our TNR coordinators – Diane Minick (Charlottetown and East), Beverly Hillier (Summerside and Central) and Gayle Adams (Western) – continue to do a fantastic job.

Two important posts remain vacant, however: We still need (1) someone to keep track of all our traps and carriers and (2) someone to look after and organize our volunteers.

Fund raising is going very well. We are selling many tickets for the Harley-Davidson raffle, a raffle made possible by the generosity of Dr. Charles Dewar. Mary Gallant has worked very hard to organize the Kitty Kat Fun Festival in Malpeque on July 16 and 17. Francine and her team are doing a great job with the catnip mice and sales continue strong. Paula Connolly and Vicky Smith are collecting much-needed Pennies for Paws; in addition, Paula continues to organize a variety of raffles. The CAT Cookbooks are out on the store shelves and the three yard sales held recently in Charlottetown, Summerside and O'Leary were a great success, as always.

I hope everyone is having a safe, happy and fun summer.

Special, in this issue; turn the page to read,

The Tale of the CAT-Nip Mice



The Tale of the CAT-Nip Mice

“A basket full of colourful catnip mice on the counter of the Summerside Animal Hospital provided my first introduction to the work of the Cat Action Team” -- Anne MacPhee, CAT volunteer

Her friends refer to Francine Labbé as the “Mouse Meister” – the expert craftsperson who oversees the production of the catnip mice which have virtually become a symbol for the Cat Action Team of Prince Edward Island.

But Francine refuses to take all the credit: she recalls that it was Joy Tremblay, one of the founding members of CAT, who brought a single, homemade catnip mouse to one of the earliest meetings in 2001. Joy was convinced that the mice could be sold to raise money for CAT.

At first, Joy designed, sewed, and stuffed each mouse herself, completing one at a time before starting work on the next. But Francine, whose family were clothing manufacturers in Montreal, realized that the mice could be produced more easily and quickly if the assembly process were broken down into carefully planned steps.

Francine searched for colourful fabrics with small patterns; she cut the fabric into carefully shaped mice-bodies; she used ribbons and twine to fashion ears and tails for the mice;



and she ordered the high-quality, organic catnip used for stuffing.



Francine developed a routine: on weekday evenings, she worked at preparing the mice bodies and parts. On Sunday afternoons, she hosted parties where volunteers gathered to stuff the mice, under her careful supervision.

Stuffing the mice is itself an art: each mouse is allotted at least two tablespoons of catnip. Fibre-fill is added to achieve exactly the right size and firmness. According to Colleen Pidgeon, who has been stuffing the mice for years, it takes about half an hour to stuff ten bodies.

Initially the mice were sold primarily at flea markets and yard sales, but then Francine and other volunteers arranged for the mice to be sold also at veterinary clinics and a few retail outlets across the Island. (For a complete list of locations, go to the Cat Action Team website: http://cats-pei.ca/Mice_Page.html)

In 2002, approximately 500 mice were made and sold. Since then, the number has increased by approximately 500 a year, until, by 2007, 3000 mice were being sold annually.

Originally, the mice were sold for a donation to CAT of \$2.00. In 2010, the price was finally raised to \$3.00, but there has been no reduction in the number of mice sold.

Meanwhile, increased sales meant that Francine needed more help. Ron and Linda Curtis, who had been among the first volunteers to take part

in the Sunday stuffing parties, assumed responsibility for many tasks: For example, Ron and Linda began to crochet, from carefully selected yarns, the colourful tails and ears that replaced the tails and ears Francine had been making from ribbon and twine.

Ron also took over the highly skilled work of cutting the fabric. According to Francine, Ron not only “cuts like a pro,” he also cuts fast, preparing as many as 400 fabric mice bodies in an evening. It is at this point in the process that the bodies are partially sewn together.

Everyone is always on the lookout for new patterns. Colleen Pidgeon is particularly proud of a fabric she found which featured tiny images of paw tracks. Also highly prized are patterns that can be used for specially themed Christmas, Easter, or Halloween mice. Ron and Linda have set aside an entire closet in their home for storing the fabric they collect.

The procedure for stuffing the mice has also evolved: Over the years, Francine has trained the large number of volunteers who now work individually to stuff the mice according to her precise specifications.



Once stuffed, the mice are ready to be sewn shut. For years, Francine did all of the sewing on her own industrial-quality machine, but recently Sandra Arsenault has been helping with this part of the job. It is at this stage in the process that Francine and Sandra attach to the mice the previously crocheted ears.

After being sewn shut and then finally adorned with tails, each mouse is sealed into its own plastic bag, along with a label proudly

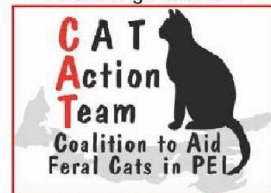
identifying the mouse as a product of CAT:

Catnip Mouse

Handmade on PEI

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To ensure that each outlet will be able to display a variety of colours and patterns, the mice are sorted by fabric before being put into delivery bags of fifty mice each.

Although Francine and Ron visit a few outlets, the majority of the deliveries are made by Paula Connolly, who drives hundreds of miles every month, to every corner of the Island, collecting the revenues and delivering fresh, new mice.

Since the first few mice were sold in the summer of 2001, sales have risen steadily until, in 2010, gross income from the mice amounted to \$6888.90 – a clear sign that discriminating Island cats value the high-quality product that Francine and her team have so carefully developed and marketed over the past decade.

But don't just take our word for it: go here – <http://alturl.com/fzd4h> – to see Harry, one of our satisfied customers, at play with his favourite CAT-nip mouse.

Did you know? CAT clothing, mugs, and other items are now available from the CAT Action Team store: <http://alturl.com/2q7cw>



The Tale of Smudge, Bibby, Tigger

by Wendy Kern

Here is a recent picture of Smudge, Bibby and Tigger (in that order). When I wrote about these feral siblings in the February, 2009 issue of *CAT Tales*, they had already been living with us for over six years. They were starved, frightened and tattered-looking when they arrived, but with the assistance of CAT, we were able to trap, spay and neuter them.

Smudge, Tigger, and their sister Bibby are close to ten years old now and thriving very well, as you can see. They are spoiled not just by us but by our many cat-loving neighbors, who leave gifts of canned and dry food on our front veranda. People walking by in the morning stop to watch as the cats sit at our front door, their little heads craning up at the knob as they wait for it to turn and their breakfasts to be delivered. We suspect that during the day they visit other homes where they are given treats. No wonder they are "Fat Cats"!



Contented Ferals

Now that the weather is warmer, Smudge, Bibby and Tigger have decided that they prefer to abide, not in the insulated cat house that we

built for them, but rather in our patio bar, so we have made the bar more comfortable for them with mats and pillows. (That's where this picture was taken.) They feel quite safe there and like to watch us through the patio doors when we are in the kitchen.

They also like to hunt in the woods behind our house. If we shake a bag of Temptations, they come running, just like the cats in the T.V. advertisement. They have come to expect a few Temptations every evening: They will climb up the patio doors to remind us that we haven't yet given them their "Good-night" snack!

We enjoy our "ferals" as much as we did the tame, indoor cat who lived with us until she was sixteen, and I won't be surprised if our ferals last just as long. Such spoiled babies!

Editor's Note: The story of Smudge, Bibby and Tigger provides proof that with a little help from their human friends, feral cats can be as healthy, happy and long-lived as domestic cats. But their story also calls attention to the fact that many of the ferals cared for by CAT over the past decade are now seniors and will thus be more likely to require medical attention within the next few years. You can help them by participating in CAT's **Fourth Annual, Thanksgiving Meow 50-50 Draw**.

This year, proceeds from the Thanksgiving Draw will be earmarked for emergency veterinary expenses. Tickets for the draw cost only \$1.00 and will be sold until September 30. Winning tickets will be drawn on October 7, 2011.

For more information, go to our website: <http://cats-pei.ca/events.html>. To purchase tickets, please e-mail Paula Connolly at pmtc.2006@yahoo.ca, or telephone Paula at 902-368-2216.

The Tale of Kelso

by Shirley Andrews

In the spring of 2010, my grandchildren found three kittens in our barn. Although the kittens were quite small, their mother had left them. My grandson named the kittens “Gord, “Aldo,” and “Kelso.”

The kittens got a lot of attention that summer, but then the grand kids went home. Gord and Aldo went away also, to live elsewhere. But the third kitten, who was black and white, stayed in our barn with the other cats. I forgot her name, so I called her “No-Name.”

Several of our barn cats have been spayed and neutered at clinics organized by CAT, and in February, 2011, it was No-Name’s turn. As instructed, after the operation, we kept No-Name inside and in her kennel overnight.

At first No-Name seemed to be recovering normally. But within a week, her usually bright eyes had turned dull, and the flesh around her stitches was turning black. I telephoned CAT and was told to take No-Name to the Abegweit Animal Hospital. The veterinarian there determined that the incision was so infected that it wasn’t possible to replace the stitches: instead, the wound was cleaned, bandaged, and left to scab over.

No-Name spent six days at the Abegweit Hospital. When I brought her home, she was in no condition to go outside into the cold, so she stayed indoors with us. By this time she was so tame that she wanted me to hold her on my lap. We realized she was on the mend when she developed the strength to play with a pencil by rolling it across the floor.

No-Name had to make five more trips to the Abegweit Clinic: every five or six days her bandage was changed and the wound cleaned. Finally, on March 22, she came home to stay.



Kelso in her bandages

By then, No-Name was following me everywhere. She got up behind the computer when I was at my desk, and if I sat down to play a game of Chinese checkers, she demanded to be on my knee. When the weather got warmer she began to go outdoors, but there is no doubt that No-Name has become a pet.

When my granddaughters visited us in March they told me in no uncertain terms that “No-Name” actually has a name – she is Kelso! So Kelso now it is.

I want to thank the Cat Action Team for their help because without them, sweet Kelso would probably not be here with us.

Editor’s Note: Although CAT attempts to provide essential medical care for feral, stray and barn cats, we do not assist domestic, indoor pet cats. We are happy that Kelso, now tame and healthy, has found her “forever” home.

A Request from Bob Stanley, Past President of CAT and present Director of Meow Productions. Bob is at work on a high-quality HD video which will be the first in a series about stray, abandoned, feral and barn cats, and the people who work to improve their lives. If you have ever fostered a needy cat, rescued an abused cat, cared for an ill or injured cat, or tended a feral colony, Bob would like to hear from you and, if possible, include your story in the video. Bob’s email address is: prince_edward_island@hotmail.com

**The Tale of Hobbs, *or*
The Sweetest Cat**

by **Katie Davidson (12 years)**

My Family and I LOVE our kitten. He has really beautiful caramel-colored fur, sweet eyes, and the cutest meow!



Our kitten's name is Hobbs - Hobbs Davidson. Well, there are many funny stories, but the one I'm going to tell is called "Sandwich Kitty":

One time when we were in the basement watching TV, Hobbs curled up on a chair and fell asleep. He must have had a dream because he hit the pillow and it fell on him – while he was still sleeping! And that's the story of "Sandwich Kitty."

and finally ... CONGRATULATIONS, to the winners of CAT's 2011 Mothers' Day Raffle:

Nancy Oldershaw, Vernon River (50-50 draw)



Joan Fischer, Fernwood
(Basket A)

Colleen Arsenault,
Greenmount (Basket B)

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*Proceeds to benefit the Cat Action Team
of Prince Edward Island*



For more information, including ticket
sellers and locations, visit our website:

<http://cats-pei.ca/HarleyPoster1.html>