



Palm Beach Island Cats, Inc.

P.O. Box 173 • Palm Beach, FL 33480 • 561-512-4884

June 2011 Newsletter

The Unsociable Cat

The following is an edited for space article by Sarah Hartwell. It is copyrighted by her and is presented by the Feral Cat Coalition with permission. She has written many articles about feral conditions in the UK, US, and Australia. The information is very good and is useful to people from all corners of the globe. One of her original reasons for research and writing was to raise money for feral programs.

For years 'experts' have told cat owners that domestic cats are solitary creatures that dislike the company of other cats. No doubt cat owners have viewed the communal sleep heap on the armchair with puzzlement wondering whether it is the cats or the experts who have their facts wrong.

While the ancestors of our domestic cats may have been solitary hunters in the forests of Europe and Africa, domestic cats frequently live in harmonious groups playing, sleeping and evening hunting together. Many form close attachments to other cats, and even to other domestic animals.

It was suggested that keeping several cats in one household, forced them to become more sociable due to unnatural conditions. However, more recent studies on feral colonies have shown that domestic cats, like lions, are rather sociable creatures and even battle-scarred tomcats will return from walking alone to relax with the family.

Cats in captive colonies at animal shelters often form close friendships. They share an enclosure with other 'unhomeable' cats. The other cats frequently rub against them and chose to sit close. When a particularly sociable cat in a colony dies, the relationships between the other cats may break down and the colony fragment into several small groups.

Cats rub against their companions to mingle their scents and reinforce the bond. Biologists studying farmyard colonies noticed that lower ranking cats often rubbed against higher ranking cats. Rubbing also has a hierarchical function, and a cat's social standing can be measured by the number of times other cats rub against it. When our cats wind round our ankles it is more than an affectionate greeting - they are letting us know that we rank higher than them.

Rubbing, nose-bumping greetings and sitting close to other members of the cat's 'family' are not actions caused by keeping cats in 'unnatural proximity' to other cats. All of these activities have been observed among cats living in feral colonies. Behaviorists studying both urban and rural colonies found that the cats formed 'family groups' rather than remaining solitary. It is easy to dismiss this as several cats exploiting a single food source, but the amount of mutual grooming and even communal kitten-rearing suggest that these colonies are more like prides of lions. Communal hunting is only rarely observed since, unlike lions, cats hunt prey smaller than themselves.

Even cooperative hunting does sometimes occur with closely bonded cats. Litter mates have been observed quartering a field in flushing out field mice for each other and often sharing the catch.

Many cats, both feral and domestic, apparently enjoy each other's company just for the sake of company and not just because there is safety in numbers. Though un-neutered tomcats are often hostile towards each other, there are exceptions where toms when reared together may remain companionable when mature - supply of food and females permitting.

In our households, unrelated cats often form close attachments to each other and a recent survey by a British behaviorist found that a number of cats grieved or pined when a companion cat died, sometimes to the extent that force-feeding was needed or another kitten had to be acquired to provide companionship.

It is only quite recently that experts have started saying what many cat-owners have known all along - cats are not necessarily solitary creatures. Far from suffering when kept in groups, many pet cats thrive in the company of other cats especially if they have grown up among other cats. Its ancestors may have walked by themselves, but the cat has evolved into a far more sociable animal both in a feral and a household setting.



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PBIC always had need of foster homes for cats and kittens. If you, or anyone you know, is willing to provide a temporary, loving environment for a socialized stray cat or abandoned pet, please let us know by calling 512-4884. The need for these foster homes is especially needed now during the economic struggles. The dedicated Field Operations Teams are finding more abandoned pet cats on the Island whose irresponsible owner apparently dumped their pet where they believe it can be better taken care of and loved. Pet cats cannot exist in the feral cat world....they are not equipped to deal with the harsh conditions of being homeless and the existent population will not accept this stranger. The pet will starve because it will not be allowed to eat or be attacked when it is defenseless. Please help the pet!!



This is one of the adult cats fostered by a loving PBIC Caretaker who calls her Francis.

*This foster Mom says . . .
Francis is a real sweetie!*

CARETAKER SPOTLIGHT



ATTENTION CARETAKERS AND VOLUNTEERS

Don't forget to call Wink at 512-4884 and let us know you will be at the Annual Appreciation Picnic to be held Sunday, July 10, 2011, at the Royal Poinciana Chapel. Registration at 12:30 with lunch served at 1 p.m.

SAVE THE DATE

October 16, 2011

National Feral Cat Day



PBIC will host another party for supports and volunteers to take part in the nationwide celebration of National Feral Cat Day. Check back frequently for further details. Plan to join us that evening, so mark your calendars now.



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FERAL CAT CARETAKER WINS AGAINST IRS

Did you see the article in the Wall Street Journal on June 11 where a feral cat caretaker in Oakland, CA won a case in Tax Court that allows for tax deductions for money she spent out of her pocket to take care of feral cats? While the IRS has 90 days to appeal the ruling, this case has set the precedent for future tax return deductions.

The Tax Court allowed her to take a charitable deduction for expenses she incurred while taking care of the cats in her home for an IRS-approved charity, Fix Our Ferals. Among the \$12,068 in expenses she deducted were for food, veterinarians, litter, a portion of her utility bills, and other items such as paper towels and garbage bags. Previously, some accountants advised clients taking such deductions to be prepared for an IRS challenge. "Now...we know what to do," said Laura Peebles, a director with Deloitte Tax in Washington. Specifically, the taxpayer must keep records of pertinent expenses, and the charity must write a letter acknowledging the gift.

To read the full article about this important decision, here is the link to the article.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304778304576377744105236346.html?KEYWORDS=feral+cat+tax+deduction>

PBIC will be happy to provide the necessary letter to caretakers of the feral cats in Palm Beach for money they spend to benefit the cats when receipts documenting the expenditures are presented for verification.

Disneyland Partners With Feral Cat Colony To Control Rodents

Reprinted from Los Angeles Times: By Ben Popken on September 16, 2010

When you have a theme park as large as Disneyland, you run into some unique challenges. Among them, the gobs of melted Mickey bars and popcorn boxes attract hordes of rodents, and those rodents have attracted an estimated 200-strong feral cat colony that has been going strong for the past 25 years.

Turns out, the theme park officially views the feral cat colony as "partners" in controlling the rodent population (Not everyone can be a movie star, I guess). Disneyland also helps maintain the kitty clutch through a trap, neuter, and release program, and five hidden feeding stations. Who knew that beneath the layers of cuteness lied a rich dark underbelly of even more cuteness?

Don't bother going around saying "here kitty kitty" on your next visit to the most magical of kingdoms, though, these cats only come out at night.

Secrets of the Walt empire, revealed!



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Field personnel call this little guy "Bobby"... often times there's something distinctive about the cat to prompt the name.



"Mouse" is a special needs kitty (he's blind) and is in the care of Field Director Wink Barber.

FERAL CATS ARE NOT SOCIALIZED TO HUMANS

Though feral cats are members of the domestic cat species and are typically fearful of humans, they are protected under state anti-cruelty laws.

NOTICE

The pet health symposium scheduled for July 12, 2011 has been postponed until the Fall. Be sure to check back for details as we get closer to "Season". This will be an event for both cat and dog lovers!



BE OUR
FRIEND

PBIC is now on Facebook!

Everyone is urged to visit our Facebook page and 'become our friend'. When we reach 25 Face book fans who like us, PBIC will earn its own URL whereby everyone can go directly to our page rather than go through your and search for our page.

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