



Forgotten Ones Cat Rescue

Mewsletter

Spring 2025

TIME TO PAWS AND REFLECT



This year Forgotten Ones celebrates a very significant milestone—25 years as a cat rescue organization. This is a great accomplishment for a volunteer-based, not-for-profit charity.

In the last quarter century, many aspects of cat welfare

have changed the lives of domestic cats for the better. One of the most impactful areas has been in the field of veterinary care. The development of more effective medications, innovative surgical procedures, and perfected diagnostic tools has improved the quality of life and longevity for cats.

Advancements in feline medications have helped tackle a wide range of health issues. Some drugs resolve temporary conditions, such as urinary tract infections or eye infections, and others greatly improve the lives of cats living with chronic conditions, such as kidney disease and arthritis.

Correcting feline behavioural issues, such as litter box avoidance, is also becoming more successful with veterinary care. House soiling is one of the primary reasons for cats being surrendered to rescues. We know from experience that a veterinary assessment can help determine if a cat's behaviour is medical or emotional and, in either case, the problem can usually be resolved.

One of the most remarkable feline medical treatments our team has witnessed is related to Feline Infectious Peritonitis (FIP), a feline viral disease. Historically, the condition was fatal, but since we became involved in an innovative FIP clinical drug trial in 2023, ten Forgotten Ones cats have had a 100% recovery—an absolutely incredible outcome!

The advances in the field of feline medical care in the past 25 years has been significant. Our cat companions bring us much joy and love, and it is reassuring to know that cat welfare is constantly evolving and improving.

~ Laura Wyatt, Director, Forgotten Ones Cat Rescue

FEATURED FOSTER - GRACIE LOU



We adopted Gracie Lou in January 2022. The first day we brought her home she hid, but by the second day she was rubbing against everything and sleeping in bed with us.

The second day was also the occasion of “the great sausage heist of 2022.” I was in the bathroom when I heard my dad yelling. I then saw Gracie trotting past the bathroom door with a sausage about twice her size in her mouth. Thankfully, she has (mostly) grown out of her food snatching habits!

Gracie Lou loves to insert herself in our family movie nights by positioning herself vertically between the legs of whoever has their feet up—she looks like a hotdog in a bun. She'll then flip herself over onto her back and demand tummy rubs. She also loves to sleep in the crooks of our knees and arms.

Her other quirky behaviour we like to call “camping.” She will crawl under the curtain that is over top of a heating vent, and, when the heat is on, the fabric will cover her like a tent.

We love all the little noises that Gracie Lou makes, and affectionately have nicknamed her Pigeon because of them. She loves to mew, trill, coo, and everything in between. We can always tell what she's thinking by the sounds she makes. It may be a forlorn “mew” when we stop petting her, a trill that goes up at the end like she's asking a question, or a sequence of coos followed by the sound of pitter-patters when she's roaming the house looking for us. She's a little creature that must make her voice known! ~ Amelia & Family



Winning CATEgories

Marley (above) beat out thousands of other cats nominated for the National Cat of the Year awards, sponsored by Cat Protection. Other winners included:

Zara - Winner of the Family Cat category. Zara offered pastoral care to the congregation at St John the Evangelist in Bexley, a borough of London. His contributions included comforting mourners and starring in wedding photographs.

Cilla - Winner of the Connected category. Cilla resides at Outwoods Primary School in Atherstone, Warwickshire. She calms pupils before their SATs and restocks the school library.

MARVELOUS MARLEY

A seven-year-old, black-and-white cat named Marley was awarded the prestigious title of National Cat of the Year 2024 last September. The contest is sponsored by Cats Protection, UK's largest cat-welfare charity, and celebrates the extraordinary impact that cats have on our lives.

Marley is a handsome, long-haired cat who lives at Caritas Bakhita House, a safe house for women who have been trafficked, enslaved, or exploited. The residence is located in London, England, and is currently home to 11 women from 11 different countries.

Marley's warm presence helps those who have experienced trafficking on their journey to freedom. Karen Anstiss, Head of Bakhita House, is delighted that Marley was honoured. "I'm so proud Marley has won National Cat of the Year—he's a wonderful example of the power of love," she said.

Marley's history is not unlike that of the women who seek refuge in the protective home. He had been placed for adoption with a London animal rescue, as he was being bullied by the other pets in his home. Anstiss believes Marley's past experiences enables him to connect with the abused women. "Before he went into rescue, I think he had a hard time," she said, "so he recognizes our guests' trauma because he has suffered, too."

A COMFORTING PRESENCE

Marley's companionship is reassuring for women who suffered abuse, and Anstiss describes his comforting ways. "Initially he sits really close, to see how the women respond," she said. "Then he gently puts a paw on their leg, letting them know they're not alone. Often Marley placing a paw on our guests' legs is the first kindness they've experienced in years. He has this incredible gift of empathy and has assisted many, many women along the road to recovery."

Anstiss gave the example of a woman who was in a distressed state when she arrived at the safe house, yet she was able to connect with Marley. "We had one guest who was so traumatized she didn't speak to us—only to Marley—and because she trusted him, over time we were able to reach her."

Marley is involved in almost every activity that takes place in the safe house. He is a welcome guest at art therapy sessions, and often joins the staff and guests at dinner. Additionally, he takes on the responsibility of staff supervisor, security guard, and chief gardener.

Anstiss touchingly and succinctly describes Cartias Bakhita House's much-loved resident cat: "Marley really is the fluffy heart of our home!"



Cats Have 276 Facial Expressions!

When Lauren Scott decided that she wanted to be a doctor, she never envisioned that studying cat faces would be part of her career path. Nor did she expect that the research paper she co-authored on the topic of feline facial movements would gain so much media attention.

Scott's interest in biological anthropology began when she was a student at the University of California, Los Angeles, which led her to assisting Brittany Florkiewicz, Ph.D., a doctoral candidate conducting research on animal facial signaling properties.

As part of the research, Scott was tasked with reviewing hours of footage of chimpanzee interactions, and that is when she gained knowledge about the Animal Facial Action Coding System (FACS). Animal FACS is an observational scientific tool that provides an objective measurement of facial movement in non-human animals.

A FELINE-FOCUSED STUDY

After the chimpanzee research was completed, Florkiewicz and Scott decided to conduct a study on feline expressions. There had been earlier studies on the interactions between cats and humans, but there was limited research on how cats communicate with each other. Additionally, the few studies on cat interspecies communications focused solely on facial

Something in Common

One expression that is common to both dogs and cats is a “play face.”

In dogs, a play face involves the lips parted, corners of the lips pulled back, a relaxed jaw, and an open mouth. This can be accompanied by panting or sounds resembling human laughter.

Cats also display a similar play face with relaxed mouths, parted lips, and sometimes panting or similar sounds, which can vary in intensity.





The Cat Café was the ideal setting for the feline-focused study, as the resident cats were relaxed and happy in the stress-free, cage-free environment. The videotaping was done in the evening when the cats were not distracted by guests visiting the café.

The café is run by a non-profit charity that focuses on rehabilitating timid cats through socialization, and finds them adoptive families.

During regular business hours, guests can visit with felines in the cat patio (above), cuddle with kittens in the kitten lounge (below), or interact with cats in the cat lounge (right).



expressions that were associated with offensive and defensive behaviour. Scott believed cats also communicated love and diplomacy, a subject that had not been researched.

In 2021, Scott started to collect data by videotaping cats that were residing in the Cat Café in Los Angeles. It was a typical cafe, in that it served food and beverages, but the primary purpose of the establishment was to operate as a non-profit cat shelter that rehabilitated rescued cats and found them homes. The café was a unique setting for a research study, but it was an ideal environment in which to observe cat behaviour, and it was conveniently located just minutes from the UCLA campus.

Over the course of a year, Scott video recorded 194 minutes of cats' facial expressions, specifically those aimed at other cats. Her research was done in the evenings, after the café had closed for the day, so the cats were interacting with one another and not humans.

THE FINDINGS

In analyzing the video recordings of the cats, Scott and Florkiewicz looked at both the number of and types of different facial movements. They concluded that each expression combined about four of 26 unique facial movements, including parted lips, jaw drops, dilated or constricted pupils, blinks and half blinks, pulled lip corners, nose licks, protracted or retracted whiskers, and/or various ear positions.

When the study was published in 2023 in *Behavioral Processes*, a journal that publishes research on animal behaviour, it received a lot of attention in the academic world. Additionally, it was of such interest to the general public that it



was covered by many media outlets, including *Science* magazine, *Smithsonian* magazine, the *Washington Post*, *National Geographic*, *CNN*, and *BBC*.

During interviews with the media, Scott and Florkiewicz described their findings. "Even though the individual expressions themselves weren't very complex—meaning that they didn't have a dozen different movements making up one expression—there was a wide variety of different expressions," Scott told *Science News*, adding, "276, to be exact."

She went on to say, "These distinct expressions, made up of combinations of facial movements, correspond to different social functions, which are likely influenced by domestication. Cats, often misunderstood to be aloof and anti-social creatures, appear to have remarkable social skills and ability to adapt."

Florkiewicz gave more details in an interview with *Earth.com*. "These findings show it is good to look at a cat's ears, eyes and whiskers to understand if they are feeling friendly," she said. "Their mouth provides a lot of information about whether a cat fight is likely. People may think that cats' facial expressions are all about warning other cats and people off, but this shows just how social and tolerant pet cats can actually be."

Scott and Florkiewicz said they hope that their research is of benefit to humane societies, shelters, and other locations that house multiple cats. They believed their research could be used by pet owners and shelters to increase the likelihood of successful bonding between domesticated cats.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Britt Florkiewicz has continued her research in the field of animal facial recognition and is currently Assistant Professor of Psychology at Lyon College. She is founder and director of the Lyon College Animal Behavior & Cognition Lab. Florkiewicz is conducting research on human-animal interactions to develop training tools and materials that help zookeepers, veterinarians, pet owners, and others provide the best possible care for their animals.

Lauren Scott is continuing to pursue a career in medicine and would like to specialize in the field of oncology. She believes that her feline research helped her land a research position in a laboratory studying cancer immunology at UCLA's medical school. Scott was surprised that her time spent studying cat faces had so much impact. "I'd never thought of research being part of my career," she said. "But now? Absolutely."

Given the influence of felines on Scott's career trajectory, she would probably agree with French novelist Colette: "Time spent with a cat is never wasted!" 



Karl Zacharias Lorenz

One of the founders of modern ethology, the study of animal behaviour, is Konrad Zacharias Lorenz.

He was an Austrian zoologist, ethologist, and ornithologist, and his pioneering research on imprinting and animal behaviour have had a lasting impact on the field.

He shared the 1973 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine with Nikolaas Tinbergen and Karl von Frisch.

One of Lorenz's observations is often quoted: "Few animals display their mood via facial expressions as distinctly as cats."



Nick Merrells (above) has built hundreds of life-saving dwellings for homeless cats.

"I feel great about doing it," Merrells says. "There's really nothing better than helping animals."

To make the shelter (below), Nick cuts a hole in the side of a large plastic container and lines the bottom with straw. He then builds a box from Styrofoam sheets within the container, and surrounds the box with more straw. The final step is to seal the lid with tape.



SMALL BINS PROVIDE BIG BENEFITS!

In an effort to help homeless cats survive extreme cold temperatures, Nick Merrells takes everyday plastic totes and retrofits them so they become life-sustaining cat shelters. His efforts have helped hundreds of cats survive harsh winters.

A NEED FOR CAT SHELTERS

The venture started four years ago when Merrells was living in Winnipeg's West End and he became aware of a large feral cat population. In an interview with *Winnipeg CityNews*, Nick described the situation: "I didn't know how many cats there were, or how big of an issue this was, but we were seeing cats like crazy," he said. "We took some in and, from there, about four years ago, we just started making shelters."

He explained that building the small cat homes—tiny in size, but big in benefits—gives cats a way to keep warm during the cold months. For homeless felines, having a shelter "is a matter of life and death," Merrells says.

To date, he has made 237 shelters and he is proud to state, "I've never heard of a cat freezing to death in one of mine, so I'd say they do the trick!"

Nick has placed shelters in his neighbourhood for feline occupancy, and he offers them to people who want to help stray cats survive the winter. Additionally, Merrells has donated many shelters to cat advocacy groups that are providing support to feral cat colonies.

"I have given away many for free," Merrells said, "and generally I ask for \$40 per shelter, as I spend nearly that much on all of the supplies needed to make just one shelter. Some people pay more, some people pay less, but it's all about helping the cats."

IMMEDIATE RESIDENCY

According to animal advocates, providing community cats with safe havens during harsh winters is a service that's much needed in Winnipeg. Merrells agrees with that assessment, and he points out that the demand for shelters is, in itself, proof of the need. As soon as he delivers a shelter, cats are very quick to take up residence in the modified containers.

"I'll give people a shelter and, within half an hour or an hour, they'll send me a picture of the cat in the shelter," he said. "I always ask for pictures and I always like to stay updated. But, yeah, nothing bad coming out of these shelters."

If you would like to contribute to Merrells' efforts, you can contact him through Facebook under the name Nick Niche, or email him at nick.merrells204@hotmail.ca. 

WHY DO CATS STARE?

Cats certainly have some very odd behaviours, and a cat's ability to stare for long periods of time is one such quirk. Cats might stare at their owners for various reasons, including affection, communication, hunting instinct, fear or stress, and simple curiosity. Cats can also appear to be gazing in a Zen-like trance at absolutely nothing!

Below are some explanations as to why cats can engage in intense stares.

WHEN A CAT STARES AT YOU

Requesting Food

The first and most obvious reason why your cat is staring at you is to convince you to feed him. If you notice that it is usually close to meal time that your pet starts staring at you with a laser-like focus, your cat is likely trying to communicate to you that it is time to fill up the food bowl. Other ways cats may try to prompt their owners to feed them is by becoming vocal or rubbing up against their human's legs.

Asking for Attention

Your cat might stare at you to get your attention, especially if it has been some time since you have engaged with your cat. Or your pet might just be bored. Once your cat has caught your attention, a slow blink, a meow, rolling over, or rubbing against you or nearby items might follow. These actions signal your pet would like some playtime or pampering—or both.

Showing of Affection

Cats can display affection by making eye contact with you and performing soft blinks. The very act of looking directly at you and voluntarily blinking indicates the cat's feeling for you—you make the cat feel safe and comfortable enough for them to close their eyes.

Soliciting Play

Some cats try to initiate play by crouching down, staring at you with dilated pupils, and swishing their tail back and forth. The cat might then sprint toward you, swat at your foot, or veer off before making contact. This behaviour indicates the cat wants to enjoy playtime with you. If your pet is giving you these signals, it's time pick up a cat wand or toss some toys and have some fun with your cat.

Signalling Fear

When a cat is staring at you while in a crouched position and their tail tucked in, this is not a playful stance. This body language is a sign that the feline is frightened. A cat hiding under furniture or in a closet and glaring at you intently when you



IT'S IN THEIR NATURE

When a cat stares intensely, it's often a sign of focus and attention. Cats are natural predators, and an intense stare can be a part of their instinctual behaviour to observe and understand their environment.

It's not necessarily aggressive or affectionate, but rather a display of their keen observational skills.

This behaviour can be observed in domestic settings when cats stare at toys, moving objects, or even their owners.



WATCHING OVER YOU

There are a few theories as to why cats stare at their sleeping owners. The most common explanations include affection, curiosity, or even to protect their owners.

It could also simply be that cats enjoy being in the company of their humans.

approach means that something has alarmed the animal and they are watching for potential danger.

Sign of Aggression

When a cat gives a hard, unblinking stare paired with stiff body language and piloerection along the back and tail, the cat is telling the other party that, if they do not back off, there will be a confrontation. The hard, unblinking gaze is a threat to the other animal or person. The other party needs to retreat and give the cat distance; otherwise, the cat might attack.

WHEN A CAT STARES AT NOTHING

They Can Hear Something

Occasionally a cat will stare intently, seemingly at nothing. In these instances, it usually means the cat is picking up sounds or movements that humans can't detect. Cats have an incredible sense of hearing and are able to hear a wider array of frequencies than many other mammals, including humans and dogs.

They Can See Something

Cats also have keen eyes and a wider field of vision than humans. A cat's vision can span 200 degrees and the human span is only 180 degrees, which means your pet has much wider peripheral vision than you. It may seem that your cat is staring at nothing, but may actually be watching a bug or a shadow on the wall. 

Forgotten Ones Cat Rescue

Spring Bake Sale Fundraiser



Saturday, April 19, 2025

10 AM - 3 PM

— Tru Pet —

10520 Yonge St.

Richmond Hill

905-508-1112



Molly

Megz and Molly - Monarch Butterfly Monitors

We adopted Megz and Molly back in 2015—they were kittens at the time, who were known as Lynx and Coal. My husband David and I have had the best of luck with these two—they were already socialized and a delight as kittens, and they have matured into healthy, happy, and playful adults.

Megz and Molly do things together, although they don't sleep together. They sleep *near* each other, which is typically somewhere around or on David or me. We are, after all, their favourite cat furniture, despite the large number of comfy cat beds at their disposal. They announce that it is meal time together, sitting right next to each other and verbally notifying us that their cat dishes are empty.



Megz

If I were to share anything with you that might be considered unique or different about them, it is that that they are my "early warning system" for Monarch butterfly births.

Annually, in July, I collect Monarch butterfly eggs from the garden. I protect and feed the caterpillars, and then release the adult butterflies when they emerge from their jewel-like chrysalises.

Amazingly, Megz and Molly are known to wake from a sound sleep when the butterflies are about to be born. They will run in and out of the birthing room to monitor what is happening and their antics alert us to the pending metamorphosis.

Megz and Molly have been such a joy. ~ Susan & David



ELSA - A Perfect Pet

I adopted Elsa in June 2024. I actually had a personal connection with her foster mom, which made the whole experience even more easy.

I had wanted a cat for as long as I can remember, and I feel like I share a lot of personality traits with cats. For a long time, life circumstances just didn't allow me to adopt one. When I saw Elsa on Instagram for the first time, I instantly felt like she was the purr-fect cat for me.

Elsa was definitely very scared at first; however, with lots of patience and love, she progressed every single week. For example, she used to be very mean to another I cat I occasionally cat sit, but she has become a lot more friendly and relaxed with him. We are still working on her being okay with getting her nails getting cut, though.

Elsa has hyperthyroidism and, even though she is eleven-years-old, she is quite active and acts like a kitten most of the time.

She LOVES playing with hair ties. She will kick them around, throw them in the air, and even play hide-and-seek with them. I kept wondering why I kept losing hair ties. I didn't know why they kept disappearing until one day, while rearranging furniture, I found a hidden stash she had been collecting!

Elsa is incredibly cuddly, sweet, and affectionate. She knows how to cheer me up when I'm feeling down and always misses me when I'm gone. She loves to play, especially right when I'm about to go to bed. Elsa has been through a lot in her past, and I am extremely proud of how far she has come! I am so thankful for the relationship Elsa and I have. I love Elsa SO much. ~ Sophie