

The *Advocat*

The Newsletter of Friends of Feral Felines

Fall 2007

What is a FOFF¹ Volunteer?

All of us who work with this organization have often been asked the question: "What is a feral cat?" Let's turn that question around and ask ourselves what (or who) is the type of person who is a FOFF volunteer.

First and foremost, we are all people who love cats and prioritize their well-being. We also believe that the number of feral cats (neglected, abandoned, dumped or lost cats who lose trust in human beings and who scavenge for their existence) need to be humanely and substantially reduced in our environment.

Volunteers are wonderful people who are able to give of their time to assist with a cause that they believe needs doing. In the United States, less than 29% of the population volunteers some time each year.² Of this number, 35% of these will do their volunteer work with their church or synagogue.³ Finally, of those people who do volunteer, 10% of the volunteers give over 80% of the total volunteer hours.⁴

So you can see as volunteers, you are very special people, no matter how much time you are able to give to FOFF. Spreading the volunteer workload as evenly as we can among FOFF volunteers is one of our goals. This will give more cat lovers a chance to work with our special population, a chance to meet other cat lovers and an opportunity provide support for our group.

George H. Bush spoke of volunteers as a thousand points of light in his inaugural address. Those of us in the volunteer world know those thousand lights "are really 500 candles burning at both ends"⁵. Many candles burning at one end only will bring us a festive and less stressed holiday season. I look forward to working with you all in the coming months.

Thank you for all that you do,

Neva S. Cram
Board President

¹*Friends of Feral Felines*

²*The Chronicle, 12/9/2005*

³*The Chronicle, 6/12/2006*

⁴*Corporation for National and Community Service (Federal agency, no Form 990) called "Volunteering in America: State Trends and Rankings."*

⁵*Nita Moser*

Cat Calendar

Fundraising Events

Uno's Pizzeria, Maine Mall
September 13, October 18, and November 15 (all Thursdays). Uno's will donate 20% of your ticket to FFF with a coupon! Eat in or take out. Copy the coupon on page 8 and give to friends!

November **Chocolate Sales**
December **gift wrapping at Border's Books.**

Friends of Feral Felines Meetings

Board meetings of Friends of Feral Felines are held on the following dates: September 20, October 18, and November 15.

General membership meetings are held on the following dates at 6 pm: October 15, November 19. See page 2 for details. General meetings are educational, and the public is invited. Our meetings have been held at Walker Memorial Library in Westbrook, but the library is undergoing renovations this fall, so check our web site for the location of these meetings.

National Feral Cat Day is Tuesday, October 16!



Upcoming Educational Meetings

The September 10 meeting has been **postponed** to a later date. Susan Britt, Acting Director of the Animal Refuge League, was scheduled to talk with us about the practice of Feline-ality (feline personality) and discuss how it might be applied with feral cats. Sue has been working around the clock with the rescued dogs from the animal shelter in southern Maine and will speak to us at a later date.

On Monday, October 15, Bill Wood, President of the Harvest Hills Shelter, will talk about the practices and

philosophy of this shelter serving towns from both Cumberland and York counties.

On Monday, November 19, HART's Joanne Dumont will end the Education Program for the year with a presentation and discussion on the Homeless Animal Rescue Team's shelter.

Mark your calendars for these informative meetings. The Walker Library in Westbrook is undergoing renovations for the next few months, so check our web site for information about the new location of these meetings.

Office Personnel Changes

In February FOFF hired Tom Ewing to manage the administrative tasks in the new office on Commercial Street. Tom has been the owner of six small businesses and is a cat lover. He set up the new computer and a donated computer, networked them with the printer and with each other, and began to set up the bookkeeping on Quick-BooksPro.

It was a challenge to make the business software bend and stretch for a nonprofit organization whose "product" is happy cats, but Tom mastered it.

He answered the phone and found people to solve cat problems. He set up databases of FOFF volunteers, equipment, cats, and all the other things we need to keep track of. He hauled Book Sale books in and out of the basement, paid the bills, kept track of the income, and gave the board reports on what came in and went out.

In August Tom resigned from this position, and FOFF

hired Torianne Pease ("Tori") to take his place.

Tori has had a lot of experience with nonprofit organizations, including being Director of Tomorrow's Promise Children's Center in Biddeford. She started a food pantry and an afternoon summer lunch program for children in connection with the Center. She wrote grants, did public speaking, volunteer management, and put a crime watch into effect, and completely renovated an old building with all donated materials and labor. Tori also worked for Steve and Tabitha King for a year at the Barking Foundation.

Tori says, "I love to work for non profits because there is usually so much passion about the actual purpose of the organization....There is a huge need for this organization. FOFF has done a great deal since its inception....we can take this to a whole new level of opportunity for this organization to bloom. "

Feral Kittens

Feral cats are cats who are born in the wild or have been living in the wild for a long time and are afraid of people. They do not let humans touch them, and they will run away from anyone who approaches them. If they are caught, they hiss because they are fearful, having never had meaningful contact with people.

Kittens born to feral mothers can be tamed and socialized to become loving pets. But they must be caught at a very young age. Kittens should not be taken from their mothers until they are 8 weeks old, but immediately after that age, feral kittens should be placed in foster homes to learn that people can be kind and loving to them. At this age they will become good pets.

FOFF foster homes socialize kittens by having them around their families and holding and petting them frequently. Even kittens who seem very afraid at first, if they are young enough, will overcome their fear quickly. But the key is to start them in a foster home at an early age.

National Feral Cat Day is October 16!

Alley Cat Allies is the national nonprofit clearinghouse for information on feral and stray cats. Friends of Feral Felines is one of their network of feral cat advocacy groups throughout the country.

Alley Cat Allies declared October 16 to be National Feral Cat Day seven years ago, to raise awareness of the plight of feral cats everywhere. FOFF has participated in events honoring this day for several years, with publicity, cat shelter-building, and other events.

For more information please visit this web site: <http://www.nationalferalcatday.org/>

Fundraising Efforts

On June 10 the First Annual Walk for Cats was held on the Portland waterfront. This event raised over \$3000 for feral cats! Walkers carried signs and walked from Free Range Fish and Lobster on Commercial Street to the ferry terminal, where they were greeted with music by "Side by Side."

The annual Book Sale was held at Williston West Church in Portland on June 16 and raised over \$2000. The annual Perennial Sale and Yard Sale together raised over \$800.

Ongoing fundraising events include enjoying delicious meals at Uno's Pizzeria and O'Naturals. Print out the coupon on page 8 and bring it with you when you dine at Uno's on one of the listed dates, and they will donate 20% of your ticket to FFFF.

Longtime FFFF member Rita Lane had her employer, Plastic and Hand Surgical associates in South Portland, designate Friends of Feral Felines as their charity of the month to benefit from their employees' Jeans Day! Some painless fundraising for the cats - thank you, Rita! We'd be happy to be any other business's designated charity, too!

Tabling at PetQuarters always needs volunteers, so if you can spend an hour or two helping sell our wares, give the office a call.

Shaw's supermarkets are donating 1% of the receipts we mail in to them, so please save your Shaw's receipts (and ask your friends and neighbors to save theirs, too) and send them to the office (225 Commercial St., #401c, Portland ME 04101). We recently sent in receipts worth over \$30,000, which nets us over \$300 for cats! Another effortless way to contribute.

Hannaford also helps us by allowing us access to cat food and supplies in their distribution center. They also are collecting "bottle return slips" for us at many of their stores in Cumberland and York Counties.

Check the Fundraisers page on our web site from time to time for new ways to raise money. Chocolate sales and gift wrapping at Borders will be coming up for the holiday season before we know it!

A big "Paws Up!" to all those who helped with these fundraisers for feral cats!



Volunteers Needed

We have an ongoing need for volunteers to trap feral cats, transport them to the veterinarians or to foster homes or barns, feed colonies of feral cats each day, and help with fundraising.

The Tabling Committee is looking for volunteers who can sell our wares at a craft table, as well as those who bake, knit, sew, bead, or make other crafts. We are also in need of fleece in new condition, 100% wool yarn and some blended yarns or acrylics for children's hats. Please call the office at 797-3014 or email office@feralfelines.net.

For new volunteers, there is a volunteer application form on our web site at <http://www.feralfelines.net/volunteering.shtml>



FFF Wish List

Helpful folks ask now and then if we have a "wish list" of items they could contribute. Friends of Feral Felines can always use more of the following:

- Cat carriers
- Towels and blankets for inside the carriers
- Cat crates (31"x28"x42")
- Cotton fabrics and Polar Fleece for kitty gifts to sell (see web site for finished products)
- Empty Pringles cans

Volunteer Profile: Rhonda Searles



For approximately one year, Friends of Feral Felines has been blessed with the services of Rhonda and John Searles, who temporarily house rescued cats in a feline-friendly space above their shop, Town and Country Motors on Stroudwater Street in Westbrook. While initially drafted as cat evaluators (friendly or feral?), they have housed dozens of cats in various circumstances, from cats awaiting barns to kittens needing taming. Rhonda, who takes a personal interest in each cat, shared some observations about her experiences.

Q: How did you start working with FFF?

We found kittens outside the shop and gave them to a couple in FFF. Then John called FFF. He got ahold of Beth (Davis) and had quite a conversation with her about what they do. She asked him about feeding down on the wharf, so we started feeding down there on Thursday nights.

Prior to that we had built this room (two screened-in areas above the shop) because we were catching kittens. We had bought the kitten condo and had the showroom, but it really wasn't working out, so we built (the enclosures) because we knew we were coming into kitten season. Then when Beth came over and saw this upstairs, she asked

if FFF could use it when it had a feral cat from a colony. That's how we got involved.

Q: Which were your first FFF cats?

I think it was a colony from Sanford. I don't know how many cats, so many of them. Dr. Chris (Allen of South Portland Veterinary Hospital) came and checked them all over. Some of them were really old, some were sick, so, Dr. Chris and a few other people made judgment calls about what was best for them. When he left, we had the healthy ones and ended up putting them in barns.

Then the Animal Refuge League would contact FFF about a cat that wasn't ready for adoption, so Neva (Cram, FFF president) asked me, "Rhonda, could you take this kitty and help with this?" I'd say "sure". (laughs). That's how I ended up with Zoey and Brady. They've been here the longest. Zoey's been here a year; she's got [a deformed] foot, so she can't go in a barn. I can pat her. Brady's her buddy. Brady just doesn't want to be picked up.

Q: How are different cats handled?

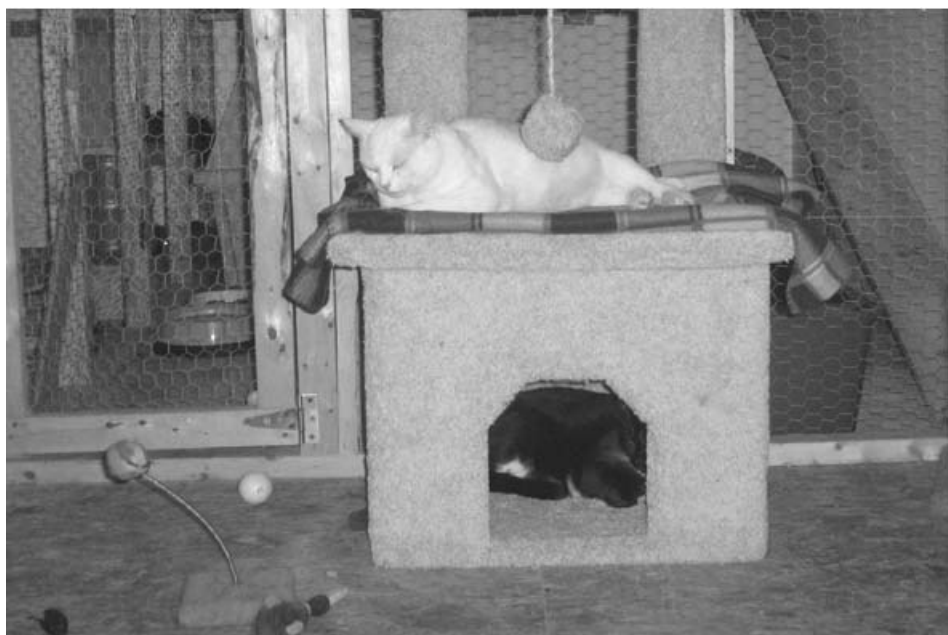
If I know they're going to barns, I just work with them a little bit differently. I have it so they can see me, and I come at night with some wet food; so when they see a human being coming and having contact with them and

feeding them, it's a good thing. I leave them alone, I don't approach them, I just let them be. Then if I think they can be friendly and go to a home, I'll pat them more and spend a little bit more time with them.

Q: At Spay Day in February 2007, you took in a large colony just for recuperation before returning to their colony, but then it was determined unwise for the cats to return. How did that work out?

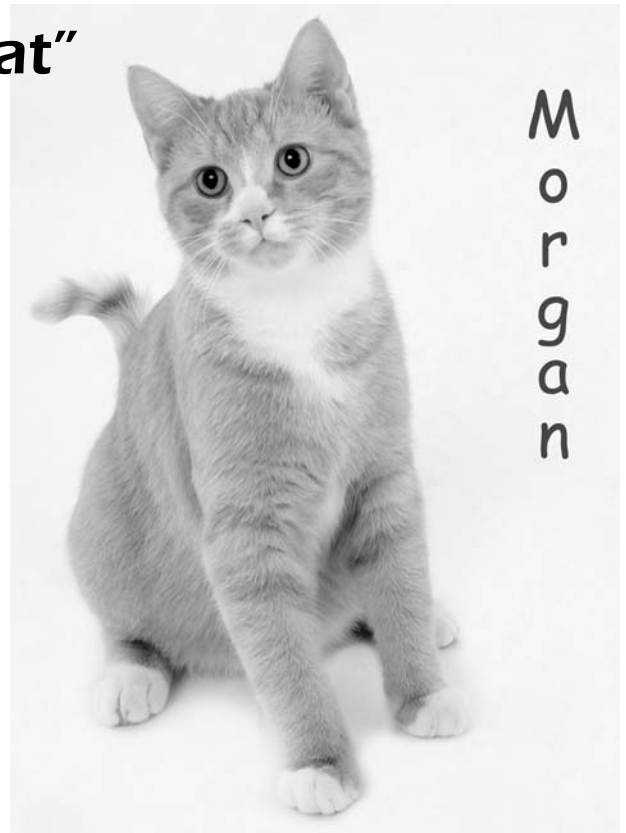
I took 14 or 15. We brought them back (from the vet) and they started doing better; then we saw that some of them were friendly, which we were glad of. One was Toby, a big white male. I was at the Village Café eating lunch one day and I had the sweatshirt from Friends of Feral Felines on, and the waitress asked me, 'Oh, you do cats?' And then she's pointing to my sweatshirt and I said yeah, I do. And then she said, 'I'm looking for a cat.' She was a really nice person and I said, 'Well I have a cat,' so she was really excited, and I ended up a couple of days later taking him (Toby) to her house. When I got there she had toys, a litter box, food, she had everything for him. And she absolutely loves that cat and he loves her. He actually puts his paws on both her shoulders and kisses her.

(continued on page 8)



“The Love of a Beautiful Cat”

by Gini Haines



After the loss of our beautiful orange tabby, Sluggo in August of last year, my husband and I were at a loss to find a male orange kitty that would bring smiles to us, but never replace our special guy. After checking local shelters and ads for kittens etc, we decided to try to find a kitten on line. We wanted to give a home to a kitten who really needed one, so the search led us to Friends of Feral Felines. As I searched through the many beautiful cats and kittens, it seemed that none of them were orange.....then, just as I thought it would never happen, near the end of the page were not one but two orange male kittens. I couldn't believe my eyes.

Then the dilemma, as I said to my husband, (knowing what the answer would be) “which one should we get?” His answer, (as I knew it would be) was----”they're brothers, we cant split them up!” Of course, that was the plan all along! So after a few phone calls and a trip to Old Orchard, we were home with two six month old, very wild orange male kittens.

After a few wild days of attempted cuddles and lacerations.....did I mention the claws and teeth?.....we decided that their foster names were not right for them. My husband said, “what do you want to name them?” My reply was.....”I don't know, but they are going to drive me to drink!” He said, “that's it.....let's name them Morgan and Myers, after the Rums!!!” The names stuck and has been perfect for them.

They lived under our dining room table for about 2 weeks and ever so slowly started venturing out to explore. They are now home owners and we the humble staff!!! We are photographers, specializing in weddings and portraits. We also do lots of pet portraits, and commercial photos as well, so we have an office and a studio in our home. Morgan and Myers are sure that every client is here to see them, and always greet everyone as they come in. Some people are worthy of an extended lap visit, and others get just a “walk by” inspection, but everyone is scrutinized and judgement is made.

They sleep with us, wait by the shower for us and are quite happy sitting and sleeping by the mousepad. I think they actually are learning photoshop!!! They are a joy in our lives, and I can't believe our good fortune in finding them. Friends of Feral Felines is doing a wonderful service, not only for the kitties in need, but for those of us who need a friend.

The antics never end at our house, they romp through the house like a herd of buffalo, and quietly sit by our side and “sing” to us when we are relaxing in the evening. Every client, except those with allergies, asks where they are if they don't make an immediate appearance. There is nothing like the love of a beautiful cat to warm your heart. “The boys” are spoiled and loving every minute of it....and so are we.

Photos by : Doug & Gini Haines Photography. Website: www.hainesphotography.com. Email: gini@hainesphotography.com. Phone: (207) 998-4645.

Progress Report on the Work of Friends of Feral Felines

* The folks at the Rocky Hill Manor Nursing Home in Westbrook, where our trappers trapped and adopted out three kittens and fixed and returned their mother, collected among themselves a nice donation for Friends of Feral Felines. Bookkeeper Patti Rowe, who alerted us to the situation, reports that the mother cat “looks fantastic” since she was returned, sans kittens.

* A new trapping project in Limington will require trapping and relocation of up to 20 cats!

* We’re getting a new, foldable drop trap custom made for us. Our trappers have been successfully using drop traps on cats that have become Havahart-wary, but the traps are cumbersome to handle. A foldable drop trap should make life a little easier for our hard-working trappers.

* Barn owners who work for Oakhurst Dairy recently got one of our brochures and some info on our barn cat program included with their pay checks. “Paws Up!” to Oakhurst Dairy -- their support should help bring us some good barns!

Kittens! We Have Kittens!

We have an assortment of adorable kittens available for adoption. Please check our web site at <http://www.feralfelines.net/db.shtml> for pictures of them with descriptions and contact information for their foster homes. They are assorted colors, genders, and sizes, but they all are wonderful pets. One of them is Felicia -- in the picture at right she is the torti on the left of her two tiger siblings who were adopted together.



If you would like to receive your newsletter by email (which would save us money that could be used for cats), please email editor@feralfelines.net

(RHONDA, continued from page 4)

Then he had worms, so she took him over to the vet where he had been fixed. And when she went there they (the staff) were so excited, they got a camera, because they said, “We never see these cats; they usually go in barns and we never see them again.” And to see him have a home was just great. He’s an indoor cat. She loves him to pieces. His new name is Handsome. She carries a picture of him at work on her waitress pad.

Q: Do you have any memorable barn placement stories?

I delivered two cats to North Yarmouth, a very clean barn. The girl boards horses. She loves the cats. They were kind of shy when they were here. Her son doesn’t like horses, but he likes the cat. He plays with the cats and he’s actually got the

cats to come around. They were part of the [Spay Day] group, two sisters about 6-8 months.

Then I took another cat that was really hard to place, Mumsey, to a dog groomer. She lives in the country in New Hampshire, and she wanted a cat because she had problems with rats or mice. She really cared about Mumsey, and she was going to get her from being in a cage to letting her go, and then letting her go outside. That made me feel good that she cared. She got a cage and put Mumsey in it, and she would take it outside during the day so Mumsey could smell the smells around the area. She had a shed part attached to her garage, and she ended up putting Mumsey in there and just letting her run around, then she was going to let her out.

Then I adopted two feral cats to a guy in Waterboro who lives on a

lake, and his wife doesn’t like cats. The cats live in his workshop and he wants them to eventually come into his house, but he said he was so happy they were so cute. He would open the door of the workshop and they would walk to the very end and just sit there and sun themselves, and he was really happy. There are lots of good stories with barn cats.

Note: All but two cats (Daisy and Penny) of the Spay Day colony were adopted out, mostly to barns. Rhonda currently (early September) has five kittens who need people to come and help socialize them, and she always welcomes help cleaning litter boxes as well. Rhonda’s husband, John, also constructed a very handy drop trap that FFF has used with much success.

-- Jill Cournoyer

OKAY, KITTY, GET UP OFF THAT BOOK – IT'S GOING TO THE FOFF BOOK SALE!

If cats could grasp this information (and who's to say otherwise?), they might be told that those books they sometimes cuddle up to in sunny spots can also be exchanged for the cash that would help many of their homeless brothers and sisters. So it's a pleasure to report that for the past six years the Friends of Feral Felines annual used book sales have become increasingly more profitable in support of our programs.

The larger of the two sales, held in mid-June at Williston-West Church in Portland's West End, was the brainchild of Jill Cournoyer, who with her usual determination and organizational talent has yearly marshaled teams of at least several dozen people to bring off this event. Volunteers engage in soliciting and eventually bringing in carton upon carton of good quality used books, and the day before the sale the haul is sorted into categories from Animals to Vegetable Gardening, with a lot of Romance and Mystery in between.

The next morning, with local used book dealers and others lined up eagerly waiting for Jill to open the door, a team of twelve or so work as cashiers and "floor people" to assist the steady flow of buyers. In early afternoon the sale is closed but the fun is not over!

A new team of clean-up people arrives to put the unsold volumes into cartons and moved, some to be stored for our yard sale, others to be put toward the following week's Greek Festival sale, and the



remaining books are brought to Goodwill. The "fun part" is counting the day's proceeds, which have grown incrementally through these years.

For the last two years, the week following the first sale we set up several tables in a donated front yard across the street from Portland's very popular Greek Festival. Coordinated by this writer, for the last two years we have been able to make a sizeable profit to add to the earnings of the previous week's sale. As well, it has been a very pleasant volunteer experience for those of us who person the book tables while enjoying a front-row seat to the festival's infectious spirit and great music, dancing and food!

Volunteering for either of these events is great fun and good exercise (!) as well as a chance to be part of a very profitable endeavor on behalf of our little friends.

-- Pat Buckley

(Pat is seen at left with Jack, the volunteer cat who came to help at the sale. He appears above with Jill, greeting customers.)



**Look us up on our web site at
www.feralfelines.net
and check it often for news and updates
on meetings and events!**

Memorials

In memory of Marjorie Messenger, from Linda and Wallace Brewer.

In honor of Sarah Michniewicz, from Kurt and Janice Ringrose.

In memory of Phil in January 2007 and Daisy in March 2007, from Kenneth and Nancy Harris.

In memory of our beloved cat Misha, from Ronald and Yumi Dearth.

In honor of Mimi Carpenter on her birthday, from Thomas and Laurie Rowan.

In memory of Kelly Glynn, from Michael and Julie Fuller.

In memory of Charlie and Tessie, from Diana and Robert Upham.

In Honor of Laurie Roberge, from Elaine Packhem.

In memory of Dolly, from Stanley and Jane Sampson.

In memory of Mimzi and Moses, from Elizabeth Snyder.

In memory of Sandy, 19 years old, from Sharon Berger.

In memory of Big Lou, from James and Marlen Smith.

In memory of Dennis Sorgen, from Dr. and Mrs. Richard Baldwin and Roberta Baldwin.

In memory of Mama Ceta, who "died at 20 years -- found in a litter on a road in New York state," from Claire and Edwin Tisdale.

In memory of Ferguson, from Linn Pulis.

In honor of Veronica Foster's 101st birthday, from Kate and Arthur Borduas.

In memory of Bear, from Sandra Lemos.

In memory of Charlie, from Richard Lane.

Copy the Uno's coupon below as many times as you like and give them to friends! All the dates on the coupon are Thursdays.



A Tasty Way To Raise Dough

Uno will donate 20%
of your check to the

To Benefit: **Friends of Feral Felines**

Fundraiser Date: Feb. 15, Mar. 15, Apr. 12, May 14, June 14,
July 12, Aug. 16, Sep. 13, Oct. 18, Nov. 15

Valid only at:

Next to the Maine Mall
South Portland, ME
(207) 780-8667

Please present this certificate at the time of payment
to have 20% of your check's value, excluding tax
and tip, donated to the organization above.

Valid for date listed above.

You can help to further our work with cats by donating online at www.feralfelines.net. Or mail your donation in the enclosed remittance envelope. Thank you!

Q: What is the difference between a stray cat and a feral cat?

A: A stray cat is a domestic cat that has been abandoned or has strayed from home and become lost. A stray cat may be skittish in your presence, but because stray cats once knew human companionship, they can usually be re-socialized and re-homed.

A feral cat is born and raised outside with little or no human contact or is a stray that has lived outside long enough to revert to a wild state. Adult feral cats usually cannot be tamed and are most content living outside. Feral kittens up to eight or ten weeks of age, on the other hand, can often be tamed and placed in homes.

Q: How can I tell if the cats are stray or feral?

A: Observe the cat's appearance and behavior. A stray cat is likely to approach you, although usually not close enough for you to touch him. If you put food down, a stray cat will likely start to eat it right away. A stray cat is often vocal, sometimes talking insistently, and may look disheveled, as if unused to dealing with conditions on the street. A stray cat may be seen at all hours of the day.

A feral cat is silent, will not approach humans, and generally will be seen only from dusk to dawn, unless extraordinarily hungry and foraging for food. A feral cat has adapted to conditions and is likely to appear well groomed. If you put food down for a feral cat, he will wait until you move away from the area before approaching the food.

(Source: Alley Cat Allies, <http://www.alleycat.org>)