



ANIMAL
D.R.E.A.M.S.

KITTENS IN THE MIDST

Last week, Animal D.R.E.A.M.S. received a call from a local college that there was a "feral" cat on campus with her kittens. The cat had been seen for a couple of months, and now students and faculty had found a nest with her kittens. As the caller explained, several people were going to intervene, from taking the kittens (much too young) to "removing" (i.e. destroying) the mother, to taking mother and kittens and dropping them at a farm (illegal and *not* a humane option). Could Animal DREAMS help this cat and her kittens before being harmed?



When we arrived, the mom cat was nursing her kittens. Her behavior indicated that she was not feral at all, but a domestic stray, and we were able to safely rescue her and her four 3-week old kittens. We were impressed by how resourceful she had been, finding a safe, secure and dry location, away from danger, to give birth and raise her kittens.

The kittens (two male, two female) and their mother are currently in foster care; they will be ready for adoption when they are seven weeks old (once their eyes turn from blue to yellow). Mom cat has been spayed and will continue nursing them until they are weaned, and will need a home at that time as well.

This time of year, we receive many reports of kittens born under porches, or found in the wild. Well-meaning humans make the big mistake of taking the kittens away from their mother at much too young an age, often resulting in their death, leaving a frantic mom cat looking for her kittens, while she swells with milk. There is also the risk of a cat bite, either from the kittens (though they are tiny, if born in the wild they will fear humans and may bite to get away) or from the mother who will try to protect her kittens.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU FIND KITTENS IN THE WILD: Do NOT bother them! The mother will move them if she fears for their safety, making it more difficult to find them later.

Call Animal DREAMS, and arrange for us to come out to safely, humanely trap both mom and kittens. The kittens can be tamed and adopted out, while Mom cat will be spayed and vaccinated, preventing her from getting pregnant all over again.



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FERAL CATS: STARS OF THE NIGHT

Founder's Journal, by Yvonne Borsody

When I look at the heavens on a clear night, I see thousands upon thousand of stars; yet by dawn they fade into the blue of a new day. But they are **there nonetheless; just because we don't see them during the daytime, doesn't mean the stars are not there. Feral cats are like the stars.....as the sun goes down and darkness veils the streets and countryside, feral cats appear from the shadows.** Foraging around dumpsters or other food sources, stealthily traveling in our midst, most humans are unaware of them. When I am teaching interns, training volunteers or taking the media on a tour, I show them a world most people never see. While cars vie for parking spaces in front of

supermarkets and malls, there exists a parallel universe out back, at the loading docks and storage areas. After patrons dine in restaurants, hungry cats dumpster-dive for the leftovers. This is the world these cats inhabit, and this is the world Animal DREAMS works in. We are the only organization in the county helping the cats directly on the streets or in barns, by providing compassionate intervention on their behalf, while respecting their dignity. Through a network of generous veterinarians and volunteers, we provide spay/neuter, vaccinations and health checks, and provide food, water, and shelter after the cats are returned to their colony or neighborhood.

Special thanks to our intern from the Horizons program at Miss Halls School, Lauren Melle. Lauren was a joy to have around and made a video documenting a day in the life of a cat trapper.

Early on a Sunday morning, while sick in bed with the flu, I received a plea from a distressed caller who reported that the feral cat living in his barn, who recently had 6 kittens, had just been killed by a car. The driver had slowed afterwards, but then sped up again without stopping. The race was on to find her kittens before dehydration or cold weather set in. Thankfully Krista, a north county volunteer, went to the barn to search for the kittens and found 6 tiny kittens snuggled in a nest. Their mother had so carefully chosen the location. Her kittens were warm and dry, sleeping peacefully and snuggled cozily together. Within **three hours of their mother's death**, they were in my care. Being only 3 weeks old, I had to bottle

feed them kitten formula every few hours, and then stimulate **them to void... I had become the surrogate mother of 6 kittens.**



The next few weeks were a journey from helplessness to independence for this little 6 pack of kittens. At first they hardly moved and slept almost continuously when not eating; they were completely dependent on me. Then little by little they started

to explore their world more. As the weeks progressed, they began to eat baby food meats blended with water. By 5 weeks they were playing with each other. Between 6 and 7 weeks, their baby blue eyes started changing to their permanent color. By then, they were using a litter box and eating kitten kibble. **And now they've been adopted....and I'm caring for two more litters** which have been rescued in the meantime.

Ah, summertime, the time of year which leaves those of us in the animal rescue world exhausted. Saving precious lives is **a labor of love, but I wouldn't have it any other way.**

Many thanks to Lynne Burns at Pondviews Kennels in East Nassau, NY, for collecting hundreds of bags and cans of cat food for us each year. We are *always* in need of cat food.

Animal D.R.E.A.M.S. Board of Directors

Victoria Wright, President

Nancy Larkin, Secretary

Bill Polk, Treasurer

Judy Isserlis

Yvonne Borsody, Founder and Director

Volunteer of the Year

M.J. Zullo

When it comes to love for animals and determination to help them, M.J. Zullo hits the mark every time, as shown in the following story. On a rainy day in March, we were asked to rescue a stray cat **which had been chased up a tree by dogs, and resigned himself to cling to a small branch 30' up for a full 3 days and nights. Bystanders' attempts to lure him down were futile, and weakness and exhaustion were setting in.** M.J. did a most impressive monkey climb, shimmying up the trunk until she was poised just 10 feet from the cat. Terrified, he kept averting his eyes, perhaps thinking of **going even higher, but the branch he clung to was so thin it would've broken under his weight.** M.J. kept talking to him, reaching further and further, with fried chicken in hand to lure him. Over the course of an hour, M.J. inched her way higher and higher, until the cat was within reach and she was able to scruff him and zip him inside her jacket while they descended the tree. Once safely on the ground, the soaking wet cat (pictured below happily in his new home) was placed onto heated towels in a cat carrier, by the soaking wet and shivering rescuer, **our Volunteer of the Year 2008, M.J. Zullo.**

Tip: Treed cats don't always come down on their own. Imagine clinging to a thin branch, as hunger, dehydration, cold/wet weather and lack of sleep begin affecting your ability to stay alert and hang on. Some cats will stay in a tree for days, falling to injury or death when they finally lose consciousness. If you see a cat treed for more than a day, start to look for help. You just may save a life.



Wish List

We are a grass-roots organization dependent on the generosity of our supporters to continue our important mission.

- foster homes for cats and kittens awaiting adoption
- Friskies or Fancy Feast canned cat food
- premium brands of cat dry food (Wellness, Innova, Nutro, etc.)
- drivers to transport cats to and from veterinary appointments
- volunteers and volunteer coordinator
- empty coffee cans
- a large shed for storage of equipment and holding area
- towels, towels, towels!
- financial donations

Animal D.R.E.A.M.S, Inc. is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) charitable organization. Donations are tax-deductible to the extent provided by law. We receive no public funding and are wholly dependent on private donations to continue our important mission. Your donation stays in Berkshire County, helping local animals who live among us. Need a gift for someone? Consider making a donation in his or her name to Animal D.R.E.A.M.S. Consider sponsoring a feral cat — \$100 will pay for all the veterinary care for one feral cat, as well as its food for one month.

A special appeal to our north county friends

Animal DREAMS has received a grant to help with feral cat Trap-Neuter-Return in North Adams, beginning this fall. We will need several volunteer trappers and transporters to assist; training will be provided. Please contact us if interested in helping out.

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B E R K S H I R E



ANIMAL
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Summer 2008



Ah, **Summer in the Berkshires**. After a lovely outdoor concert, ballgame or picnic, the clean-up crew begins. The night shift. As grounds and parking lots empty, out of the shadows come feral cats and kittens, searching for food. Feral cats, wild and afraid of humans, number 75 million in the United States. They live all around us, yet are rarely seen. Both of these adorable kittens were born in the wild and were recently rescued by Animal D.R.E.A.M.S. Read their stories and others inside.