



# FELINES

Taunton & Wellington Branch Newsletter  
Autumn 2020 (No. 131)



## *In this edition:*

- ***Not quite TNR*** (trap, neuter & return)
- ***News of earlier adopted cats***
- ***Harvest Mites***
- ***Wilfie's blog***
- ***Working ferals***
- ***Swimmer Syndrome***

**Scooby  
has just hunted  
down a feather!**



Shadow  
&  
Sheena



Mr Tinky



Scooby



Missy

## Kittens from the class of 2019

2019 certainly saw some memorable kittens coming into our care, including a family of six – two black and whites, two tabby and whites, and a fluffy black and short-haired grey. They arrived with us when they were about seven weeks old, and we quickly noticed that they bonded themselves into pairs – so that's how they were homed! It's hard to believe they celebrated their first birthday recently.

AM

### News from their adopters:

**Missy and Mr Tinky** are both doing great. Our kitchen floor is covered in cardboard boxes and old newspaper, which is a great playground for them. They go zooming around the house in the morning, then have a big sleep. They tend to have a mini zoom around teatime, then a bit more sleep, then another big zoomy time before bed. Mr Tinky is huge and Missy is still quite dainty.

LC

**Shadow and Shena** love spending time cuddling together. They are both very sweet natured, loving, affectionate cats who thoroughly enjoy their food. They have brought me so much happiness.

VP

**Scooby & Igloo** Scooby is a big softie – very gentle and still loves feathers! Igloo is smaller and a bundle of mischief, but adorable with it and incredibly affectionate. They got on very well with my dog (who sadly had to be put to sleep in June but I had all those lockdown weeks with him when I worked from home.) They would share his bed and Igloo especially loved us all going out on the green for a wander around. Igloo has a huge purr but Scooby's is much more gentle – just like him.

They are very well and happy. They are lovely cats and still very close, but with very different personalities.

LH

*Scooby is our poster cat on the front of the Autumn Felines, and Igloo is featured together with him on page 19.*

## Donovan and Daphne - more from the class of 2019

Donovan and Daphne were two of 2019's kittens, part of a litter of four born by emergency Caesarian to a beautiful stray called Demelza. Life took a turn for the better for Demelza, who found herself a wonderful permanent home.

All the kittens were adorable, of course, but ginger Donovan was particularly memorable, in that he never stopped getting up to mischief.

We recently received an update from his adopters, and it sounds as though things haven't changed that much!



### News from their adopters:

*"They are both doing very well. We've had a little trouble with Daphne and her tummy. The vets think she has a touch of colitis.*

*However, after many attempts we have finally found a food that agrees with her and she is back to her happy and healthy self.*

*Donovan is still as bullish as ever, still likes to play fight with Daphne and doesn't understand why she still doesn't want to join in after all this time!*

*They have both claimed the blanket on the spare bed and this is how we find them each morning. Daphne is still putting her hunting skills into action and boy, is she good, we have had many presents dropped at our feet in the last two to three months. Donovan is much lazier and would rather play with his toy mouse indoors in the warm!"*

L&N G

***Hello Friends and Readers,***

***Welcome Felines Newsletter — Autumn 2020 NO 131***

The expectation was that by this edition it would be possible to talk about all the work of the Branch having got back to the 'hands on' business of caring for cats. Covid however, seems to be making returning to normal activities in all aspects much more difficult than might have expected back even in July, when things seemed to be relaxing somewhat.

However, getting the new pens ready to receive cats seeking new homes has in part been done. Rotas for feeding and caring for our residents needed to be sorted out. Consumables such as food, medicines and litter pellets all have to be ordered.

Volunteers have been and are undertaking training and refresher courses on cat welfare and the care of cats that are held in pens. These currently are all held online, via 'webinars'. Webinars are likely to be the way forward and on one level, much easier to attend - no long distance travelling to an hotel, but undertaken in the comfort of your own home. However, you do miss out on meeting volunteers from other branches, hearing how they deal with issues you all experience. And generally socialising with like minded cat people during the coffee breaks.

Cats Protection's head quarters have been tireless in communicating via email newsletters, giving updates on hands free homing cats without prior contact—somewhat more successful than might have been Imagined! And slowly agreeing the start up of some of the more regular branch activities.

Sadly a campaign to stop the unlicensed ownership of airguns is still urgently needed, with cats coming in to care having been used as target practice.

***Please support CP's campaign by signing the  
petition: [www.cats.org.uk/airgunpetition](http://www.cats.org.uk/airgunpetition)***

## **Not quite the return of Trap, Neuter & Return but first steps to resuming activity**

The first tentative steps towards resuming the Branch's 'Trap, Neuter & Return' activities for feral cats saw a day out for two volunteers from the trapping team.

Having been very active in the first part of the year in trapping feral cats from various rural colonies in the county, new homes had been sought, where landowners, though willing to feed a small colony of cats, found that things had got out of control. So we'd been called in to neuter all the cats, and find new homes for some of them.

After being checked out by Mount Vets, in Wellington, neutered and had their first vaccinations, three pairs of cats and kittens were relocated to new homes in the weeks before lockdown.

Once having become accustomed to their new locations, its smells and noises, the large cages were opened up so they could venture out, whilst still being fed inside. During the weeks of lockdown, they were all released and allowed to roam free, with new feeding and sleeping accommodation provided.

What would normally happen would be to collect the now not needed puppy cages and return to the store, for a good clean before being reissued. This couldn't happen for four months.

So on a bright sunny day, we set off to retrieve our equipment. First stop to a site on the Blackdown Hills. A lovely location, where a pair of black very young cats, had been placed in a large barn, with fields all around. We usually don't see the cats we have placed, ferals as a rule will disappear if strangers appear— or remain wary of us. So it was an unexpected treat to see one of the cats. With a sleek black coat and not overly worried about our presence. It was obviously well looked after and had become quite friendly - a successful relocation.

Our second collection was out on the Somerset Levels where another pair of kittens had been placed earlier in the year. On arrival, we saw the daughter of the house cuddling a now black cat, no longer a tiny kitten, but a much loved addition to the family.



Our final pick up was closer to home to a site not far from the Branch's store – this time we saw both cats and again friendly, not fazed by our turning up and clattering about collecting the three large puppy cages and other paraphernalia associated with their relocation. Both cats were approachable, and quite happy for us to stand quite close, taking pictures and chatting to them.



**Panther & Tigger**

All three relocations a tribute to those willing to provide a home for feral cats. Proving that with care and given the time, it is possible to provide a better long term home for feral cats from over large colonies or dangerous locations.

The Branch always weighs up the stress that trapping and neutering must cause all cats. Relocating from a known environment adds to that. However, a new location that is safer, and where there is a guarantee of regular food and shelter being provided, is better than one where overcrowding can spread disease and shorten life expectancy, or safety is compromised.

All in all a lovely day out.

**Cats are mood enhancers.  
Cat comforters during lockdown**

I have been fortunate in that during lockdown I had my daughter with me, and living in the country we were able to leave the house and walk down the lanes and in the fields. I really did feel for those living in flats with no outside spaces at all, I think that would have driven me over the edge!

Life was very far from normal, but we muddled through it. For us though, what we found kept us most grounded and gave us the most comfort was having our two cats. They just carried on as normal, going about their daily lives as if nothing was amiss, and of course for them nothing WAS amiss, it was business as usual.



Dobby above and Freda above right





They'd wake me up for their breakfast, get under my feet in the kitchen making me wince when I had to twist out of their way to avoid breaking anything, they'd still roam around the garden or further afield, but best of all they'd demand their regular snuggles and strokes.

I felt truly comforted with Freda sitting on my shoulder purring down my ear, or Dobby giving me head boops and curling up beside me on the settee. That was normal for them and I'm so thankful to them for just being them, for being the wonderful creatures they are.

I was tempted to say that we love them all the more because of this but that's impossible, we couldn't have loved them any more than we did before this madness happened.

What perfectly fabulous and comforting little souls they are.

## Relocated feral cats - earning their keep

### Faith & Charity

(Farm near Frome)

*We are enjoying ripe strawberries from my kitchen garden this year, knowing full well it's because my kitties are on vermin patrol.*

*(Didn't have any last year, the berries were nipped off the plants while green then hidden in stashes behind the ornamental grasses.)*

SO



### Left: Socks & Sable (Shepton Mallet)

*" I think they've forgotten they are feral! They come for food and cuddles twice a day within seconds of me calling them. Socks hangs about in his favourite spot on the ledge by the window - catching a suntan" DMCC*

## National 'Black Cat Day' this year: October 27

Celebrate all that is wonderful  
about black & black-white cats.  
*"You will always be lucky if you  
know how to make friends with  
strange cats"  
(ancient proverb)*



Stan



Gabby & Megan



Scooby (when not hunting  
down feathers) taking  
over a shopping bag



Bertie

Hello!

I hope you've had a good weekend. Now then, tidying up the garage **has been on the list of 'Things To Do During Lockdown' since March**, but I have noticed it's still there, down at the bottom, together with clearing out the loft. Hhmmm!



I'm not allowed in the garage (or the loft for that matter) as I might get lost and Mr and Mrs P wouldn't be able to find me, it's that bad. Mrs P says it reminds her of one of those "find the hidden object" games each time she goes in, but insists that tidying it is a man thing as the garage is full of those eight legged beasties that we are not allowed to mention. I think we are at an impasse here.

Love, Wilfred X



## **The Three Amigos – Thor, Odin and Freyja**

I can't believe that our Three Amigos, Freyja, (tabby/tortie(ish) Odin (white chin & feet) and Thor (ginger) , have just reached their fourth birthday!

They are still great friends - well, most of the time anyway - with the occasional tiff! They are beautiful, friendly, confident cats and I attribute that to the wonderful care they received when they came to Cats Protection aged around 4 weeks. Although originally I only wanted two cats and came to see the boys, I am so glad I took all three as I couldn't bear to see them separated. The boys are more often curled up together and Freyja can be slightly more aloof, but they are still a friendly little family.



All are still keen hunters and the boys in particular will sometimes stroll in for breakfast in the late afternoon just as I am about to launch a search party!! Freyja tends to stay closer to home and proudly brings in her catch to show us what a clever girl she's been. .

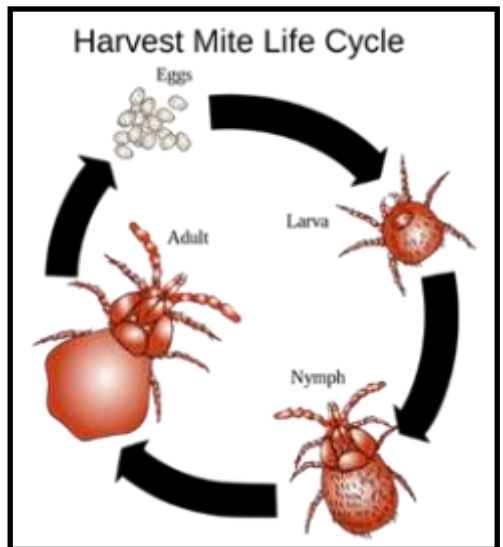
We had a house sitter recently while we were away on holiday and I said it was up to her if she let them in the house at night (they always have access to their 'quarters' in the utility room but I shut them out of the rest of the house). She decided she'd let them in. All was well with the boys sleeping quietly on her bed till 4am when Freyja brought in a live mouse and chased it round her bedroom!! She shut them out after that .....

## Has your cat been scratching itself a lot this summer?

We have been aware that many cats have shown signs of Harvest Mite infestations in recent months.

Harvest mites, *Trombicula autumnalis*, are a microscopic member of the arachnid (spider) family. They are tiny and in small quantities pets may not even notice that they are there at all. The problem occurs when the population of mites begins to grow.

The mites are attracted to areas where the skin and coat is slightly thinner like paws, ears, the abdomen and groin. The tell-tale sign of harvest mites' larvae are distinctive bright orange dots or orange dust-like clusters in these areas.



As the numbers increase, clinical signs such as dermatitis (skin inflammation), reddened patches, sometimes crusty in nature, may be seen. The affected cat may also rub and scratch itself continuously.



## Spotting the signs

July to September are the most likely times of year to get a mite infestation. However, they may not always be the cause as other ectoparasites and allergens such as pollen may show very similar clinical symptoms.

## Treatment

Licensing restrictions mean that there are no specific over the counter products available to treat harvest mites, although your vet will be able to supply prescription medicines.

Spot-on treatments for fleas and ticks do not appear to kill harvest mites. Effective treatment involves spraying the affected area completely to remove them.



Wilfred had a nasty infestation in 2019 so we were watching very closely this summer. Sure enough, he has needed treatment again, but we did manage to start it before the problem became too advanced.

*(Harvest mites bite and feed on all warm-blooded animals and that includes us! Luckily however, it's usually just an irritating bite on the feet, ankles, or lower legs that, although itchy, can be treated with over-the-counter creams. It is, however, unlikely to find clusters of harvest mite larvae on humans as we don't have hair like our pets to attach to. Just please remember you must never use your medicine on your pet or theirs on yourself!*

## Living with Swimmer Syndrome in a Kitten

Swimmer Syndrome is an uncommon developmental disorder of motor function. It is seen less frequently in cats than in dogs but can affect either the front and back limbs, but more commonly the back limbs, causing them to splay out in a swimming like motion. If the front limbs are affected, this can cause chest compression, making it very difficult for the animal to breathe, and is known as Flat Chested Kitten Syndrome. In these cases the ribs tend to splay out sideways.

The causes of these conditions are unknown and the effects can be very variable from one animal to another. We have seen four cases of Swimmer Syndrome in cats we have fostered, but the most recent was Coco-Tinkerbell, who came to us at about four weeks of age, having been found abandoned in a garden hedge. Here is her story, by her adopters. We could not have found better owners for Coco, who have done everything possible to make life as comfortable for her as possible. She is a very lucky little girl. AM

*"We adopted Coco in November 2019 when she was about eleven weeks old. It was quite an undertaking having a kitten with special needs, but as soon as my husband and Coco saw each other that was it! As she is our only pet and we are retired, we have been able to devote a lot of one to one time to her.*

*Luckily Coco doesn't suffer from the chest compression; it's just her back legs that are affected, especially the left one. When young she was very prone to stress, urge and general urine incontinence. We were always prepared with towels*



*and came to recognise that seconds before she went, her ear would twitch and her back leg would paddle.*

*We placed Coco's food bowls on a raised base because the act of bending over causes pressure on her bladder. Physio was carried out on her legs to begin with, until Coco kept pulling her legs up and wanted to do things her way! She is also prone to*

*constipation so we have introduced some oily fish recently which has helped a lot more.*

*She wasn't drinking a lot of water, so an elevated wide water bowl has encouraged her to drink quite a lot more.*

*She has been able to go up and down the stairs from an early age and rushes around the house. She loves playing with her toys and her back seems very flexible. We are trying to care for her in a holistic way, being careful of stress because she gets idiopathic cystitis and is very sensitive to chemicals, so with flea treatment etc we go for a smaller dose.*



**Coco -  
12 months on**

*We are hoping as Coco gets older more muscle strength will develop in her legs, bladder and bowel but we know that she will always be likely to have some measure of incontinence, though she is not leaking all the time. She has already made great improvements.*



*Coco is a feisty, loving, playful rather obsessive little girl. She loves being in the garden and we have no worry about her climbing the fence. We just had to ensure she couldn't get underneath it.*

*Coco has just celebrated her first birthday and is a loved, happy little girl who just happens to have Swimmer Syndrome.*

## **FRIENDS OF THE BRANCH**

'Friends of the Branch' is available to anyone who cares about cat welfare in our area. Minimum membership is £7.50 a year.

Please make cheques or postal orders payable to:-

### **'Cats Protection T&W – Friends of the Branch'**

and send to :- Friends of the Branch

51 Yarlington Close, Norton Fitzwarren, Taunton TA2 6RR

Please enrol/re-enrol me as a 'Friend of the Branch'

(One year membership)

I enclose a cheque/postal order for £ ..... (£7.50 minimum)

**Gift Aid** - I confirm that I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year (6th April to 5th April) it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

Please tick this box if you want to Gift Aid this donation and any other donations you make in the future

or have made in the past 4 years to Cats Protection, ☐

**OR** If you are not a UK Tax Payer please tick this box ☐

**Name:**

**Address:**

**Phone:**

**Email:**

If you would prefer to receive Felines by email, please tick this box ☐

Please do not leave your renewal form and subscription at the Homing & Information Centre at Blackdown Garden Centre. This is not a Branch facility, and has different staff on duty each day, so it could be very easy for paperwork to be mislaid, as volunteers may not understand its significance.

*If you'd prefer not to receive information by post, or wish to change the ways we contact you, please contact Supporter Services by telephoning **0800 160 1012** Monday to Friday during office hours (9am-5pm), or by emailing **preferences@cats.org.uk***

*or write to: **Freepost, Cats Protection, National Cat Centre, Chelwood Gate, Sussex RH17 7TT.***

*Please visit [www.cats.org.uk/terms-privacy](http://www.cats.org.uk/terms-privacy) if you have any questions about how we use your data.*

## Sewing & growing veg in lockdown

There is something about getting out a sewing machine, or setting up a cutting board that is, for cats, as jam is to wasps. As soon as fabric, cutting board, tape measure are set out, one or more cats, hitherto not around, suddenly appear. One cat one could possibly cope with, but when you end up with all three, then the challenge to cut, or hand sew, let alone have room for a sewing machine, goes out of the window. George started it, then Freddie joined him, and lastly Lucy couldn't resist coming to see what was going on. In this instance, not a lot, very frustrating!



### The trials of growing your own during lockdown

No, these aren't new sleeping boxes or litter trays. Turn your back for a millisecond and your lovely new planting trays have been colonised, barricades are needed if you want

any chance of growing your own.

Slugs, snails, cabbage white butterflies, the list is endless.

Add in also the 4 legged!



Scooby & Igloo



**Coco as a young kitten - absolutely irresistible!**  
See her story inside 'Living with Swimmer Syndrome in a Kitten'



## **Taunton & Wellington Branch**

Call 03452 602 397 (standard rate)

Please note our new email address  
[enquiries@taunton.cats.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@taunton.cats.org.uk)

Plus for lost and found please use:

[lostandfound@taunton.cats.org.uk](mailto:lostandfound@taunton.cats.org.uk)

[www.taunton.cats.org.uk](http://www.taunton.cats.org.uk)



Taunton & Wellington Branch offers help in the following areas: TA1, TA2, TA3, TA4, and TA21.



We are on Facebook and Twitter!