



- Search
- Advanced search
- Home
- Local
- Eastside
 - Datebook
 - Community resources
 - Eastside staff
 - Map
- Southeast
- Snohomish Co.
- Politics
- Education
 - Columnists
 - Nicole Brodeur
 - Jerry Large
 - Danny Westneat
 - David Postman
 - Sherry Grindeland
- Letter from Washington
- Inside The Times Here and Now
- Nation / World
- Business / Tech
- Editorials / Opinion
- Columnists
- Sports
- Entertainment
- Comics / Games
- Living
- Pacific Northwest Magazine
- Travel / Outdoors
- Real estate
- Obituaries
- Special reports
- Photography
- Corrections
- Archive
- Alerts / E-mails
- Marketplace
 - Jobs
 - Autos
 - Homes
 - Rentals
 - Classifieds
 - Shopping
 - NWsource
 - Personals
 - Post an ad
- Services
 - Your account
 - Contact us
 - Submit listings
 - Send us news tips
 - Seattle Times store
 - Advertise with us
 - RSS feeds
 - Wireless

Friday, December 9, 2005 - Page updated at 12:37 PM

Print

Wild! Cats from New Orleans have advocate in Woodinville woman

By Ranny Green
Seattle Times desk editor

When Mary Jarman Karr of Woodinville flew to New Orleans on Oct. 15 to help rescue displaced Hurricane Katrina pets, she had intended to return in a week.

Seven weeks later, Karr finally made the 3,300-mile journey home, with a truckful of unlikely passengers: 63 cats, including 35 that were feral.

Feral cats — those who have had little or no contact with humans — are often overlooked in animal-rescue situations, says Karr.

"They are the stepchildren of animal welfare," she says. "They have very few advocates, but they're living beings, too, and deserve a chance to survive. Now there is no one in New Orleans to create the garbage they used to eat or warm the homes they used to hide beneath. Besides, the ground is so toxic, most will eventually get sick and die. So they do need help to survive."

In New Orleans, Karr, 46, joined the nonprofit MuttsShack Animal Rescue Foundation, sleeping in her minivan after working 16-hour days at a shelter in a flood-ravaged school. Her job included cleaning cages, feeding cats and searching neighborhoods for pets locked in homes or lost on the streets foraging for food.

While there, Karr realized the stray and homeless cats included a large population of ferals, and decided to make rescuing them part of her mission.

Feral cats, she admits, can be fearful, aggressive, shy or all of the above. In fact, she was bitten twice shortly after beginning work at the cattery, prompting five rounds of antibiotic treatment.

"I started wearing bite-proof gloves after that," she says wryly.

Ferals gradually build some trust when you work with them daily, she says. "If you get them young enough, there's a good chance you can domesticate them."

With the nation's animal shelters full of healthy domestic cats needing homes, not all animal-welfare experts and veterinarians favor feral rescue, especially transporting them to a new state.

Dr. Terri Schneider, clinical instructor at Washington State University College of Veterinary Medicine, says, "All of these cats



[enlarge](#) JOHN LOK / THE SEATTLE TIMES
Mary Jarman Karr cuddles Bubba, whom Karr calls "a real lover." Bubba is one of dozens of cats — many of them feral — Karr brought back from New Orleans, where she helped rescue pets displaced by Hurricane Katrina. Seven of the cats have taken up at least temporary residence with Karr.

Related

[Photo gallery: Four paws, nine lives, new life](#)

→ [Marketplace](#)

Jobs	Autos	Shopping
Homes	Rentals	Post an ad

ADVERTISING

HOBBY LOBBY
Super Savings, Super Selection!

*Celebrating Over
40 Years of Custom
Framing Experience!*

[LEARN MORE](#)

ADVERTISING

[Buy a NWad](#)

NWsource shopping

More shopping

- [Sales & events](#)
- [Articles](#)
- [Store guides](#)

deserve to be well cared for; they can't help where they were born and how they were displaced.

"I would have concern, however, how they are integrated [elsewhere] because they may be carrying different strains of FIV [feline immunodeficiency virus] and FELV [feline leukemia virus]. You wouldn't want to see a New Orleans strain of either disease introduced here."



In New Orleans, the temporary shelter was given notice to close, as the school planned to reopen — giving Karr and other volunteers an urgent need for more permanent solutions.

Karr contacted Judy McCarthy, of Dandelion Dog Rescue in Forks, Clallam County, which has a feral-cat colony. McCarthy told MuttShack her shelter could accommodate several dozen feral cats if Karr could get them there.

How to transport 63 cats, more than half virtually wild, across the country? Just in time, the Humane Society of the United States donated a climate-controlled semi-truck, equipped with individual cages, to the MuttShack shelter and supplied a driver to bring the animals to Forks.

On the seven-day trip home, Karr and another volunteer, Sandra Holder, shared minivan driving duties behind the semi. And like the rest of her adventure, the journey was far from conventional, with early-morning and midnight work sessions to clean cages and feed the animals.

After helping deliver most of the cats to Dandelion in Forks, Karr returned home with seven cats who seemed largely domesticated, and two puppies, dachshund and Akita mixes. Karr also may keep one or two of the seven cats and plans to work with area no-kill animal-rescue agencies to place the others.

They include Trickster, a declawed 5-year-old orange-and-white male who sits up and waves his paws for attention; Bubba, a jowly 5-year-old male "who's a real lover"; and Charger, a small year-old feral who loves to position himself in an intimidating "charge" posture for what Karr calls his tough-guy look.

While enjoying the comfort of home again, Karr says the experience was a life-changing event: "It really taught me what's important in life." She plans to quit her job in the technology industry and become a veterinary technician — and vows to remain involved in animal rescue ... "part of my character now."

Ranny Green: rgreen@seattletimes.com

Copyright © 2005 The Seattle Times Company

Print

[More Eastside news headlines...](#)

Most read articles

1. In Person: Manure entrepreneur Kevin Maas turns dairy waste into green energy
2. Bad times good for evangelical churches
3. Exclusive: Microsoft loses last Xbox founder, mobile PC visionary | Brier Dudley's Blog
4. Junior Seau latest in a series of NFL veterans' deaths
5. 'I Am': Rare feel-good documentary explores happiness and the meaning of life | Movie review

[Most e-mailed articles](#)

[seattletimes.com home](#)

[Home delivery](#) | [RSS feeds](#) | [Low-graphic](#) | [Search archive](#)

[Site map](#) | webmaster@seattletimes.com | [Contact us](#) | [Privacy statement](#) | [Terms of service](#)
[NWclassifieds](#) | [NWsource](#) | [Advertise with us](#) | [The Seattle Times Company](#) | [Employment opportunities](#)

