

## THE STORY OF STUART THE GIANT CAT

*Submitted by Karen Cleveland*

aka “Sarah’s mum”

and Stuart’s chief litter maintenance officer,  
food server and “furry behind-washer”

Everyone remembers the winter of 2015, right? Well, imagine being a cat outdoors.....every storm....in the cold, in the snow, with no loving owners to make sure you had food or shelter. Add in some wild predators wanting to make you THEIR dinner, just for excitement.

To the rescue comes the Society of Friends of Ferals. These volunteers (none of them “spring chickens”) shoveled a long path through the persistent snowfall that winter every other day, to feed two cats at the Digby East Fish and Game.

One of these cats was a gorgeous double-pawed, grey and white “tuxedo” male cat. Named “Grey Boy” by volunteer Gloria Reid, re-named “Stuart” after Stuart MacLean by his new owner, Sarah Cleveland, who adopted him in July 2015.

When rescued in May 2015, Stuart weighed 16.5 pounds. He also had infected, broken teeth, a sore eye and infected ears, and was already neutered. At some point, Stuart had been trapped, neutered, ear-clipped and .....we don’t know his story but we can guess at some of it based on injuries and behavior. After a LARGE vet bill for oral surgery and antibiotics, plus the usual tests and vaccines, Stuart spent over two months with Gloria, recuperating... and eating.

When Stuart came to live with us, he weighed 18.5 pounds. He still had sore ears and a sore eye and was on antibiotics for the next few months. At his vet visit in October 2015, he weighed 22 pounds. Now, you’re thinking.....well, you should have fed him less, you overfed him and he got fat.

NOPE! This guy had double paws that filled my palm, a huge “tom cat” head and large, strong forelegs that were almost as big as my wrist. He was just plain big. His dry food was measured every morning, put in a separate SECURE container and doled out at intervals during the day. Why such extreme measures??? Because Stuart would consume a full day’s ration in 5 minutes then sleep by his dish waiting for more.

Stuart had a food fetish.....or food insecurity issues.....he basically thought about food 24/7. Even an “anti-gobbling device” inserted in his food dish did nothing to prevent him from reaching in with his huge feet and pulling out the food.

Stuart had a fear of loud voices – he would crawl under the couch and gnaw the fur off the top of his front paws.

Stuart would NOT enter a bedroom. If you carried him in and set him on the floor he would quickly crawl to the door, cowering as if expecting to be kicked (which possibly explains the broken teeth). Sarah was really disappointed about that, she wanted him to sleep with her and hang out – so thanks to whoever abused him ☹

Stuart LOVED feet..... if your feet were still, Stuart was lying on them, watching them or rubbing his head on them. It still feels strange to not have his head on my feet while I type this.

Stuart LOVED to sleep, preferably belly up, stiff as a board, feet straight up in the air, or sprawled across my husband’s lap or chest or feet, anywhere he could have physical contact with “his humans”.

Stuart PURRED....loudly.

Stuart had opposable thumbs.....seriously!

Stuart LOVED being touched and (if you could lift him) picked up and cuddled. He really craved that physical contact. Lying on top of you or beside you was his second most fav place to be (after his food dish).

Thank you to Friends of Ferals for putting so much effort into saving Stuart and providing him the opportunity to have the rest of his life safe and, most important to him, fed regularly. You could have looked at his health issues and the ensuing vet bills and said “he’s not worth it”. We’re glad you didn’t! Even though his underlying health conditions took him after only 14 months with us, he left some great memories and stories 😊

Opening your home to a rescued stray is a wonderful experience – they are so happy to have a home and a family – and content to stay inside where it’s safe. It may take time for them to develop trust and overcome their past experiences, but with patience you will have a loving companion and friend to keep your feet warm, or sit with you in your favourite chair and purr your troubles away.