

# Friends of ferals

Helping manage our cat overpopulation crisis



**Nancy Robinson**

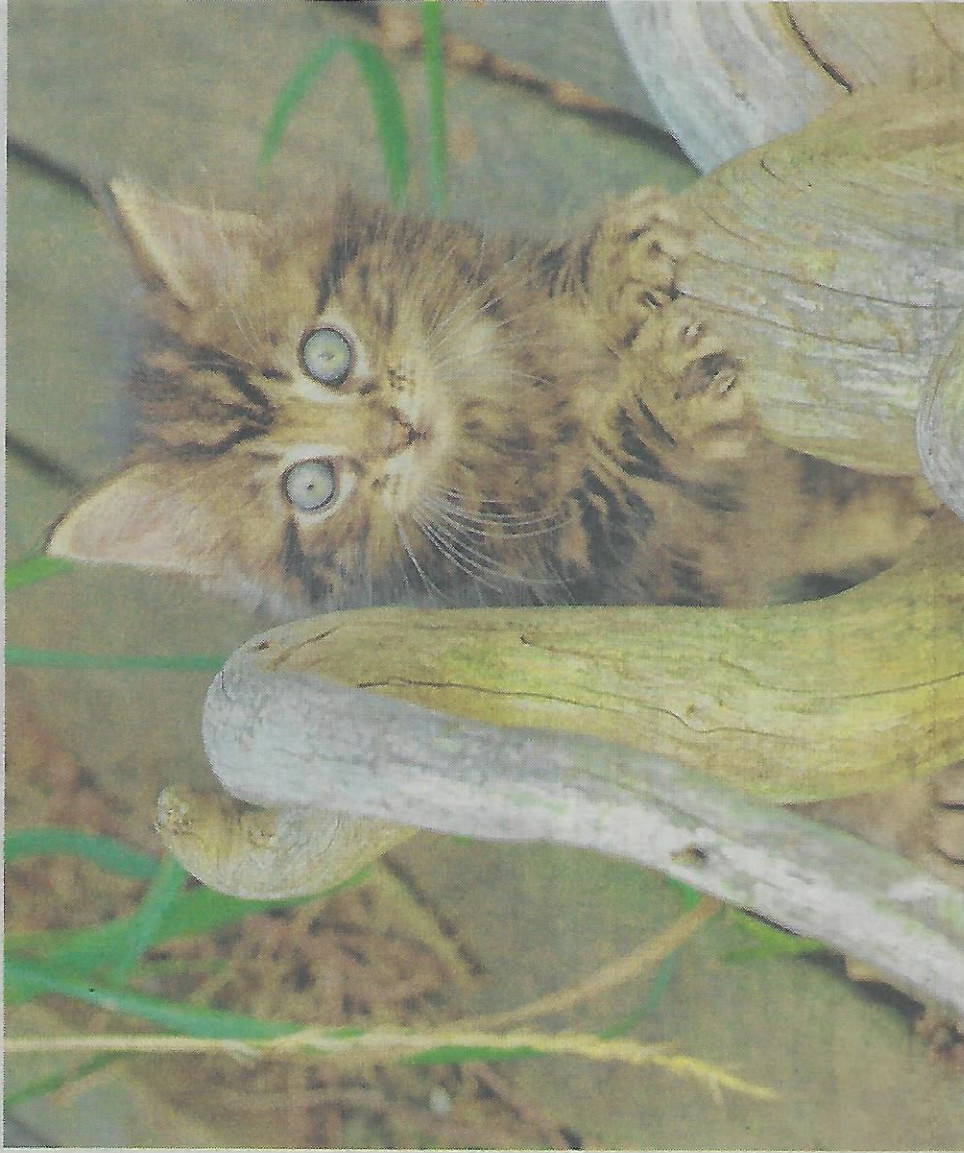
Environmentally Yours

In their two ground-breaking reports of 2012 and 2017, the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies, Humane Canada, identified a serious problem of cat overpopulation. There are simply too many cats and not enough homes for them.

A major symptom of this crisis is the high numbers of feral cats in our communities. Unable to find a home for their unwanted cats, people often abandon them in the country. When an abandoned or stray cat has kittens, feral cats are born, ones that have never known a home. Unlike homed strays, they are frightened, wary and vulnerable, threatened with disease, starvation and brutal treatment from people and predators.

Society for the Friends of Ferals, founded in 2003 by a group of volunteers wanting to improve the lives of these cats and prevent more births, looks after several colonies of feral cats in Digby County.

"Survival for these cats in the wild is not easy," said the society's president Chris Callaghan. "They live short, miserable lives, unless someone in the com-



This adorable kitten was found alone along Highway 217. It was friendly, so it's believed to have been dumped. Society of Friends of Ferals found him a wonderful home and made sure he was neutered. **PHOTO COURTESY OF FRIENDSOFFERALS.CA**

munity is willing to take care of them."

As domestication is extremely difficult, the many dedicated volunteers of Friends of Ferals,

and their families, feed these cats twice daily, treat them if they are sick, and trap them humanely to have them spayed or neutered, then returned to the same col-

ony. The spay/neuter program is called TNR – for Trap, Neuter and Return. They have several dedicated foster homes for recovery and also for socialization

of kittens – possible up to three or four months of age.

Since their founding, they have sterilized more than 1,000 cats. Just last year they found homes for 150 adoptable cats and kittens through their network of rescue groups. In March 2018 they became a registered charity. Their history and services – and lots of great photos – are on their website: [friendsofferals.ca](http://friendsofferals.ca).

The society wants you to know there is help if you are finding your pets too costly, feel helpless when your cat keeps having kittens, or simply can't afford to have it spayed or neutered. Even giving them away through advertising on the Internet is not good idea. "A free kitten is not valued," says Callaghan, "and there is no guarantee it will be spayed or neutered or that it will receive good long-term care."

Of course, cats kill a lot of birds, so the fewer that are roaming our fields and woods, the better! Friends of Ferals covers the Municipality of Digby and can be reached at

902-308-2248. The SPCA

serves the tri-counties and offers a low income spay/neuter program. Call it at 902-742-9767.

Nancy Robinson is a freelance nature writer who focuses on the small things we can all do to improve our environment and encourage biodiversity. Send your comments to [nrobbyn@gmail.com](mailto:nrobbyn@gmail.com)