

Making Ripples

by Amanda Bancroft

As a lover of wildlife and a great admirer of cats, I want to give everyone the best life they can have regardless of what species they are. Since 2015, I've participated in a Trap-Neuter/Spay-Release (TNR) program and have worked with 12 feral cats or kittens so far. Our kitty pal, Solo, is an indoor-only 13-yr-old neutered black cat we adopted as a kitten from the shelter. Adoption is a popular choice for pet lovers, and plenty of our readers have big hearts for animals in need!

One such hero is Mandy DeWitt, who not only rescued one kitten, but three at the same time! An outgoing orange tabby, a shy tortoiseshell, and a smart gray striped kitten were all dumped in a rural area of Washington County several weeks ago. Not yet socialized, the kittens feared humans but were thin and starving. Without a home and good veterinary care, these kittens would have starved, succumbed to Bobcat Fever from a tick bite (almost all the kittens we worked with last year died from this disease and were diagnosed by a veterinarian), or, if they survived, suffered from disease and parasites, killed wildlife, and produced unloved offspring. Weeks of interacting with them at meal times encouraged them to become social and even friendly, making adoption possible. When we sent out a call for adoptive homes, Mandy responded and offered to take in all three kittens. Keeping the litter together was important to Mandy. "I think animals care about family relationships more than we give them credit for," she said. Her "fur babies" are happy in their new home and have settled into a good life. "I think they are really enjoying themselves. There's plenty of fun spaces for them to play safely."

Of the 12 cats I've socialized and adopted out or helped to TNR, six have found adoptive homes in the region (we thankfully have nobody up for adoption right now). If you want a companion animal, consider adoption! There are many shelters and events in Northwest Arkansas that encourage adoption and provide education on spaying, neutering, and raising a healthy pet. Reducing the feral cat population makes a difference for adoptive owners, wildlife, and especially the cats themselves!

Amanda Bancroft is a writer, artist, and naturalist building an off-grid cottage for land conservation on Kessler Mountain. She and her husband Ryan blog about their adventures and offer a solar-hosted online educational center on how to make a difference with everyday choices at: www.RipplesBlog.org.