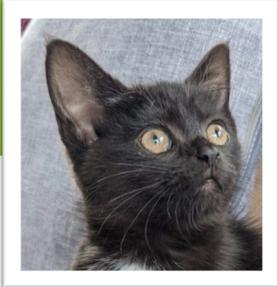


WISCKers

News for supporters of Western Isles Support for Cats and Kittens (WISCK) (Edition 6, August 2021)



Kittens, kittens, kittens

We made a cautious start to 2021 (and who didn't?) so you might think it's a while since you heard from us, but things have been far from quiet behind the scenes.

We've had the building of new pens (see story inside) and some emergency healthcare issues to deal with, and then a very late start to the kitten season.

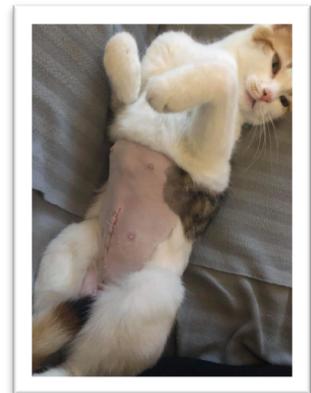
When it did start, it was like a dam bursting. Not only were we collecting kittens from locations in Harris, Point, the Westside and Stornoway, but the cats we trapped as part of our TNR (see inside) activity also included a ridiculously high number of pregnant females.

So, kittens galore, being born in care, coming into care, getting socialised and, finally, moving on to their new homes.

Here's some of the July batch, re-homed to happy families in the past few weeks.



Emergency room Mimic



Every now and then we are faced with a truly difficult situation, which means we have to make decisions no cat owner wants to be faced with.

Foster cat Mimic gave us one of those decisions early this year, after she had already undergone not one but TWO spaying operations. The vets had first tried to spay her in a routine procedure last year, but couldn't find her ovaries, so she went back for a second op using a lateral incision - a much more invasive procedure.

During this procedure the vets found that she only had one ovary and one kidney. They removed the ovary but, once back with her foster carer (who had fallen in love with her) she continued to go into heat, meaning at least some ovary cells were still active.

Mimic was referred by our island vets to the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary studies in Edinburgh and a kind volunteer accompanied her for another prolonged (and expensive) procedure, which was funded from our own reserves and by our many generous supporters.

Sadly even the top clinicians in Edinburgh weren't able to find the very few cells responsible for the symptoms, so we're currently waiting to see whether Mimic settles and can live comfortably with her condition.

Trap, neuter, return (TNR)

One of the main purposes for setting up WISCK in 2020 was to continue essential work neutering the large feral population of cats in the islands. This is work which had been left behind by the national charity when they withdrew from the islands in 2019, but work that could not be left undone.

Islands suffer disproportionately from the problems that come with feral cats. The difficulty of access to veterinary services in remote areas means that people who love cats will put out food, but can't get cats neutered or treated for illnesses.

Colonies breed freely, with interbreeding contributing to genetic weaknesses that bring further health problems. Mother cats are often pregnant within a very short time after having kittens and this also shortens their lifespan and adds further to the long-term problem of overpopulation.

There's also the issue of mother cats, especially when they're feeding kittens, hunting ground-nesting birds including some of the iconic species like corncrake, skylarks and terns.

For that reason, Scottish Natural Heritage has issued us a licence to trap, neuter and return feral cats. While they are with us, cats can be health-checked as well as neutered, kittens born in care can be socialised and re-homed and even some feral cats can be re-homed as barn cats. Most ferals are simply returned, neutered, to their colony where they are comfortable and highly social animals, often treated well by nearby humans who value their pest-control skills.

Many of the feral cats we trap are actually on private land and we receive numerous requests to go and collect litters of kittens or to trap adults. We always respond to these requests as, in our view, the way that you show your love for an animal is to ensure that they are as healthy and safe as they can be.

But we're also pleased to see that the wider benefits of our work are being recognised, as when we had this message from the wildlife ranger researching corncrake numbers on the Westside of Lewis.

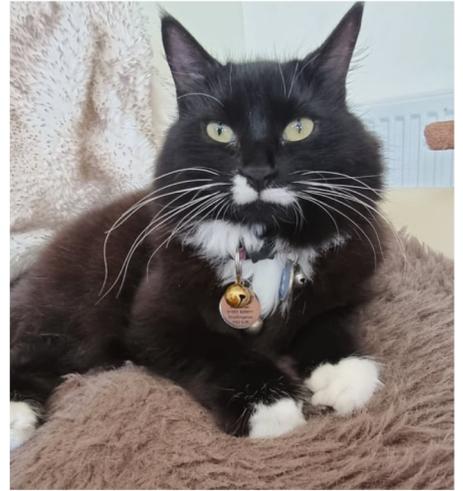
She said: "Just to let you know I finished my surveying last night. The corncrakes have gone up from one last year to four this year! Delighted and 100% sure that removing the ferals did this. Not only did you guys help the cats and kittens but the corncrakes are (quickly) recovering. Great result, just shows you!"



It might be cats first, always, for us, but seeing wildlife thrive as a by-product of all our efforts is certainly a very pleasing result!

Pictured left - one very grumpy girl who was already trapped once last year and duly neutered before her return to her colony. Then she couldn't resist the food in the trap again this year!

Meet the kitty committee

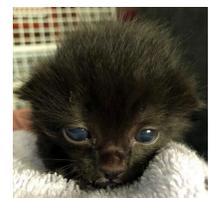


Gracie Lou is three years old and is a hard-working supporter to mum Becky, who takes charge of WISCK's trap, neuter, return scheme (TNR). She was one of three kittens found soaking wet in a puddle in Lingerbay in the Isle of Harris, at just a few days old (see below).

Gracie Lou continued to have a hard start in life - she had to be separated from her siblings and had a bad reaction to worming treatment, which meant the hair on her back fell out. Her foster-carer, committee member Becky, couldn't resist keeping her and she's now an invaluable member of the foster team.

Becky says: "She is the foster-mummy for all the kittens and loves cleaning, cuddling and teaching the new kittens, both good and bad habits. If any care needs to be given, such as baths or eyedrops, she will come over and supervise.

"The other kittens we adopted are now adult cats, but still come to her for reassurance. She has a beautiful personality, is very gentle and loves falling asleep next to you with her paw resting on your hand."



In July 2021 we admitted 22 cats, arranged for three adoptions and have nine kittens currently in the adoption process. We returned eight neutered cats to feral colonies or barn homes, neutered six females, had four kittens born in care and lost one kitten to post-natal illness. We have 19 cats currently in foster care at the homes of volunteer carers and are looking after 12 (three adults and nine kittens) in pens with the help of more volunteers.

Time to celebrate our *pen-pals!*

We have spoken before about our small army of foster carers, who take kittens and adult cats into their homes to help establish them as social, calm animals suitable to go to new homes as pets. That's a team which is absolutely invaluable and many new pet-owners have met one or more of our foster team when they go to see a potential new pet.

But we also have a completely different kind of accommodation, supported by a second army of volunteers. Our pens are not designed to be posh, but to be clean, secure and a sensible way to keep cats safe while they await neutering or recover from surgery, or as they are assessed to see what would be best for their longer-term future.

Until recently we had just three pens at Cat Central in Stornoway, and these were (and are) kept fully active by a team on a cleaning, feeding and cuddling rota. After last year's tremendous turnover of cats and kittens, though - and especially with social distancing and hygiene a greater issue, we realised we needed more accommodation.

Over winter 2020/21 we decided to use the quieter months to organise the construction of two new pens at the homes of committee members, and together with one already completed at another committee member's home, that gives us a total of six available outdoor pens for adult ferals and mothers with kittens.

Thanks very much to Stornoway Sheds for construction and to Andy Gress for laying flooring. We're not yet able to afford electrical connections to two of the new sheds, but we're hoping to get light and heat installed when we can.

The pictures show the first visitor at home in one of the new pens.

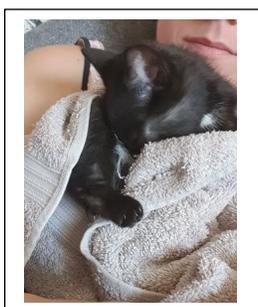
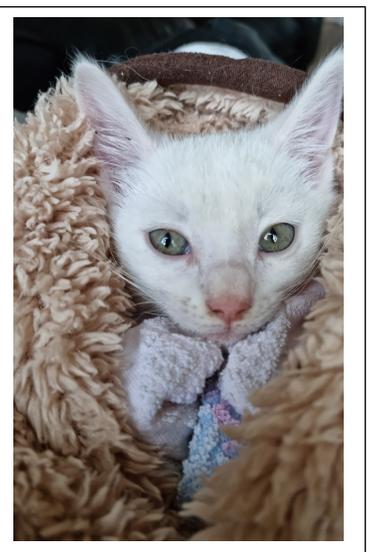


Anyone for a *burrito?*

You might remember our explanation of the fine art of the 'burrito' - a tightly wrapped towel cocoon designed to tame the most ferocious feral kitten. It's come in handy for more than a few of our new arrivals this year and never fails to raise a smile among our foster-carers when they share snaps of the results.

From hiss - to this! And all it takes is determination, a strong grip and a fluffy towel or blanket (well, maybe two...)

All pics by foster carers.

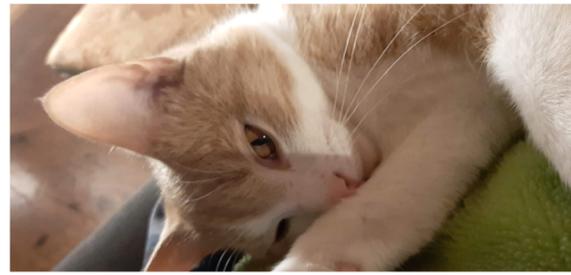
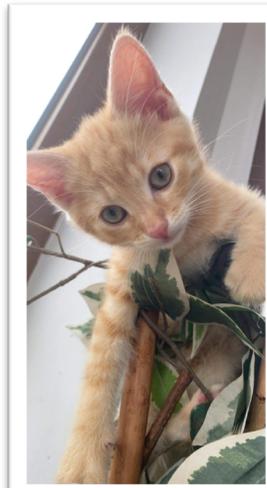


Share round the ginger-snaps!



All of our adoptable kittens are snapped up, but there's a special 'ahhh' factor when we have ginger kittens available.

Here's just a few of the 2021 crop of gingers, guaranteed to put a warm glow in your heart for summer.



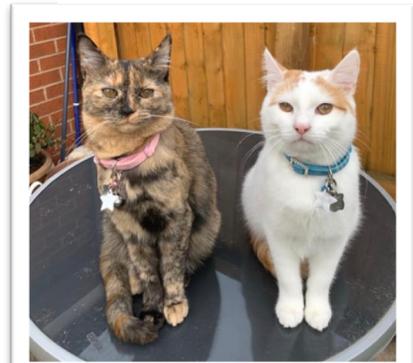
Where are they now? The story of a calendar girl



May 2021

If you bought our 2021 calendar (and thank you very much if you did) you will have seen this wee toot (left) in May getting one of her early feeds from the tiniest bottle...

Well, here is Tilly today, a much-loved pet in a loving household, with brother Tommy, who is also a WISCK rescue cat. They live in the Midlands of England and love playing together, getting into mischief and soaking up the adoration of their mum. We love a happy ending!



Easy fundraising is - well- easy! All you have to do is go and get registered at the website at www.easyfundraising.org.uk and then every time you shop online with one of 5,100 partners including huge outlets such as ebay, Argos and M&S, the retailer makes a donation on your behalf to the cause of your choice. We really hope you choose WISCK - we have raised over £700 for food, medicine and catcare because of the scheme!

Thanks to our supporters!

Western Isles Support for Cats and Kittens

Has been paid

£105.53

£722.84

Total raised to date

by

64

supporters



DONATE: PayPal: wisck2020@gmail.com | RBS SC:83-27-12 | AN: 15988656

AMAZON WISH LIST: <http://bit.ly/wisck-wishlist>

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Any donation, big or small is hugely appreciated!



Follow us on Facebook & Instagram to keep up to date with our work & fundraising events:

[@westernislessupportforcatsandkittens](https://www.instagram.com/westernislessupportforcatsandkittens)

We currently have several cats in care who would make **AMAZING** mousers for a barn or stable.

