



ALLEY CAT RESCUE

AN ALLIANCE FOR CAT PROTECTION

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Compassionate Conservation

A New Approach Emerges, Challenging Tradition to See Each Tree Within the Forrest.

By Maggie Funkhouser

Whether the topic is feral cats or Bengal tigers, bald eagles or pigeons, when it comes to managing animal populations, the traditional school of conservation thinking tends to choose lethal practices as its primary tool. However, with new research and evidence showing that nonhuman animals are more similar to humans than not—studies proving these species think, feel, and possess sentience—traditional conservation is being challenged by a new ethos called “compassionate conservation,” where *nonlethal* practices are the focus.

Traditional conservation approaches for managing nonhuman animal populations are based on the notion that these individuals have simple minds; like machines, they only respond to stimuli, are not feeling creatures, and are “lesser” in some way. This school of thought is also hunting centric, with a firm focus on the herd or population as a whole. The idea is that if the integrity of the whole is thriving, the well-being of the individual is not necessary to consider.

Evolving views

With mounting evidence that nonhuman animals are capable of feeling a wide range of emotions, from joy and happiness to sadness, sorrow, and even post-traumatic stress, some scientists are beginning to shift their views of these species; and with that, they are shifting their management practices (“Animal Sentience,” 2018). This change in mindset is questioning the status quo regarding ethics and moving towards conservation that again takes into account the value of individual life with a focus on “do no harm.”



Compassionate conservation is a new way of thinking about biodiversity that considers individuals and populations as a whole.

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From the Desk of Louise Holton



The African wildcat, *Felis silvestris lybica*. Photo: ©www.jameswarwick.co.uk

A few years ago Alley Cat Rescue supported a group TNR'ing at the Sun City resort, bordering the Pilanesberg Game Reserve near Johannesburg, where there are African wildcats living. It would be a terrible tragedy to allow the small wildcats of the world, especially this one from whom our domestic cats descend, to simply die out. We are again working with scientists, the veterinary community, and TNR groups in South Africa around Kruger National Park.

ACR is taking action to save this magnificent and unique small cat... and we need your help!

Wildcats look remarkably like our tabbies of today. In fact the very first time I saw one, many years ago in Kruger Park, I thought she must be a domestic cat who had escaped from a ranger's home. Only later, when I read that staff are not allowed to have domestic pets in the park, did I realize that the cat was an actual wildcat!

When wild and domestic cats interbreed it leads to hybridization— one of the main threats to the survival

of pure African wildcats today. Safeguarding the genetic integrity of the wildcat is a complex task.

“Outside the park, one option is to try capture, neuter and return feral cats,” SANParks invasion ecologist Llewellyn Foxcroft told *Wild* magazine in 2012. “The reasoning here is that if a cat is removed, another will fill its home range and thus the problem is not solved. However, by returning cats which cannot breed, the home range is maintained and other cats are naturally excluded from the territory. This approach is, however, costly and also needs to be ongoing.”

ACR is asking you, our kind and compassionate members, to support this bold new project to protect the African wildcat by TNR'ing domestic cats who live along the border of Kruger Park. Our project will be lead by Rita Brock, the former General Manager of the Knysna Animal Welfare Society and founding member of CAT (Cat Action Team). She is a TNR expert and has a long history of leading successful TNR projects in South Africa. The project

will also include a conference of stakeholders as well as an education campaign about the importance of spay/neuter.

Many of you donated towards our previous AWC project and we hope we can count on you again. By working together, I'm confident we can protect this iconic species while also providing crucial TNR services to feral cats in South Africa.



Louise Holton, President & Founder

For the cats,

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“As a conservation community we have normalized the perpetration of significant, intentional, and often unnecessary harm against wildlife individuals. This constitutes a tragic failure to exercise our considerable capacities for compassion,” states Arian Wallach, an ecologist at the University of Technology Sydney in Australia, and her colleagues in a recent Conservation Biology essay. With increasing evidence surrounding the “widespread sentience and sapience of many nonhuman animals,” they state, “practices that categorically prioritize collectives without due consideration for the wellbeing of individuals are ethically untenable” (Wallach, Arian et. al., 2018).



Some believe all cats should be confined and outdoor access limited to

Traditional conservationists are having a hard time accepting this new approach of compassion and empathy in managing animal populations. They are holding onto the belief that in order to protect biodiversity, compassion has its limits and killing is necessary. Director of the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center, Peter Marra, and bird advocate Chris Santella strongly support this idea. In their latest book, *Cat Wars: The Devastating Consequences of a Cuddly Killer*, Marra and Santella write, “From a conservation ecology perspective, the most desirable solution seems clear—remove all free-ranging cats from the landscape by any means necessary” (Marra and Santella, 2016).

“...practices that categorically prioritize collectives without due consideration for the wellbeing of individuals are ethically untenable.”

This new debate among scientists has placed conservation management practices on a spectrum with lethal methods at one end, occasional killing in the middle, and abstaining from lethal force at the other end of the scale. Dr. Mark Beckoff, Professor Emeritus of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of Colorado, Boulder and a pronounced leader of the compassionate conservation movement, responds to Marra and Santella’s *Cat Wars*, stating, “The phrase ‘by any means necessary’ is among the most reprehensible statements I’ve ever seen, and of course, in addition to it being morally repugnant, it is not based on science and it won’t work. And, think about the horrific lesson it offers to youngsters. The authors totally ignore the cognitive and emotional lives of cats, and view them as mere disposable objects” (Beckoff, 2016).

Does killing work?

Scientists in favor of the compassionate conservation approach point out that killing often allows root problems to be ignored. It’s easier to kill than to formulate solutions to the underlying causes; lethal practices simply provide a band-aid fix. Whereas the new school of thought looks towards ecology, natural processes, and the interconnectedness of all living things to find the answers that will most likely be more effective in providing long-term solutions over repeated killing. These scientists propose allowing nature to “take its course,” to allow natural processes within an ecosystem to self manage.

For example, instead of killing apex species to manage a habitat, compassionate conservation would allow these species to naturally regulate

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the ecosystems in which they reside—scientists would observe more and interact less. Alley Cat Rescue strongly agrees with this school of thought and therefore advocates Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) as the preferred method of managing feral cat populations because TNR programs—following sterilization—allow natural attrition to reduce local cat colonies.

Embracing humane methods

Killing has a dramatic effect on the environment, often with counterproductive results, TNR provides a practical solution with a more subtle approach to interacting with the environment. TNR stops the breeding cycle without wholly removing animals from the ecosystem, which prevents the creation of open niches and keeps nature in balance. TNR also recognizes the individual by providing care to every cat who is trapped. In fact, surveys show that most individuals would rather see a cat sterilized and returned to his or her outdoor home over having the cat trapped and killed.

More communities and agencies are embracing this humane, nonlethal method of managing community cats, not only because it preserves the sanctity of innocent life—do no harm—but also because it provides an effective, long-term solution. Unlike catch-and-kill, which only provides a temporary fix and often requires repeated attempts, TNR programs stabilize populations, improve the overall health of outdoor cats, and reduce both shelter intake and euthanasia rates. Additionally, such programs drive community involvement and encourage compassionate actions.

Scientists opposed to this school of thought believe this is a naïve approach in that it's biased towards non-native (i.e. invasive) species, which when left unmanaged can be detrimental to ecosystems. Feral cats are often placed into the category of non-native, invasive species and labelled a “nuisance,” but ACR believes that this categorizing of species is often arbitrary, especially in today's world as travel and trade continue to increase. Traditional conservationists still claim that if not removed from the environment, feral cats will in some way “take over,” despite numerous studies that show habitats fair better when cats are TNR'd rather than removed. What's naïve really is to deny the inevitability of ecological globalization.



Trap-Neuter-Return can be used to manage community cat populations without resorting to killing.

A question of values

Compassionate conservation is also challenging the outdated ethos that some species are more worthy of protecting than others. There is a push to move away from protecting just the cute, unique, and not-so scary ones. Traditionalists fear that due to limited resources it will be impossible to protect all species. They believe conservation needs to pick and choose which species to save. The majority of scientists continue to maintain this train of thought despite cases where non-native species are actually providing critical support for endangered, native species. Stripping away this arbitrary

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Planned Giving

Sample Rates

ME-WOW!

Charitable gift annuities are a wonderful way to support Alley Cat Rescue and receive interest payments for your lifetime. And charitable annuity rates have just increased, making it the perfect time to sign up and provide long-term loving care for cats while receiving a guaranteed income.

A charitable gift annuity is a contract (not a “trust”), under which a charity (ACR), in return for a transfer of cash, marketable securities or other assets, agrees to pay interest to one or two individuals (you!). Rates are dependent on your age at the time of the gift. Additionally, a portion of each year’s annuity is tax-free for a period of time and you may be able to deduct a portion of the gift as an income tax charitable deduction.

AGE	OLD RATE	NEW RATE!
65	4.7%	5.1%
70	5.1%	5.6%
75	5.8%	6.2%
80	6.8%	7.3%
85	7.8%	8.3%
90♥	9.0%	9.5%

If you are interested in receiving further information on creating a charitable gift annuity with Alley Cat Rescue, please contact Elizabeth Thomas, Director of Development, at 301-277-5595 or at development@saveacat.org.

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worth/value system would ultimately lead to less discriminatory killing.

Just recently a US District Court ruled that federal Wildlife Services, a division of the Agriculture Department that removes and kills millions of animals each year, overstepped its use of authority in order to kill native predators in Idaho. The court ruled that the agency did not provide “an objective analysis of the environmental impacts” and stated that federal officials dismissed legitimate concerns raised by sister agencies (Fears, 2018). This case sets a new precedent, not only calling for more adequate environmental impact studies to be conducted prior to implementing animal management practices, but also showing that blanket killing of animals as part of traditional conservation is now being closely monitored and challenged.

Compassion does not exist in a vacuum and not all suffering is avoidable. However, unnecessary and human-caused harm should and can be avoided. There is now some agreement that lethal methods are too often implemented when not necessary and that lethal precedent often overrides genuine species protection. Hopefully this commonality will propel the conversation field towards more ethical, nonlethal practices. In the meantime, Alley Cat Rescue will continue to advocate for the humane, nonlethal management of feral cats through TNR, while also supporting compassionate conservation for all species.



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Action for Cats

This Spring and Summer, aka Kitten Season, has been action-packed and full of uplifting stories of colonies TNR'd, kittens saved, and injured cats nursed back to health. We began with our annual May Spay Challenge that calls on veterinarians and clinics to step forward on behalf of cats and provide low-cost or free spay/neuter services for community cats. This year participating clinics, alongside ACR's Maryland and Los Angeles programs, set a new Challenge record for the

In Los Angeles, our staff have been making connections, increasing their involvement in the community, and helping TNR in some interesting situations. We're making a big push in LA because right now TNR can only be done by private citizens or groups like ACR. Due to a lawsuit, the city and county government are barred from even talking about TNR, let alone providing any resources or assistance toward it. There are currently an estimated 2-3 million free-roaming cats there who could be helped by TNR.

One of these projects involved rescuing two mothers, their nine kittens, and one male from a residential rooftop. Always intrepid, our team found a way to trap on the roof and then get cats in traps down a ladder. A few of these kittens faced challenges with illness, including emergency trips to the vet for high fevers, but after attentive care and socialization, each pulled through and was adopted into a loving home!

Our Maryland crew have been hard at work TNR'ing with local businesses and residents, running the Cheap Fix spay/neuter clinic, and of course, rescuing cats and kittens and nursing them back to health. Finding Kubo n our doorstep- We've seen a rash of major injuries this year, many requiring amputation and extended healing time and rehabilitation. Adult cats Thor, Tatito, and Zoe all lost legs, as did kittens Fife, Marleny, and Uma. For all these cats who'd been living outside, these were life threatening injuries. Thanks to our amazing partner veterinarians and your financial support, each one received life-saving care, was nursed back to health, and then placed in a forever home.



Moms & kittens on a roof in LA.

KUBO



FIFE



UMA



SWEET GIRL



Special Recognition

Our work this Summer was supported by a generous bequest from Jacquelin L. Kiser. Ms. Kiser was a lifelong lover of animals and we are proud to honor her legacy by providing services and care for free-roaming and homeless cats in need. May her generous spirit live on in the souls of the cats she continues to provide for.



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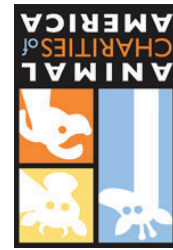
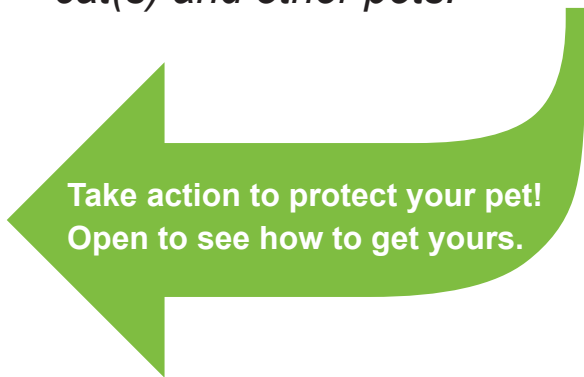


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"TNR is the Cat's Meow" hooded sweatshirt (blue)	\$30 20	S-M-L-XL-2XL		\$
Grocery Bag (cat face logo)	\$10 5	(Green & White)		\$
Tote bag (ACR paw logo)	\$15 12	Grey-Blk-Grn-Blue		\$
ACR's Handbook Guide to Managing Community Cats	\$15.99 11			\$
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Make checks payable to: Alley Cat Rescue, Inc.	<i>Maryland residents ONLY add 6% sales tax please.</i>		Tax	\$
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Mail completed form to Alley Cat Rescue, Inc., PO Box 585, Mt. Rainier, MD 20712. *Thank you!*

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