

In a Man's-Best-Friends' World, DIFF is the **Cat's Meow**

by Roberta Gunderson & Tina Laser

The Dataw Island Feline Foundation (DIFF) is a recognized non-profit organization that was started in 2010 to address the need for stabilizing feral cat colonies on the island. In its first operational year, DIFF was able to trap, vaccinate, neuter and/or spay and release twenty one cats with seven more being adopted to residents. Run solely by volunteers, fundraisers and donations, DIFF has been extremely successful (and clever!) in continuing to maintain the feral cat populations on Dataw and helping residents when they stumble upon a cat family on their property. It may sound simple, but catching wild cats take patience, skill, perseverance and lots of time.

Two years ago, Zena (right), a lovely tortoise shell cat and two tiny kittens, were found by Sally and Jim Marks in their garage on Dataw Drive. Calling on DIFF, a trap with food was set up and soon Zena and one male kitten, Donny, were caught. Daisy, the female kitten, took a little longer because she was still so tiny, that she could eat all she wanted and still fit through the trap bars after she had her fill. A few days later, Daisy had gained too much weight to still be able to escape the trap.

The whole little family was taken to the vet together, vaccinated and spayed/neutered, then returned to live on the screened in porch of Pat Ashton on B.B. Sams for the cats to be socialized.





Zena had decided domestic life was not for her and her kittens and was winning the battle in keeping them feral towards humans. DIFF took Donny and Daisy to the Tabby House for adoption and Zena was transferred to a huge customized cage in the backyard of the Fiorellas. After a month of socialization, it was assumed that Zena had adjusted to somewhat domestic life, and she was released.

Instead of hanging around the yard, she took off! Never to be seen again.

Well, guess what? She has been living around the corner on Island Circle East in Kay and Charles Turner's back yard for about the last nine months. She simply showed up one day, and being kind folks, the Turners started feeding her. She is skittish, but she will come to the bottom step of the porch for her food.

Nobody has any idea where and how Zena lived for the year between leaving the Fiorellas' yard and arriving in the Turners' yard. But all of her caretakers - past and present- and the DIFF team are thrilled to have her alive and well. Everyone feared the worst, but the ending is a happy one.

The Dataw Island Feline Foundation is always looking for volunteers to help feed cats and make vet visits.

The next fundraiser benefit will be on November 6th at the Clubhouse, beginning at 5:30pm with wine, gourmet appetizers and raffle giveaways all included with your donation of \$25 to DIFF.

DIFF would like to ask that all residents please keep your eyes out for any new feral cats (previously trapped and released cats have collars) and call Roberta at (843) 838-7737 or Dale at (843) 838-6081 with any information.

Who's that cat?

This calico to the left is made up of the names of all the feral cats who have been caught and released, currently living the good life on Dataw Island!