

Welcome to the latest Vocal newsletter!

Last year flew by so quickly, and we were so busy, that we had no time to write another newsletter after the spring edition of 2009. However most importantly the work of Vocal did continue and many cats and other groups were helped and supported. An important landmark of 2009 was the establishment of Vocal as an official not for profit organisation, recognised in Greek law to work for the welfare of cats. Its Greek name is Η Φωνή της Γάτας

In addition to the website, Vocal now has its own Facebook page www.facebook.com/pages/VOCAL-Voice-of-the-Cats-Alliance/78926749323, where we try to keep regular updates of our work, and of course wonderful photographs of cats and kittens that Vocal has helped.

We continue to have regular local fund raising sales but must also find other ways to raise essential funds if our work is to continue. Whatever country we live in, whatever our currency there is always the annoying `brown` change that fills up our purses and weighs down our bags and pockets. We can send you a box to store the change and help Vocal too, however small the denomination, whatever the currency, use our box and fill it up! See our latest Change for Change Appeal on page 3

It is also not too early to start thinking about World Animal Day on October 4th, and ways to raise funds to help Vocal. Locally we are already thinking and planning events, and you can do something wherever you live. Visit http://www.worldanimalday.org.uk/events_diary2010.asp for information and ideas. News about our events will be posted on Facebook, so don`t forget to visit the page regularly.

So, from sunny Elounda, I hope you enjoy reading our stories and wish all our readers and supporters a very enjoyable summer, wherever you are in the world. From all of us on the Vocal team, we want to thank you for your help, support and encouragement, without it we could not help so many cats on Crete.

Virginia Swain-Dixon

President

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visit us on the web:
www.miaow.info

or email:
vswain@miaow.info



Devoted to the cause of cats

Committed to improving their welfare and treatment

CHANGE FOR CATS APPEAL

Cats like Po have been saved because of the work of VOCAL. Po was found in Sitia and her leg was so badly broken and infected it had to be amputated, her body was so weak that she had to be nursed for 6 weeks before she could cope with surgery. She is one of thousands of street cats from Crete that have been saved since VOCAL began in 2005. By collecting your loose change you can help us to continue our important work.

The VOCAL collection boxes can be flat packed and posted to you wherever you live. Add a little loose change when you can and when the box is full pay the contents into a VOCAL account. VOCAL boxes accept ANY CURRENCY! Please send your name and address to claire.matthews@mac.com GIVE YOUR CHANGE TO HELP CHANGE THE LIVES OF MORE CATS ON CRETE.

Examples of the work we do



This cat had a plastic lid stuck around her neck for two years before VOCAL intervened.



A treated mum and her kittens



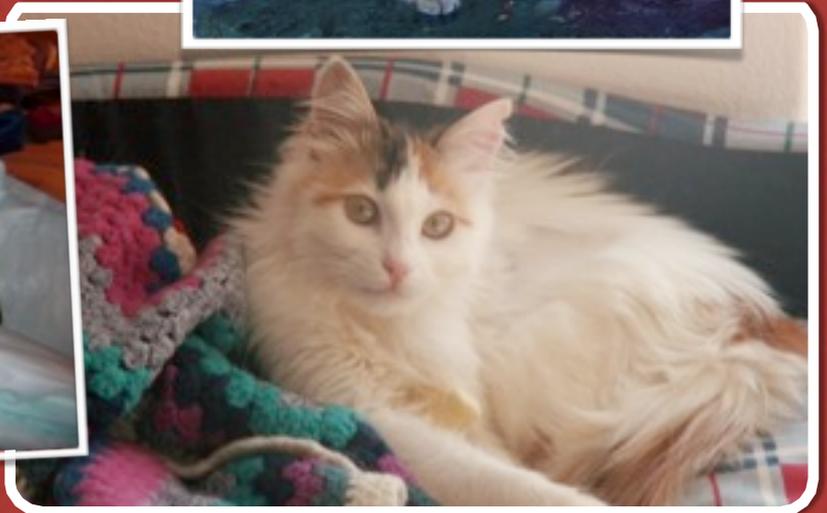
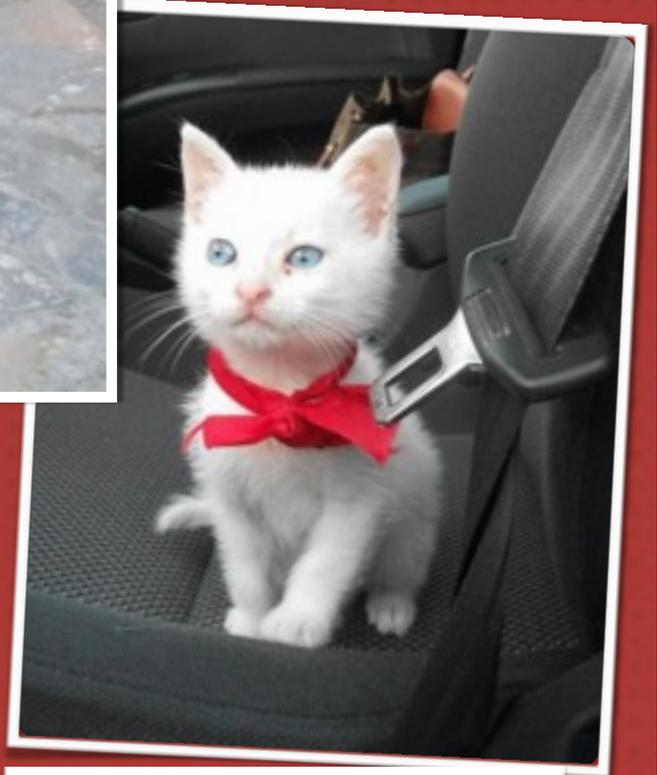
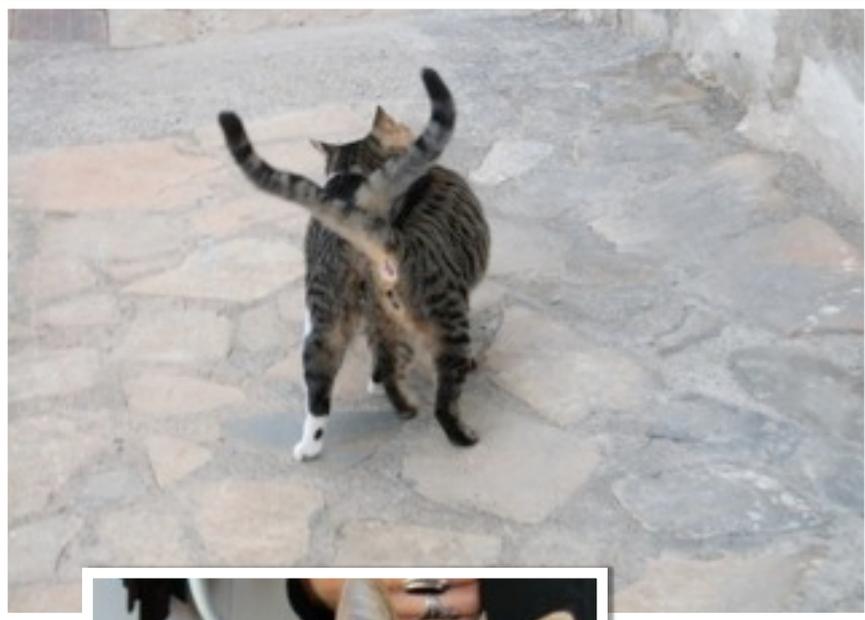
This kitten came from a shelter and had lived in a bird cage. It was necessary to remove her eyes, though unable to see they gave her pain. Now she is happy, free of pain and living with an English Lady in Crete.



One of the many feeding stations



PHOTOS FROM THIS YEAR



Minnie on the Mend

Vocal tries to assist other groups and individuals living around Crete who are also working to help the cats that live around them. Vocal was recently approached by a couple on the south east coast who had found the cat they feed covered in crude oil. They could not catch her, and she disappeared. Vocal lent them a trap and a «slam-dunk» (a small cage with removable floor, that can be used for catching a cat who is close by). These were kindly donated to Vocal by SNIP Int, UK. Katerina tells the story of how they eventually caught her.

“Its a miracle, she disappeared the day before yesterday and by the evening I was thinking the worst. Yesterday morning we were woken up by one of the other cats tapping our bedroom window really hard, something he has never done before. I opened the front door and who should be sitting there on the doorstep, Minnie, the injured cat. She wouldn't come in so I put food and water nearby where she helped herself, but she was really shaking and weak, I think she was probably in shock. Keith quickly got her in the slam cage which we borrowed from VOCAL. We took her to Micahlis, the vet and he said he had never seen anything like it, he wasn't sure what to do with her. After two hours we picked her up and he had cleaned most of it off. At the moment we are keeping her in the house where we are nursing her as best we can. She's not herself as she seems really frail and she is sleeping a lot and we are giving her lots of love. We just can't believe that our other cat had the sense to wake us up, who says cats aren't clever, then? Hopefully she will slowly recover and get her confidence back”

Minnie is now doing much better and is almost back to normal. **The message is, please take care to dispose of oil and other toxic substances safely and responsibly.**



Minnie before the oil incident



Minnie after the vet had managed to remove most of the oil.



Paradise or hell?

The last three years, my boyfriend and I have spent our summer holidays on Crete. Greece has a great history, culture, nature and many friendly Greek people. The weather is perfect, the food is amazing. It sounds like a perfect paradise, but this old splendid and "philosophical" country has a dark, shameful side: the treatment of their animals.

The hypocrisy shocks me, there are so many postcards, calendars, towels, and other tourist stuff for sale displaying cats but the reality is, that the tourist "paradise" can be hell for cats - starving, frightened, sick kittens without their mothers, trying to survive inside and around the garbage bins and begging for food from the people in restaurants and the hotels.

We were on Crete last summer, September 2009, we enjoyed the beauty of that amazing island, but at the same time we felt bad a lot of the time because we felt so sad and sorry for those poor cats around us. It is not fair to sit in a restaurant and eat whatever we want while so many starving little lives are looking at us, asking for a leftover from our meal.

The other dark side of this ignorance and cruelty is knowing that some people and even holiday resorts resolve the over population of cats by killing them, especially after summer, when there are no protesting tourists anymore.

We have spent two weeks on Crete, always carrying in our bag cat food, water and clean plastic pots, and we fed and gave water to every hungry cat that crossed

our way. It made us feel better to help just a little bit in that time.

I know there are some brave strangers, Greek people and organisations fighting to help, to rescue and to give good lives to orphaned animals in Greece and abroad. We adopted a kitten from Crete (she was dumped with her two brothers and a sister in the garden of an animal shelter) and she lives a very happy life together with us and our two cats in the Netherlands.

I cannot like and have fun in a country and to continue to like those people who kill, torture, throw away cats and other animals. I'm sure the Greek government should give a more attention to the problem and take responsibility for their cats and other animals. I think the best way to resolve the over burdening cat population, is to invest in a good neutering program, to educate people and their children. They should learn to respect animals. I think is very important to stop killing cats and other animals and to start to punish cruelty against animals.

I don't know if I still want to spend my holidays and my money on Crete. I really don't like what I see and know about the treatment of animals there. I feel bad walking in paradise, crying about the neglected cats and dogs. I hope something good happens to change that shameful reality because I am sure there are many good Greek people.

Eunice Maria C Mendonça

I'm a 47 year old, Brazilian woman from Rio de Janeiro, living in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, for 8 years and 6 months, together my Dutch boyfriend and my three lovely cats

The Good Samaritan

I was walking back to my home in Mavrikiano after attending the March "VOCAL" bazaar which was held at "The Peacock" in Elounda. It was a sunny hot day and I was looking forward to having cold beer on the balcony of my local taverna but as I reached the school at the bottom of Mavrikiano hill I could hear a kitten crying out frantically. It took a while but I spotted it on top of an empty building's balcony. She was a very young cat and she had slid down a high wall linked to the infants school building and was trapped in all the heat on this balcony. She looked at me and I looked at her...it was a pitiful sight and i thought "WHY ME?!" The schools were on holiday so I did not know how long she had been up there but one thing was for sure she had to be rescued. I went home threw my ladders into my car and drove back to the scene. Having pitched my ladders on a slippery tiled floor and with nobody to foot the ladder I ascended with great care. She was frightened of me but in no time she came to me and I took hold of her and started my descent to which she struggled with me the whole way down. On the ground I put her down, she waited a few seconds looked up at me as if to say thank you and trotted off up the hill to Mavrikiano.

It was some days later that I was told that she belonged to an old lady in Mavrikiano who had spent a whole day looking for her the day before I found her and as for my beer that day, I did not feel the first one touch my sides!

By John Synnott.

Barbara and Dave Chapman fostered a tiny kitten for Vocal but fell in love, and decided to keep her, sadly Lucky was killed on the national highway near to their home. This is their tribute to a beautiful and clever cat.



A Eulogy to a Beautiful Pet Lucky

We Buried her in her favourite Playground after her Tragic Death on Saturday 26th June 2010. We hope she will always remember us for we will always Remember her.

Lucky had a bad start in life, born in a Village called Nikithiano being born the runt of the litter and she was the only survivor of her Family.

She was a ball of nothing in our hands, hardly any Fur, she had Fungus and she was Sneezing, but she had a Twinkle in her Beautiful Eyes.

We both watched her grow into a Beautiful Cat who gave us so much pleasure with her Antics, whether it was Making the Bed, having a shower, going to the Toilet, Barb doing her Hair, me doing a Job, unpacking the shopping, she was always there to help (or Hinder).

I can't end this Tribute without saying she could Whinge and my could she Whinge.

Well Lucky I am going to close now, so Rest in Peace my Lovely.

Goodbye Monkey Pups we will always remember you, you were a Star.

The following story is a happier tale of the experience of a new foster family helping Vocal in their work.

Fostering kittens in Crete

"OK we'll do it, but we mustn't get too fond of them". My husband, Nigel's wise words before agreeing to foster three kittens in our house in Pano Elounda, for a few weeks.

Although we have always had cats at home in England, it has been a while since we cared for kittens and never as foster parents and certainly never without a reliable vet nearby for advice, a steep learning curve.

An expert foster mum had these three for their early needs, (their mother had died while they were quite young), she had done the difficult job of getting them through their early days, but they did still have a few problems when they arrived at our place, probably through losing their mum so early.

Running eyes and bleeding bottoms made me panic a bit, as a novice, I desperately did not want to let them down. A call to Virginia Swain gave me much needed help and advice. Who needs a vet when she is around?! Not getting fond of them soon went straight out the window, who can be

detached when bathing bottoms and giving them all sorts of pills and potions? Not me! How they forgave all the indignities I heaped upon them and still purred in my arms I don't know, humbling.

The good things I will take from this experience will be the trust and affection given so freely by the kittens and the help and support from Vocal in Elounda, generously given with great patience.

What good people.

The bad news for me was saying goodbye, they all took a piece of my heart with them, but it is a good feeling to have helped in a small way to set them on the road to a good life.

Good Luck Girls, I miss you!

