Blossom: She’s Only Different in Our Eyes

Meet Blossom. She was born with a congenital defect called eyelid agenesis, a condition which prevents the eyelids from forming properly. If caught in time, the defect can be repaired through surgery. Unfortunately, Blossom was on her own for too long. Her eyes dried out where the eyelids didn’t cover, and the friction led to corneal ulcers. Ultimately, her eyes ruptured and became infected.

Blossom was at death’s door when a Good Samaritan brought her to VCA and, learning that her required treatment was extensive, surrendered her for euthanasia. Dr. Kaplan refused to give up on this sad and sweet little creature. She contacted ICRA to see if she could foster Blossom through our program, and then took her home to nurse her back to health.

Blossom flourished in foster care. There was no hope of repairing her eyes, but she gained strength quickly and showed herself to be a happy and playful kitten. To fulfill her social needs, we matched her with a kitten named Arya, who helped give her good cat manners.

By early-September, Blossom was healthy and mature enough for the surgery to remove what remained of her eyes. Her first day or two of recovery, forced to sport the dreaded ‘cone of shame’ around her head, were tough, but within weeks she was is enjoying life pain-free.

Despite her blindness, Blossom is a happy little youngster—running, playing, and purring like any other. She and pal Arya are desperate to find caring, forever homes.

Special Needs Adoption: Purrfection is in the Eyes of the Beholder

A kitty like Blossom who becomes blind at a very young age is unlikely to realize that she is in any way different from other cats—all she knows is that SHE IS A CAT—a survivor by nature—and will conduct herself accordingly in the fashion we admire most about this extraordinary species. Even older cats show remarkable resilience and adaptability when faced with similar physical challenges. Our role in all of this is to provide these special creatures a safe and loving home in which to thrive.

ICRA has always prided itself in advocating for the adoption of otherwise healthy cats and kittens with special needs, whatever they may be. While caring for an animal with disabilities may not be your first choice, or even one you had considered, doing so may be one of the most selfless and rewarding acts you will ever commit.
Gracie
Happy and at Home

I first met Gracie when she was called Ruby, the cute but miserable cover girl for The ICRA Catalyst Winter 2015 newsletter. I was not even remotely thinking of adopting a third cat, and of the two cats I already have, one was a very shy ICRA cat, 9-year-old Emzy (f. Whimsy), who was fostered for five and a half years before I adopted her. Hardly the ideal profile for her to be excited about welcoming another cat when it had taken Emzy 18 months to warm up to me! However, the cover photos of Gracie with the stories of abuse just nagged at me. Then after her story appeared in the Oakland Tribune, I decided to call ICRA to say I would be a back up if nobody else wanted Gracie. Lo and behold I found myself at the head of the line, making a date to go visit Gracie’s foster home in January 2015. That week, Gracie moved in with me, Emzy and my boy cat Bodhi, an 11-year-old rescue.

The first few days were somewhat tense while the three cats got acquainted—a closed door between them. Much to my surprise Bodhi wanted nothing to do with Gracie. As expected, neither did Emzy. But Gracie had other ideas. Even though she has a stiff front shoulder and awkward hind legs when she walks or runs, thanks to an old broken pelvis injury, Gracie was delighted to have feline play friends. Emzy still wanted nothing to do with her, but Gracie and Bodhi raced all over the house together. She quickly discovered that Bodhi was willing to wrestle without hurting her, despite his large weight and reach advantage. One favorite tactic was to plant herself with the long part of her hind feet flat on the ground and then stand straight up. When Bodhi approached, she’d duck her head under his chin, wrap her front legs around Bodhi’s neck, and topple the two of them over sideways.

And Gracie is ever creative in adapting to her physical limitations caused by the pelvic damage. Because she can’t run very fast and often falls sideways when turning corners on my hardwood floors, her overdrive solution is to put her hind feet together and hop like a bunny in the back while her front feet run. Strange to watch, but it does make her faster.

Through all of this running and wrestling, Emzy watches with distaste and tries to get my attention to be fed. And speaking of being fed, Gracie is the only cat in my 60+ years of cat care who does not like canned cat food. But she is a funny, cheerful cat who likes to hide in the washer/dryer closet and sleep in the afternoon sun on the kitchen window seat. I’ve added a ramp to the side of my bed so Gracie can join the other cats for their 5-6 hour morning nap, also in the sun. The ramp also means I often have all three cats sleeping with me on chilly nights.

I’m so glad that I broke my two cat maximum rule and brought this deserving little girl to what I hope will be her forever home.

- Susan Ciriclio, October 2015
Dedicated to

- Bob Chrobak from Mary Lynn Carlton
- Cyrena Hillyard from Patrick Riley
- Thank you to Gail Churchill from Robert and Deborah Leong
- My 5 garden cats from Pat Mosley
- Jake from Ming Hui Wu
- James for his love and creative guardianship of his garden cats from Nina Rosen
- Liz’s healing journey from Peggy Harding
- On behalf of Mr. Kitty, the Mayor of Kenmore from Christine Riedell
- Shiloh Melville-Hackett from Anonymous

In Memory of

- Allie and Pico from Theodore and Barbara Simon
- Annabelle Earl from Diane Earl McCan
- Bassett from Bruce and Jean Elerick
- Bella O’Toole from Heather Hanly
- Betty Milioto
  - from Cathy Butera
  - from Denise Orlando
  - from Debbie Sharp
  - from Jacqueline Gamaza
  - from Laura Milioto
  - from Marco and Christina Del Grosso
  - from Mary Hagan
  - from Mary Milioto
  - from Paula and Chris Telmosse
  - from Steven Milioto
  - from Sylvia Weltz
- Bingo Lorenz from Andrew and Sally Lorenz
- In loving memory of Bou, the beloved cat of Chris Phipps and Karin Mosseri from Alicia Dyrwal
- Buddy, 19 yr. old cat, from Gretchen Hayes
- Bunny - Marion, Mike, and Luke’s beloved dog from Peggy Harding
- Chief the Coastie Cat from Ann-Marie Doherty
- Cleveland and Calico from Ria Di Costanzo
- Comet from Christine Shaheen
- Cupcake and Mr. Mister from Katina Ancar
- Dorothy Perillo from Alice “Ollie” Krauss
- The wonderful Dorothy Perillo from Kathryn McCullough
- Ezra and Theo with love and gratitude to Sue Nee and Kevin Cho from Gail and ICRA
- In loving memory of one of my longtime clients, Gloria Thompson from Gregory Anderson, DVM
- Jazzy, our wonderful kitty from Allan Massingill and Ann Bracci
- Jerome from Robert Hagedorn
- Larry, Claire’s sweet boy from Peggy Harding
- Melinda Taplin
  - from Claudia, Gianfranco and Lara
  - from Marianne and Maurice Bihan
  - My dear friend from Emilie Borge
- Mildred “Millie” Mauldin
  - from Anna Holmberg
  - from Judith Giardina
  - from Susan Christopher
- Mozy from Fred Heckendorf
- Mufasa
  - my dear friend from Emilie Borge
  - wonderful Mufasa from Gail Churchill with special thanks to Debbie Sharp and Jody McKeveitt for helping him have some happy years
  - from Heather and Dan
  - Debbie’s dearest Mufasa from Peggy Harding
- Norman Lopolito from Martha Lopolito
- Poppys – Trisha Schaller’s beloved rescued kitty from Gail and Natasha
- Jane Margold’s beloved Poobah from Margitta Gardner
- Ruby - Valerie, Ted and Rowan’s sweet cat from Peggy Harding
- Sport, the great outdoor cat of Liz and Russ from Peggy Harding
- Tyler and Muffin from Charles Daly
- Wilson, Oscar, Jett and Scout from Peggy Harding

In Honor of

- Bodhi from Kathleen Rotlinson
- Dr. Christopher Stewart Macklin’s graduation from UC Berkeley with a PhD in Physics from Jeffrey and Sandy Nadeau
- Debbie Sharp from Jen and Ian Couwenberg
- Kara from Ruthann Cohn
- Karen from Peggy Harding
- Lucy Mae, Mr. Molly, Scoop and Sugar from Muriel and Amy Whitcomb
- Mr. Chips, Remy and Rudy from Ellen McGinn
- Stormy from Patricia Swartz
- Tai Moses from Barbara Harbridge
- Thank you to Asia Whitcomb from Patrick Riley
- Walter from Robert Hagedorn
- Jordan from William Dinger
- Allie and Pico from Theodore and Barbara Simon

Your donations allow us to help cats: DONATE NOW at icraeastbay.org

WISH LIST: gas station cards, unopened kitten formula, store gift cards-pet supplies, silent auction items, food/litter

Perfectly Aged Like Fine Wine
Shiraz and Merlot

These littermates need a new home together. Shiraz is what we call an insta-kitty; he’s a happy, social and well-adjusted guy. He loves being around people, being held, and sitting on laps. He’s active, vocal, busy and independent.

Merlot is a gorgeous Maine Coon-like fluffy brown tabby boy. He loves being around people, but he’s a little shy at first. Distract him with a toy and he forgets his nerves. He’s mellow, affectionate, and likes to be groomed.

They get along with other cats and would be fine with kids and maybe a calm dog. They were born in June of 2006, both have had regular veterinary care and are in good health.

Please ask us how to meet them! info@icraeastbay.org
Alumni Mews

Dexter + Teddy
Best buds Dexter & Teddy know how to nap together with minimal invasion of personal space. They reserve that thrill for their human! Adopted 2012 and 2013 by Gail C., Alameda.

Fiona
According to their people, “Fiona (f. Autumn) continues to be the “good” cat and Drake (standing) the “brat” cat.” Yeeehaaah, good try and thanks for playing, but your tactics of trying to counter our united quest for household domination with divisive gibberish and labels are futile. Oh, how curious and insanely naive these two-legged creatures are! Adopted January 2015 by Lynne & Robert H., Oakland.

Gertie
What a gorgeous girl! “Wanted to give you an update on Gertie. She is totally settled in and doing her own thing”… (which apparently includes herding finger puppet toys brought by her foster mom)… “Gertie is a great companion and we are enjoying her company so much. It was a perfect match!” Adopted March 2015 by Kathleen L., Alameda.

Futura Cat
Future Cat (f. Jake) is poised to try his “hand” at unlocking the mystery of the legendary and irresistible feline paper bag escape portal. Say his captors… errr…people: “He is an amazing cat and so much fun! We love him so much, and so do all our friends. Thank you so much!” Adopted November 2013 by Elizabeth B. & Chris M., Oakland.

Bear + Fredericka
Bear urges: “Please remember this moment. Mom. The girl – let’s just call her Fredericka – is not even acknowledging your presence! This obviously means that I love you more and, therefore, deserve the bigger food bowl.” Adopted 2011 and 2012 by Debbie S., Castro Valley.

Binx
Nothing but character! From his guardian: “Binx is wonderful! He’s been eyeing the turtles (HAVE NOT!!) but otherwise leaving them alone”… “He likes playing with his toys, batting balls and chasing stuffed fish (What else can I do when I CHOOSE to leave taunting the turtles alone??). When he’s all worn out he’s found the sunniest windowsill in the house for afternoon naps.” Ahhh, the life of a busy cat. Adopted May 2015 by Amy C., Alameda.

Henry
Henry warns: LIES! All LIES!! … “We really enjoy him. (Look at me. Who wouldn’t?) He is getting bigger and ever more mischievous. (Aaaaand the litany of lies begins) The other morning he jumped up on the little bathroom table while I was putting on makeup. (I was helping) He often does this, but that day I had a cup of coffee there. (The human’s bad judgment) He was hot and he yanked his paw out, managing to fling coffee all over the wall, mirror, sink, toilet, floor. What a mess!” … (I am clearly the victim here) Adopted October 2014 by Sarah and Jim P., Alameda.

Freya
Patience and understanding are keys to happy bonding with your shy kitty companions. “Maeve is now Freya, named for the Norse goddess of beauty” … “Every day a little better!” … “She’s doing well eating, drinking and LOVING chin scratches and belly rubs and any human cuddle time. Thanks again for all the help. I think she’s gonna do great here :>” Freya says her TOTALLY fitting new name helps a lot! Adopted September 2015 by Ann M. & Andrew L., San Francisco.

Marlowe
Has she NO shame snapping these intrusive candid shots?! Apparently not, but I love her just the same and will, therefore, let her live… if only to please me. “Marlowe (f. Kuma) sends greetings on his forth birthday, yogurt-covered whiskers and all. His outsized personality has brought great joy to my home since he was a small kitten. Thank you.” Adopted November 2011 by Christy K., Alameda.

Seal
Just two hipsters hangin’ out together, doin’ that newfangled social media thing. Writes his new companion: “I am not good with selfies but thought you might be amused to know that Seal has decided to sleep and cuddle with me.” This is a big, BIG deal for 11-year-old Seal, a very shy fellow who was one of several adult and senior kittens who came to ICRA when their guardian passed away suddenly last year. Adopted August 2015 by Rowena T., San Francisco.

Ueli
Does this Christmas tree make me look fat? “Ueli is growing fast! He seems very happy here. He is getting a little more mellow, but he is either playing hard or sleeping hard (hence his foster name, Tucker). He is very sweet and sleeps with his face on my cheek. This is fine until he drools!” (see Henry re: LIES!) Adopted November 2014 by Sage W.-B., Oakland.

Baxter
Baxter goes in for the big catcher’s mitt toe flex on his accommodating human. Life is oh so puuurrrfect when this happens. Adopted June 2014 by Kristen F. & Andrew S., Alameda.

Gertie
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We reserve the right to use your photos and comments to update the community of our work. Thank you for sharing your images, families and stories of your ICRA kittens with all of us!
ICRA 2015 in Review: It Takes a Community of Caring

Every year ICRA helps hundreds of cats and 2015 was no exception. Whether tame or semi-feral, if a community cat needed help we provided it when our resources were available. This year to date, more than 1000 community cats were spayed or neutered, 100 received needed dental, orthopedic or other surgeries, and countless more received preventive vaccines and medications to help them live better lives or to become adoption ready.

Behind each statistic is a warm feline face or a heartfelt story such as Blossom’s and Gracie’s, and not infrequently, a special human caretaker in some way, too. Take Louise, a 90-year-old who drove to and from Hayward and the East Bay SPCA in an attempt to fix six kittens and their mom—one cat at a time, day after day during September’s heat wave. When we learned about Louise and that she was only two kittens toward her goal, an ICRA volunteer jumped in to assist by helping her humanely trap the mom and coordinate the effort so that mom and three of her kittens could be fixed at a clinic closer to home.

Unfortunately, space precludes us from telling you about all of these sweet cats or the humans who care about or for them, but rest assured that many cats are purring contently in their new guardian’s lap or head-bumping a garden cat caretaker’s shin as you read this—thanks to your generous dollars, time, and willingness to help.

Mewsette is very special. With an amazingly resilient and loving spirit, she deserves an equally special person to be her protector and guardian. She is blind in her right eye but manages very well. Petite, graceful, and playful, this soft, young, gray kitty was abandoned in a park with her sister. At first they were afraid of people. After a time it was clear she longed for loving human contact and began coyly rubbing against the legs of her foster mom. She simply adores being petted. She sometimes has a shy moment, but she is learning. Small children, dogs or a hectic household would not work well for her. She is quiet and ladylike and would probably do fine with another cat if introduced properly and slowly. We estimate she was born in August of 2014.

Contact us to meet her – info@icraeastbay.org

Maddie’s Fund

We take our hats off to Maddie’s Fund® for inviting us to be a part of their Maddie’s® Pet Adoption Days 2015, where more than 80 ICRA cats and kittens found homes during the two-day event. ICRA is a proud and grateful recipient of funding from Maddie’s Fund® (www.maddiesfund.org), helping to achieve a no-kill nation. #ThanksToMaddie

ICRA is forever grateful for the services contributed by our local veterinary community. The discounts and generous access our veterinary partners provide are invaluable in helping us stretch each and every dollar to help as many cats as we can. This year, we spotlight the fantastic contributions of Dr. Buchinger and staff at Alameda Pet Hospital; Dr. Anderson at Calaveras Vet Clinic; Dr. Hughes at Chabot Veterinary Clinic; Dr. Widner and staff at Park Centre Animal Hospital; Dr. Yang and staff at Thornhill Pet Hospital; Dr. Bynum and staff at VCA Bay Area Animal Hospital; East Bay SPCA Spay and Neuter Clinic; Fix Our Ferals; and San Francisco SPCA’s Community Cats Spay and Neuter program.

This thank you to our supporters would not be complete without a mention of one of the Bay Area’s beloved columnists and devoted cat lovers, Martin Snapp of the Bay Area News Group. Martin’s column has featured several of ICRA’s rescue cats and helped us find loving homes for all of them.

We are so thankful for all those who brought attention to Ruby’s plight, including Oakland Tribune reporter, Matthew Artz (see Oakland Tribune: A Feline Survivor, December 31, 2014) and photographer Jane Tyska, who spent time taking countless pictures of Ruby.

Our selfless volunteers are the heart of our organization, and we thank each and every one of YOU for all the time and energy you continue to give throughout the years.

After a long, grueling kitten season and a spate of heart-wrenching rescue situations, it takes something like Louise’s spunk and can do attitude under challenging circumstances to help inspire and focus us on the work ahead in 2016. If a 90-year-old can successfully catch and help a mom and six kittens, then there must be a whole slew of folks who can do that and more! We hope you will consider donating and/or volunteering to support our work to help community cats now and in the coming year.

P.S. Louise has asked to volunteer!

AMELIE

This sweet, fluffy 3-year-old tuxedo sporting an adorable milk mustache is as happy playing interactive toys as she is sitting with her foster mom to watch TV. A gentle pawing will let her person know when she warrants more attention than the TV screen, however. Having overcome the shyness of her youth, Amelie now likes meeting visitors in her foster home, even honoring some by climbing into their laps. Will yours be next? Meet her! info@icraeastbay.org
HENRY
With ICRA’s Help (And Yours), I Got More than a Makeover!

Henry wasn’t feeling so hot when we pulled him off the streets in late-August. In fact, he might not have made it if we hadn’t found him when we did. He was filthy, anemic from a severe flea infestation, had an abscess draining from his cheek, and a mouth full of painfully infected teeth. Dental fistulas—small tunnels connecting his upper jaw to the cavities above—were causing the infection to drain from his left eye. The poor boy weighed less than 7 pounds.

Henry did not let his shabby appearance and health stop him from being a lovely, affectionate boy right from the start. Henry definitely is a people kitty who seeks attention frequently, conveniently posing his front paws on your knees to provide easy access to his chin for a few scratches.

The before photo shows Henry at the veterinarian’s office the day he was rescued. The after photo shows him a few weeks later in his foster home, looking handsome and gaining weight—he’s up to 9 pounds!! Dental surgery put him well on the road to recovery.

We think Henry is middle-aged, but it’s hard to say when a cat comes to us in such poor condition. But he wants you to know that he is feeling much better these days, with clear blood work and sporting a healthy new coat. Henry is on our website and ready for a home of his own now!

Please help us continue providing medical care to sick and injured homeless cats like Henry by making a donation (or becoming a foster parent) today.

PLEASE ADOPT US

Ace was rescued at an apartment complex near the San Leandro BART station. He was born to a feral mama and lived on the streets for the first 11 months but became human friendly as he looked for his next meal. He is a sweet-natured boy who loves human attention and to play. Although not a lap cat, he does enjoy being held, brushed and petted. He can be a bit shy to new surroundings but is curious about everything and tends not to hide. He is best suited to be a solo cat. His temperament around children is unknown. He may have a fear of dogs. We estimate he was born early February 2014.

Contact us to meet him – info@icraeastbay.org

Sachi and his brother (Boku was recently adopted – yay!) were surrendered by their loving guardian when she suddenly lost her home. Behind these stunning bold tabby stripes lies a sweet, soft-hearted personality. Sachi is timid with new people but becomes an affectionate marshmallow once he’s bonded. Please give this fabulous kitty someone to stick to for life! We estimate he was born in 2008.

Contact us to meet him – info@icraeastbay.org
Sylvester (his friends call him Sly) is a friendly and affectionate former house cat rescued off the streets of East Oakland in pretty rough shape. But now this big, handsome fellow has the fluffy good looks of a Maine Coon — behold that impressive ruff! He is a sensitive cat emotionally, perhaps from the stress of living on the street for many months, but the old house cat in this 3-year-old is very much in there. While he is very affectionate and loves sitting on laps, he still reacts strongly to certain situations he finds stressful. So, Sylvester will require a home with a mellow, patient cat-savvy guardian. We know you are out there.

The schematic chart above illustrates the importance of starting TNR—and sticking with it—before the problem gets out of hand. Time and follow-through are of the essence. When one free-roaming kitty shows up, rest assured there are bound to be more. ICRA has worked on many successful TNR projects over the years, both large and small. Our most successful large-scale project last year involved putting grant money to use in fixing 200 community cats in Alameda. But just as important, if not more so, is the cumulative effect of ICRA’s assistance with many small-scale, backyard TNR projects that have kept potentially huge problems in check for people who are just trying to do the right thing with semi-feral community cats. Here is one sweet success story about a recent collaborative project.

It started as they so often do, with an email cry for “Help!” to ICRA’s website. Carol C., an Oakland resident, had been feeding two free-roaming cats on her front porch for several years when suddenly they were joined by a third. When four beautiful fluffy black-and-white kittens later emerged from a shed in Carol’s side yard, she asked us for help in trapping and fixing them. It took several tries with conventional humane traps and then a drop-trap, but Carol and two ICRA volunteers eventually caught the mom and all the kittens and got them spayed and neutered. Shortly thereafter, two of the kittens decided that Carol’s house was much more inviting than the shed and moved in with her and her elderly cat, Mitzvah.

As this photo shows, these two kittens grew into gorgeous adult cats, now known as Boris and Shmoo. Mama Cat and one other kitten are now Carol’s beloved garden cats and are thriving as well. Sadly, the fourth kitten disappeared—a common yet gut-wrenching reality when dealing with the dynamics of stray and feral cat populations. We can only hope that this kitty found a safe, new place nearby to call home.

Does Carol’s story sound frighteningly familiar to you? Already feeding one cat too many? Do you need help or encouragement about where to start and what to do? Please do not freeze or turn a blind eye hoping that the problem will just magically go away…because it won’t. Reach out to help us help you use TNR to curb the cycle of free-roaming cat overpopulation that may be brewing in your own backyards.
They call me Luso. Don't be fooled by my broad shoulders and big guy appearance, I'm actually a teddy bear just looking for love and affection. As a matter of fact, I think I'm actually pretty quick and nimble for my size. I love to play, so if you have toys, let's go! Laser light, catnip toys and teasers are some of my favorites. Also, I'm pretty talkative, so if you're looking for conversation, I'm your man. I'm really good with kids and I can hold my own in social situations. Sleeping and eating are some of my favorite activities and I would love to join you for both. I would probably be best as a solo cat, just because I'm a big guy with a big personality. I should be fine with calm kids of any age. They estimate I was born in January of 2012.

ADOPT LUSO