

## Twinkle Trust

Strays are rescued, sterilised and cared for at a shelter



Kieth, one of the many volunteers



services as foster parents of cats also, in which case they receive assistance with vets' bills.

Despite the progress made, a lot remains to be done and Jenny and her team of visitor and local helpers make no secret of the fact that a mammoth task still lies ahead: "Areas that we are struggling with include the lack of volunteers in Fuerteventura. We rely on a handful of people and it would help if more people would get involved in fostering cats and kittens, cleaning and putting food down at a cat café, DIY help, market stalls, fund raising etc. And of course we have many cats and kittens that need and deserve a good 'forever home'. We are not a re-homing centre but we still take in some cats if it is life or death, if we have the means to care for them." Around 6,000 cats have been sterilised by the Trust since it began its work fourteen years ago. The next trip from the UK is scheduled for 25 November, with another pencilled in for March 2010.

The economic crisis has hit Fuerteventura hard like everywhere else, forcing many, including Britons, to sell up and return home, in some cases leaving their cats behind to fend for themselves. The practice brings more work for Twinkle Trust not to mention a rebuke from its head: "This is so cruel and irresponsible. Many of these cats have no idea how to cope with being abandoned and almost none have even been sterilised. I would not even dump a bag of rubbish in this way. Many

Little did I know at that time how **my life was about to change forever**

people think that because they took it in from the streets as a kitten, they have done it a favour and that it will be fine, but they are not" says Jenny on the Trust's website.

The cat sterilisation and care work featured on Canarian TV back in the Spring, when a camera crew from the daytime programme Canarias Directo followed the volunteers as they went about their job of trapping strays and taking them to a special field hospital to be sterilised, before returning them to the area where they were found. The week-long campaign, in which the teams caught an average of 30-40 cats each day, was carried out at the charity's Fuerteventura HQ, a farmhouse in Los Estancos bequeathed to the Trust by a Dutch cat lover who supported Twinkle's work for several years, allowing her premises to be used as a makeshift veterinary surgery for the neutering campaigns prior to her death in 2004.

Among the British volunteers who help out during their holidays in Fuerteventura is Cath Erine, who is due over again shortly for another stint. Cath

explained to *Island Connections* her decision to get involved: "I first volunteered in November 2008 and did the night shift, my partner then volunteered in February and then I visited in July/August this year to bring back three cats to the UK. One of them has moved in with us as she had a number of disabilities which meant releasing her back onto the streets was not an option. Sadly not enough homes are available on the Island at present - but the cost of bringing them back to the UK makes it only possible for very special cases. I am due to volunteer again in November - again doing the night shift and hopefully this year it will be a bit warmer! The work of the Trust means that I can feel confident to visit the island and not be distressed by the animals. A number of other people are now considering visits as a result of me sharing this information."

Another helper is Beverley Sadler from Yorkshire, who visited Caleta de Fuste with her family for the first time in 2006 and has returned at least once a year since: "We noticed the presence of Twinkle Trust and their Cat Cafés from our very first visit and became involved when we contacted them in the UK whilst actually on holiday, when we spotted very poorly young cats in distress and in urgent need of help. Twinkle Trust's assistance was immediate and, with the help of a local volunteer, we personally caught and delivered these cats who received veterinary care and a 'home' - without it they would surely not have survived. We have kept in touch with the Trust ever since and have met some fantastic people in the process. It can be distressing while on holiday, when you are there to have a good time, to see the sorry plight of some of these cats. We find it reassuring to know that someone is trying to help!" Beverley is not the only one in the family who helps out when over in the Canaries. Daughter Emma (9) is also involved and has carried word back to her school chums in the form of a talk on the work of Twinkle Trust to her class.

*Anyone who is planning a visit to Fuerteventura or already lives there and would like to give a helping hand can contact Jenny via the Twinkle Trust website on [http://www.twinkletrust.info/how\\_you\\_can\\_help\\_in\\_fuerteventura.html](http://www.twinkletrust.info/how_you_can_help_in_fuerteventura.html).*



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