

## Room at the Inn

A motel-owning couple helps the cats of Florida's Cedar Key



Doreen and Oliver Bauer not only look after the needs of guests at the Faraway Inn, their 12-unit motel in Cedar Key, Fla.; they also provide care for a group of about 70 community cats like this one in outdoor enclosures behind their own home.

**Don't get behind Doreen and Oliver** Bauer at the supermarket checkout if you're in a hurry. They buy at least 20 large bags of cat food at a time.

But don't feel sorry for the Bauers. They're living their dream.

After many years of vacationing on the Florida island of Way Key, the Bauers bought a piece of paradise there—the Faraway Inn, a 12-unit motel built in the 1940s. In 2000, they moved with their cat to the island's city of Cedar Key.

The Bauers knew from prior vacations that their pet kitty would not be alone.

Although the Bauers were initially consumed with major motel renovations, the huge number of roaming cats in the area always saddened them. "Some of the cats were emaciated; others looked like they had skin issues," says Oliver. Cedar Key was a major port in the 1800s, and it's likely that many cats—who provided rodent control on

the ships that docked there—decided they liked the island as well.

In 2004, the Bauers completed their motel renovations, and then their real work began. With advice and borrowed traps from a source at Operation Catnip—a nonprofit organization offering free spay/neuter and vaccines for feral and free-roaming cats—they trapped 25 cats and drove them to the University of Florida in Gainesville, where Operation Catnip does its work.

Unfortunately, since they weren't in the county served by the group, they couldn't use its services over the long term. The Bauers searched and searched for other options, trying to learn more about the best ways to help. In 2006, their search ended.

Beth Hackney and Kim Glickman were on one of their many vacations to the island and inquired if anyone was helping the cats. An island resident told them that

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As you'll see from the poster at right, we're opening the Mouthpieces department to reader submissions! So many shelters and rescues have produced fantastic public service announcements. If you've created one you'd like to share so that other groups can use it, please submit it to us. We'll use some of the best ones in the magazine. This is from the Coalition to Unchain Dogs in North Carolina, in collaboration with the Triangle Chapter of the American Advertising Federation.

The small print: Submitted PSAs can retain your organizational branding, but you must be OK with allowing other groups to add their contact info so that they'll be able to use the ad in their own communities.

The technical stuff: Our preferred file format is PDF/X-1a:2001 with crop marks at least .125 inches from artwork. Accepted alternate file formats are QuarkXPress, InDesign, Illustrator, or Photoshop. If an ad is submitted in a format other than PDF, graphics and fonts must be included — images must be CMYK and 300 dpi. Line art must be at least 600 dpi. The dimensions must be (or must be adjustable to) full page including bleed: 8.375 inches by 10.75 inches; live area/non bleed: 7.125 inches by 9.5 inches.

To submit a PSA for use in Mouthpieces, please contact us at [asm@humansociety.org](mailto:asm@humansociety.org).

ALL PHOTOS: DOREEN AND OLIVER BAUER

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## [scoop]

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Oliver and Doreen were trying to provide some aid. "And that's how we were introduced," says Oliver.

Hackney and Glickman were with Cats Angels Inc. SPCA, an all-volunteer rescue group in Fernandina Beach, about three hours away. "They were just wonderful," recalls Oliver. "They brought traps and showed us how to use them."

They introduced the Bauers to other organizations and arranged for the Jacksonville area River City Community Animal Hospital's mobile spay/neuter clinic to come to Cedar Key. The unit can sterilize 40 cats a visit.

Initially the Bauers trapped colonies weekly and held up to 40 cats at a time at their motel for recovery. Nowadays, they trap cats monthly and make the hour-plus drive to the Humane Society of Florida in Inverness, which has sterilized more than 400 of the cats from Cedar Key. Sometimes the Bauers transport cats to the nearby city of Otter Creek; thanks to its cat-friendly mayor, its town hall serves as a staging area for the mobile spay/neuter unit from River City Community Animal Hospital. The vehicle parks outside the town hall, and, after the mobile team performs the day's surgeries, the cats are returned to the town hall, where veterinarian Kathleen Fleck and other volunteers vaccinate and monitor them during their recovery.

The following day, the Bauers collect the cats from the town hall and put them under their house, which sits on stilts and is high enough for the Bauers to move around without stooping. Cages are lined up on tables, and fans (or heaters, whichever is necessary) are provided to keep the cats comfortable. Several days later, the Bauers return the cats to their caretakers. Those cats without caretakers are integrated into the Bauers' own menagerie—after all, what's a few more?

Fleck formed Sheltering Hands in 2007; the group has since sterilized thousands of roaming cats in the area. She notes that the animal services department for the county has seen a huge decrease in the number of cats coming in. "I like to hope that's because of all of our efforts over the past five years. Without [the Bauers], it wouldn't have been done. There's no question," Fleck says.



Outdoor enclosures serve as shelter for about 70 community cats that the Bauers—with help from other area cat advocates—have had spayed or neutered.



Ramps connect the outdoor enclosures that the Bauers have built for a large group of community cats whom they care for. The ramps also give the kitties access to the Bauers' own home.

Oliver says that motel guests have noticed that there are a lot fewer cats than before, and they're a lot healthier. Some guests and residents have donated generously to the Bauers, but finding homes for the kittens is still a big challenge.

One lucky cat was Turtle. She'd had many litters and was emaciated and practically hairless before the Bauers rescued her. She now reigns as the Faraway Inn's office cat. Other lucky cats came to live at the Bauers' house, a few blocks from the motel. Outdoor enclosures

with ramps allow the cats, now numbering 70, access to the Bauers' house. The Bauers recently purchased the lot next door and expanded the cat enclosures onto that property.

Oliver remembers saying back in 2006, "There can't be more than 200 cats on this island," but as of May 2011, the Bauers had trapped 725 cats.

"For us, it's always just been about the animals," he says. "It's not their fault. They're just doing what comes naturally, and it's up to us to do the right thing." **AS**



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