

Mewsings

Exploring the Feline Myst





Preface

Growing up in Scotland the only pets I owned were a goldfish and a tortoise; it wasn't until my mid twenties that I discovered the wonderful world of cats and officially became a "cat person." As I was studying for a diploma in commercial photography at Dawson College in Montreal, Canada. When a friend asked if I would be interested in adopting two stray kittens, I was hesitant as I knew absolutely nothing about cats. With my husband's coaxing, I agreed to take them on and named them Hamish and Angus, two adorable ginger tabbies, immediately won my hearts. These perfect little furry creatures were beautiful to watch whether they were stretching, wrestling, kneading, purring or simply sleeping. I used dozens of rolls of film trying to capture their every move and expression. Needless to say, I can no longer imagine my life without cats.

When Hamish and Angus tired of posing for me I volunteered to be the model for the calendar for the Montreal CSPCA. I had the pleasure of having my photographs used for eight calendars and was privileged to meet many wonderful people and their pets along the way.

Through reading about and observing cats I soon gained an understanding of their behavior and an appreciation of all things feline. I have amassed a large portfolio of animal portraits over the years. I would like to share some of these with you and hope that you will find them as interesting and beautiful as I do.



Cats Throughout History

Throughout history, society's attitude toward cats has undergone many changes.

Perhaps the best time to be a cat was over 2,000 years ago in Egypt. During this period, cats were greatly respected for their value as they made excellent hunting companions and skilled rodent control experts. Over the years the bond between the Egyptians and their felines grew stronger, and cats were no longer simply viewed as exterminators but as an integral part of the family. Some religions believed that they were associated with the gods and worshipped accordingly, with many families placing cat statues outside their homes to ward off evil spirits.

Cats were so highly revered that if a human killed one, either intentionally or unintentionally, he would be sentenced to death.

When a cat died, members of the household would go through a period of mourning, often shaving their eyebrows to publicly display their grief. The mummified cat would be taken for burial to the temple of the goddess Bastet.

Changing Attitudes

Perhaps the worst time in history for felines was the Middle Ages when cats in Europe were associated with evil and witchcraft. Sadly, superstition, fear, and ignorance led to the sacrifice of vast numbers and the population quickly dwindled. With fewer cats around, the number of rodents increased, contributing in part to the spread of the bubonic plague, or Black Death, that ravaged Europe and killed thousands.

During the Renaissance cats regained their place as beloved household companions. Their revival in popularity was no doubt largely a result of the literary movement of the period, as cats were often the subject of choice for artists and authors.

To this day our furry friends have remained an important part of the family—respected, pampered, and adored.





Felis Catus

In Latin the term for the domestic cat is *felis silvestris catus*. *Felis* is actually derived from the adjective *felix*, meaning happy.

A male cat is called a *tom* and a female cat is called a *queen*. The term for a group of kittens is a *kindle*, while a group of grown cats is a *clowder*.

There is a good chance that you are an *ailurophile*, or cat lover, and are reading this book. Famous cat lovers include Ernest Hemingway, Theodore Roosevelt, and Sir Isaac Newton.

A person who fears or dislikes cats is an *ailurophobe*. Adolf Hitler, Henry III, and Napoleon Bonaparte were all ailurophobes.

As a cat lover, it's hard to imagine how anybody could dislike



Did you know that the average domestic cat spends over 10,000 hours purring in its lifetime? Did you know that in Italy, a sneezing cat is a good omen for everyone who hears it? And did you know that a group of kittens is called a *kindle* while a group of grown cats is called a *clowder*? In this unique book, author and photographer Fiona Green shares her large portfolio of beautiful cat portraits and her years of cat observations.

Anyone with a fascination of the complex and curious cat will be inspired by this book, and gain a better understanding of cat behavior and an appreciation of all things feline.