

Cats of Eden

Buenos Aires finds solutions to the age-old challenge with stray cat colonies.

By Caroline Goldman

On a warm day in September, I strolled through the renowned Buenos Aires Botanical Garden, a peaceful paradise amid the city's ceaseless buzz. I wandered past leafy Ginkgo, thorny Bunya-bunya ... and gaggles of stray cats lounging in the sun.

About 300 stray cats to be precise. For many years, these strays found an Eden in the Botanical Gardens — a 15-acre fenced garden complete with sunshine, shade and passing birds in the center of the trendy parks district of Palermo. After some irresponsible cat owners discarded their pets in the Garden, it soon became a popular destination for people looking to easily dispose of unwanted pets. Add those born within the gates, and the population exploded.

During my visit, a small group of about 20 cats lounged idly on a warm cement square at the far end of the Garden. Beatrice Bottone swooned among them, scattering handfuls of dry cat food around the plaza. "Manchie, Manchie!" she called to a fuzzy black-and-white spotted resident who strolled over to claim its chow. As head of the Cats of the Botanical, a nonprofit neighborhood organization that took responsibility for the daily care of the cat colony in the Garden, SeOora Bottone makes daily visits to her clan. Her organization feeds, spays and neuters, and organizes a squadron of volunteers to protect the cats. The cats have thrived under her care. Most look healthy and are friendly to passers-by, forever in search of the perfect petting.

****For the full article, pick up the April 2007 issue of CAT FANCY.****

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