

## Meet Nina Malkin

**In her book, *An Unlikely Cat Lady*, Malkin relates how she cares for a feral cat colony. Here on CatChannel, she explains how she wrote her book.**

*By Stacy N. Hackett*

Author Nina Malkin's cats, Iggy (left) and Echo (right).

Author of the book, *An Unlikely Cat Lady*, Nina Malkin at Central Park in New York City. Why did you write *An Unlikely Cat Lady*?

Any person who works with feral cats has enough stories to fill a book. Ferals are so remarkable and mysterious. Caring for them can be rewarding, frustrating, hilarious and tragic — basically, everything we want from literature.

What was your inspiration?

Every morning I'd look out my kitchen window and see the ferals. To watch them stalking squirrels, discovering snow or walking into the trap for the first part of *Trap Neuter Return* inspired me. And boy, if I didn't see one of them I'd worry. A lot. Worry is a big inspiration.

What is your writing process?

Bang it out. Just relate the events. Since everything in *An Unlikely Cat Lady* actually happened, I didn't have to rely on my imagination. It's a bit trickier with fiction.

Do you have any other books?

Yes, I write Young Adult novels. My first two books, *6X: The Uncensored Confessions* and *6X: Loud, Fast, and Out of Control*, are about a teenage rock band. This summer I'll have another Young Adult novel out — it's about girls who get to work at their favorite magazine — and I'm currently working on one about the modeling industry.

What has the feedback been on *An Unlikely Cat Lady* so far?

My mom loves it! She cried — and she's a former New York City schoolteacher, a pretty tough cookie! It got a few very good reviews and blurbs. I'd love for *An Unlikely Cat Lady* to reach as many people as *Marley & Me*.

In the book you own two cats. Do you still own them? Tell us a little more about them.

Ah, does anyone really "own" cats? Sometimes I think it's the other way around. Iggy is a black tuxedo, a very sweet boy, a little shy. He likes to sleep on my head. His sister, Echo, is white with a black tail and some well-spaced black spots. She's very social, very smart. They're great. My husband Jason and I adopted them as kittens from the North Shore Animal League on Long Island. They're about 2-and-a-half years old now. They have us very well-trained.

How has the feral colony in your yard changed since the book's publishing?

Sadly, even with the best care, feral cats live hard and die young. A number of the cats in our family wandered off, never to be seen again. They haunt me, and I dream about them still. I reached out to a feral online support group, and one person told me that losing a feral you've known only for a few months can be more difficult than the loss of a house cat you've loved for years. It made me feel better to know there were others who knew what I was going through. We've had some new additions, too, and it's impossible not to get attached to them.

Were certain parts of the book more difficult to write than others? Which ones?

Not really. I'm a pretty natural writer — I love doing it. And the cats had wonderful stories to tell; all I did was relate them. The only weird thing was writing about people. They're real people, not characters, and I don't want to offend anyone. When I got the deal I said to Jason, "Are you sure you're OK with this? Because I'm going to be telling the world how you look in your underwear."

Stacy N. Hackett is a contributing web editor for CatChannel.com and the former editor of *Pet Product News* magazine. She lives in Southern California with her husband, James, children, Kayla and Parker, and two adorable Cornish Rex cats, Evita and Carson.



In March 2007's CAT FANCY:  
Get your discussion questions about An Unlikely Cat Lady for the monthly Cat Book Club.