

## Rescue of San Nicolas Island Cats Continues

**Humane Society of the United States helps feral cats start new lives in Southern California sanctuary.**

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This cat is one of nearly three dozen that has been removed from San Nicolas Island and transported to the Ramona Wildlife Care Center in Southern California. Photo courtesy Humane Society of the United States. The Humane Society of the United States is continuing its rescue efforts on behalf of the feral cats of San Nicolas Island, off the Southern California coast. So far 35 cats have been transported from the island to the Ramona Wildlife Care Center in San Diego County.

According to Nancy Peterson, cat programs manager for the HSUS, the cats receive physical examinations while on the island before they are transported to the Ramona facility. Once at the facility, the cats are housed in individual cages called feral cat setups, said Peterson, which allows caretakers to monitor the cats while caring for them.

Construction has begun on a cat enclosure that will be built around a stand of trees at the Ramona facility. Photo courtesy Humane Society of the United States. Construction has begun on a cat enclosure that will house up to 100 felines, Peterson said. The enclosure would be escape-proof, with special netting over the top and would be built around a stand of trees on the facility grounds to enrich the cats' environment.

"Six kittens were born on the island, and they are in cages with their moms and doing well," Peterson said. "We plan to socialize the kittens; a few juveniles and a few adult cats also show some promise of socializing so that's something we will be working on."

All of the cats have been spayed/neutered, vaccinated and treated for any medical issues, Peterson said.

Getting the cats off the Navy-owned island, where efforts are in place to preserve the native species, was part of a deal between the U.S. government and the HSUS.

Earlier this year, seven cats were removed from the island and taken to the CARE Sanctuary in Little Rock, Calif.

The cats are being housed in feral cat setups while the new cat enclosure is being built. Photo courtesy Humane Society of the United States. An estimated 100-200 cats live on San Nicolas Island, which is about 60 miles off the Southern California coast and provides nesting habitat for numerous native seabirds and shorebirds, as well as other threatened species. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife service had determined the feral cats were to be trapped and euthanized to help restore the native wildlife.

In a compromise, the HSUS, along with the Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Navy, decided to give any healthy feral cats a second chance. Capturing the cats and flying them off the island to a secure sanctuary is the only way to both save them and to save the native wildlife, Peterson said.

Peterson says that caregivers are needed at the Ramona facility to help with feeding and cleaning needs. People experienced in feral cat care are preferred. Those who are interested, who live in San Diego County area near the Ramona facility, may contact the HSUS.

To donate funds and monitor the progress of the cats, go to the HSUS website.