

Birmingham Zoo Embraces Copy Cats

Cloned African wildcat and her three offspring are being housed in Alabama until New Orleans recovers from Hurricane Katrina..

Caty, an African cat who first gained international attention years ago as one of eight cloned cats at the Audubon Nature Institute Center for Research of Endangered Species in New Orleans, has found a temporary home at the Birmingham Zoo in Alabama.

The Birmingham Zoo is taking care of Caty and her offspring for the Nature Institute as it recovers from Hurricane Katrina.

Caty is in a pen that isn't accessible to zoo visitors, but her three toms play in an exhibit that's open to the public. Caty's cubs are the offspring of not just one, but two clones. Their father, Ditteaux, is also a clone. Caty and Ditteaux were created from cloned embryos planted in a surrogate queen.

Their three male offspring were born Aug. 2 just weeks before Hurricane Katrina struck and damaged the Audubon center.

Although Birmingham Zoo officials expect the quartet to return to Louisiana by the end of the year, Betsy Dresser, senior vice president and director at the Nature Institute, told the Birmingham News that she didn't know when the kittens would return because the facility hasn't been repaired and it has very limited staff to care for the animals.

Read an extensive update on these cats in the October 2006 issue of CAT FANCY. Posted: April 14, 2006, 5:00 a.m. EST