

Feline Fragments 17 (2010)

(page checked March 2026)

Boots, celebrity bar cat from Vanuatu Two Fishing Cats

A Cat called Boots

Vanuatu



In mid-2010 the Pacific island group of Vanuatu, to the east of Australia and formerly known as New Hebrides, issued a handsome set of four postage stamps entitled 'Cats of Vanuatu'. The Vanuatu Post website announced that the 100 vatu stamp in the series pictured a particular cat named **Boots**, although no details were given of the other cats shown. Boots was apparently quite a celebrity in the capital town, Port Vila. He was born in 2003 to a mother who was 'a bit of a floozie', says the site, but found a home with a family who already had two large dogs and two territorial cats. Boots found life there quite hard going, so he was given a job as rat-catcher at the well-known Waterfront Bar & Grill.

He loved the place and the fresh fish that's available there — unfortunately, though, he didn't much like rats! So he found a new job as an entertainer, and was able to suck water up through a straw. His party piece, however, was to jump up on the bar when asked to do so, stroll over to the

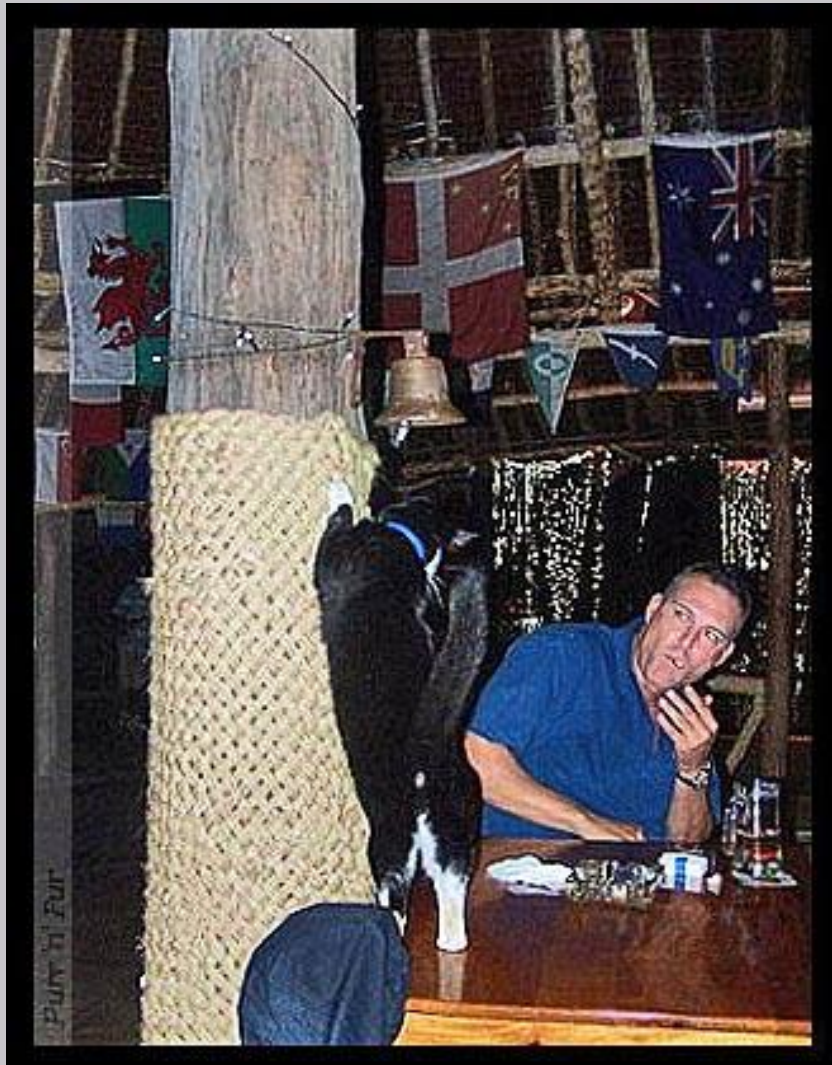
ship's bell that hangs there and wait to be told how many times to ring it. He could differentiate numbers up to 5 and would stretch up and ring the bell that many times, which is what the stamp shows him doing. He would be rewarded with some cat treats or fresh tuna.

As might be expected, Boots' favourite job was inspecting the catch as it came in on the fishing boats, and no bad fish passed his inspection. During 2010 he and his humans moved to a new venue, the War Horse Saloon in Port Vila, where he entertained visitors from all over the world in the evenings. As a seasoned entertainer he was of course much photographed, and he'd been featured in the Australian and New Zealand media as well as being seen on local TV.

Update:

When the owners of the Warhorse Saloon left Vanuatu, Boots retired to a new home on Devil's Point Road. He was reported as having had 'many adventures' there, and one of them seems to have resulted in the loss of a leg. from which he never fully recovered. He became ill for a while, and died peacefully at home in April 2018 aged 14. In spite of his handicap, though, his vet said, 'Boots retained his arrogance, dignity and love of life almost until the end. He leaves a huge hole in our hearts and lives; it's the end of an era in Port Vila,'

There's a short tribute on a [Facebook](#) page, from which the above information came.



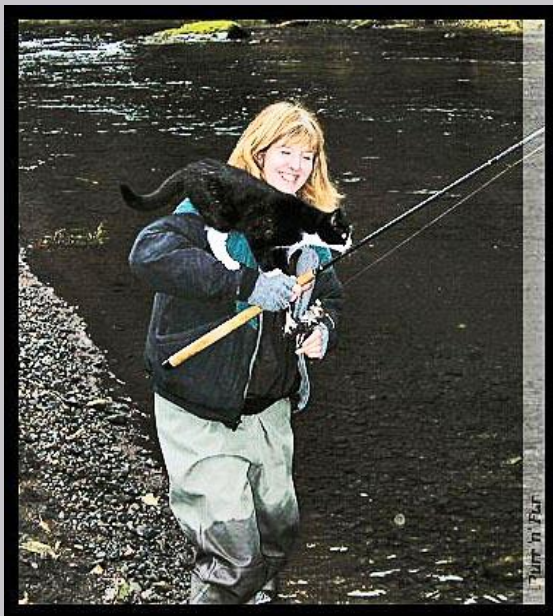
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Fishing Cats (2010)



There isn't much information about these cats, but we wanted to share the photos with our readers. The first two come from the American forum [Ifish](#), where people were invited to 'show their fishing animals'. Not surprisingly most of them were dogs, and there were some wonderful canine photos of many different kinds of dog at work — but also these two cats. It seems the images are from the north-west of the United States — Washington State and maybe Oregon — but we don't know how old they are.

Molly Mae, the black-and-white one (*below*), belonged to a lady called Jennie, who said the cat was completely unafraid of water and loved to go fishing with her mistress, often trying to get down to the riverbank first. She would dig in the sand, chase insects and even wade in the water. One photo shows her trying to get out to the boat, which was anchored in the river; she became quite cross about that and eventually decided to swim for it! — but in the end the anchor had to be pulled up and the boat mobilised to rescue her. She was much happier when she finally arrived there, after making a lot of noise. She was very good at 'walking the tightrope' on the anchor rope, and loved to watch the fishing float bobbing in the water. She also liked to get in on the action — making casting rather difficult!





There's just the one charming photo of a cat named **Chumski** (*main image at top of article*), belonging to 'Fisheromen'. He said he couldn't keep her out of the water when the fish were running; but although she was bigger than she looked in the picture, she was able to go only for the 'jacks' (not sure whether that refers to young northern pike or to coho salmon — knowledgeable fisherfolk please advise!).

And here are some other images, with hardly any information, of a cat that was taken on a fishing trip to Alaska and apparently enjoyed it. **Kitty** was rescued from a pound in Seattle just hours before the boat was due to leave, and joined the crew. She would run out on the deck during the fiercest storms and attack injured seabirds, said the writer, and she enjoyed eating king crab on a daily basis. He concluded by saying, 'Her fur was soft. I loved her, and she loved wide open spaces. Offloading was party time for Kitty. She lived on the edge.'



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Dante the Vegetarian Smokey with the record-breaking purr

Dante the vegetarian



In early 2009 a cat in a village near Norwich, in the east of England, had cat experts scratching their heads — by refusing to eat meat or fish. The black-and-white tom was found in an alleyway, close to starvation, by Becky Page, who named him **Dante**. Thinking he would love some chicken, she put a tasty sample in front of him — but he turned up his whiskers at it and wouldn't eat it. There was the same result with tuna and other seafood. Just when I thought nothing was going to work,' said Becky, 'I found him wolfing down a plate of left-over vegetables that was by the kitchen bin waiting to be thrown out.'

Ever since then Dante, about 2 years old at the time, loved to eat melon, bananas, broccoli, rhubarb, asparagus, aubergines (eggplant) and Brussels sprouts — even uncooked potatoes. No one had ever come across a vegetarian cat before, as cats, unlike other mammals, need the amino acid taurine, and other minerals found only in meat, to maintain their health and especially their eyes. Fortunately Becky grew her own organic fruit and vegetables in her garden — but she admitted trying to sneak small pieces of meat into Dante's food to fulfil his needs. Sometimes he spotted it, though, and would leave it.

Dante didn't seem to supplement his food with live prey — in fact he preferred to stay indoors, finding the world outside rather scary — and he showed no interest in the other animals that Becky and her partner kept, including rabbits, guinea pigs and chickens. Despite his strange diet he appeared to be in excellent health. Maggie Roberts, director at the time of veterinary services at the UK's largest cat charity, Cats Protection, said, 'This is extremely rare. Cats are obligate carnivores, and I have never before heard of a cat that won't eat meat.' Well, she has now!



[Mirror](#) (Aug. 2009) | [Telegraph](#) (April 2009)

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Smokey

with the
record-
breaking
purr

It's official — **Smokey** the cat had the loudest purr in the world! Most cats' purrs are measured at around 25 decibels, apparently — but a pet from a village near Northampton in England purred at an average of some 70 decibels, and when she really got going a close-up measurement showed 92, which equates to a lawnmower, or a hairdryer.

Smokey, about 12 years old at the time, was a rescue cat taken on by the Adams family for their ten-year-old daughter. Noting Smokey's very loud purr, Ruth Adams started a 'cat-purring competition' in Northampton to raise funds for the charity Cats Protection. In early 2011 it became obvious that Smokey was going to be the clear winner, and Ruth and her husband Mark wondered whether maybe she had a record-breaking purr! They said she had always been very vocal, purring at some level much of the time and being silent only when she was asleep. She would purr even while eating. If she was in the room it was difficult for them to hear radio or TV programmes, and telephone conversations could be a struggle, with people on the other end of the line wondering what the loud noise was!

The Guinness Records organisation was approached, and trials and expertise were organised by Northampton College. The Guinness requirements are very stringent, and recording of Smokey's purrs was made with equipment used by music professionals and in the presence of authorised witnesses. Confirming the feline's purr-themed title in early May 2011, a Guinness spokesperson said, 'It's incredible to think a purr can be as loud as a vacuum cleaner!' Smokey can be seen and her purr heard in YouTube videos [here](#) and [here](#), and she had an [official website](#) (2013 – archived copy).

Smokey has a book out entitled *Smokey, the Very Loud Purring Cat*, for which she was helped by her owner Ruth Adams, and it has a brief foreword by [Larry of Downing Street](#)! Published by Derby Books (DB Publishing), of Derby, UK, the ISBN is 978-1-78091-000-0. It has a good colour-picture section.

Update: Sadly, Smokey died from kidney failure in August 2014; she was 14 years old and was greatly missed by her family. At the time of her death she still retained the world record, despite many challengers, and was featured in the 2014 edition of the Guinness book.

However, in 2015 **Merlin**, a 13-year-old rescue cat from Devon in south-west England, narrowly beat Smokey's record to become officially the world's [loudest-purring cat](#) (May 2015). [ABC News](#) | [Huffington Post](#) (both May 2015).



Smokey ↑



Merlin

Update, 2023

But in early 2023 Smokey's owner, who previously hadn't given much thought to the matter, [challenged Merlin's record](#) of 67.8 decibels against Smokey's 67.68, with sound engineers and technical experts advising that it was impossible to measure with such a degree of accuracy. The case was put to Guinness World Records, who agreed with the findings and reinstated Smokey alongside Merlin as '[joint loudest-purring cat ever](#)'. Merlin has also since died.

Since then it seems that there's now a category for the loudest-purring **living** cat, and in October 2023 that was reported as being held by **Bella**, a 14-year-old tabby cat from Huntingdon in Cambridgeshire, [recorded at 54.6 decibels](#) (Oct. 2023). At the time of writing, Smokey and Merlin are still some way ahead in terms of the loudest purrers ever!

[BBC News](#) (Oct. 2023) | [USA Today](#) (Oct. 2023 – *archived copy*)



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