

Feline Fragments 37 (2024)

(page checked March 2026)

Halifax Dockyard Cats

Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada



In the 1990s, when their population was uncontrolled, there were getting on for 100 feral cats roaming the dockyard, which is the base for Canada's East Coast Navy. One day in 2005 Pierre Fillatreault, a naval petty officer, saw from his office window a pair of kittens playing in an alleyway and thought they looked malnourished, with no sign of a mother. He began feeding them and built them a little shelter out of scrap materials and they soon took to it. Eventually he took them to the SPCA, and they were adopted.

But that left all the other cats ... so Pierre began the task of trapping, neutering and returning them, so after a while no new kittens were born. Retiring in 2009 after 31 years' service, he was able to devote more time to the cats, assisted by his wife. They had special permission from the Defence Department to visit the base each day, maintain the shelters that have now been built, and feed the 'dockyard cats'. By 2017 there were just 20 or so, all with names; they couldn't be touched but would come when called.

There were effectively two colonies of cats, known as the 'city cats' and the 'country cats', living at opposite ends of the dockyard. The city cats, at the south end, were mostly black-and-white and lived amongst the hustle and bustle of the Atlantic Fleet; they could sometimes be seen trotting along the wharves with naval officers. They had a splendid shelter built by Pierre, called the Catty Shack, and that's where they were fed and there were plenty of cat beds and enough heating to keep the temperature above freezing



Black Chin

At the north end of the yard the country cats had more of a green area, with some tall grass, and an insulated shelter known as The Ark. Sometimes officers would visit the country cats during their lunch break, bringing treats!



Bino



Placid

In 2007 Pierre set up a charity, [Pierre's Alley Cat Society](#) (*archived copy*), which raises money to keep the programme running; cats can be sponsored on a monthly or annual basis, paying for their food and any necessary vet visits. In 2026 the charity is still operational, with a [new web page](#), and there are some 30 to 35 cats at the dockyard; it seems there may still be two colonies. In addition to the dockyard cats, a number of feral cats elsewhere in Halifax are also cared for by the charity.

There's an active [Facebook](#) page; there was an Instagram account, but in late 2024 it seems no longer to be there..

[CBC News](#) (June 2017) | [YouTube](#) (2013). See also **Mini Fragments 1 / Halifax** for the former Halifax Breakwater cats.

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Henri, le chat noir

Seattle, USA



Henry was a long-haired tuxedo cat born in 2003, who was adopted from a Seattle shelter. In 2007 William Braden – who was at the time studying at the Seattle Film Institute, and whose mother Henry lived with – wrote and directed a short black-and-white film in which Henry was given the character of 'Henri, le chat noir' and gave his existential musings on life and his situation. It was inspired by the American perception of French films as 'very pretentious and self-involved'. The commentary was in French, for which Braden's mother helped him with pronunciation and usage as she was fluent in that language. Subtitles were in English, though.

Later, beginning in 2012 with 'Paw de deux', Braden went on to produce a further 16 short clips of Henri's musings. They were viewed millions of times on the internet; they are listed below, and more information is to be found at [Wikipedia](#). The final one, 'Oh, revoir', dates from May 2018 and announced Henri's retirement from filming.

Henry died in December 2020, aged 17. In real life he was described as a good-natured and happy cat who never had a single existential crisis in his life, and bore no relation to the brooding character he portrayed on film.

Links to a few of the films on YouTube are below.

['Henri, le chat noir'](#) (first film, 2007)

['Paw de deux'](#) (2012)

['L'Haunting'](#) (2012)

['The worst Noel'](#) (2012)

[‘Le Vet’](#) (2012)

[‘Cat literature’](#) (2013)

[‘Artiste’](#) (2014)

[‘Bacon’](#) (2015)

[‘Oh, revoir’](#) (2018)

The other titles are: ‘Politique’ (2012); ‘On cat food boredom’ (a series of 4 films, 2013) ‘The cat is sat’ (2013); ‘Blight of Spring’ (2014); and ‘Reigning cat and dog’ (2014).

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