

Featured Felines: Cats' Adventures & Travels 6

(2009)

(page checked April 2026)

Cooper the Photographer Cat

Seattle, USA

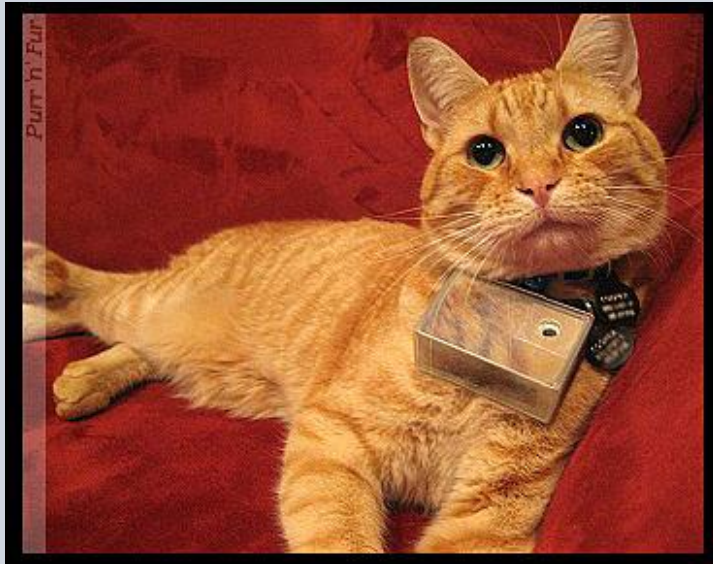


Cooper, of Seattle, in Washington state in the US, was a cat with a mission: he took photographs! His owners, film-makers Michael and Deirdre Cross, wanted to find out what he got up to all day in his wanderings around the neighbourhood while they were at work; so they came up with the idea of fitting him with a special small, lightweight digital camera on his collar. He wore it on one day each week for the past couple of years or so (*this was in 2009*); it was set to take a picture automatically every two minutes, and was encased in plastic to protect it from the weather. Mounted on a special harness, there was no sign that the camera bothered Cooper at all and he was said to 'handle it like a pro'.

Although naturally there have been a lot of 'duds', with thousands of out-of-focus, dark or meaningless shots, on the whole the results from the 200 to 400 images a day were amazing — people's gardens (yards), busy streets, scenery — and on at least one occasion the cat seems to have spent a long time bird-watching! There were some spectacular successes, enough to produce several [Flickr pages](#); * also included is a superb video of Cooper on a typical day: see [A Day in the Life](#).** (Use Edge for the links)

*[Michael Cross | Flickr](#)

** <https://www.flickr.com/photos/michaelbenjamin/3220269005/in/album-72157602652072917/>



Slide show and exhibitions

The Crosses set up a 'cat-cam slide show' that neighbours watching it thoroughly enjoyed as they recognised their own houses and gardens from Cooper's unique perspective, six inches (15 cm) above the ground. In February–March 2009 some of his best shots were exhibited at a local art gallery; his work has also been seen in London and of course on the internet. He had a spot on *Cats 101*, an Animal Planet series on American TV, and in early 2011 on the same channel, [Must Love Cats: Cat-tographer](#). Some of Cooper's efforts were for sale, and part of the proceeds went to benefit [PAWS](#), an animal-welfare society in Seattle. From Cooper's photos were also on display at the Nature Museum in Chicago in 2009–10..



Results from his photos seem to show that Cooper, a former stray who was four in September 2009, didn't seem to meet feline friends. He gained one important benefit from his 'work': an infra-red device on his collar that opened his cat door and allowed him — and only him — to get into his home. It had become obvious from early photos that he was spending hours outside the door waiting to be let in while his owners were out. Now he didn't have to sit out in the rain. Usually, said the Crosses, he was home 'at a reasonable hour'.

Lost camera

One day in the middle of winter 2008/9 Cooper returned home with no camera, which had apparently fallen out of its case. This was a disaster! A replacement was quickly provided by the original suppliers and the feline pro was back in business. Some three

months later, in the spring, a neighbour turned up with the missing device, which he had found in his garden. It had survived the rigours of a Seattle winter, and although unfortunately none of the photos had also survived, it was repaired and put back into use. It was preferred to the newer one as it had a shallower depth of field.

Cooper had a [Facebook](#) page (*last used early 2023, but then a post from 2025 shows Cooper's brothers, Malcolm and Dr Grant*)) and there's also his own blogspot, [Cooper: Photographer Cat](#), with news, links, images, and archive material going back to 2008; Cooper merchandise and copies of some of his photos are also available. Since the end of 2009 Cooper had his own video camera, which he used occasionally! View his CatCam films from his [YouTube page](#), where there's also another great video of him on a day's shooting, called *On Location*. And now there's a full-colour book of the best of Cooper's work, under the title *Cat Cam*. It was released in late October 2010



End of the line

Cooper was 15 in 2019 and at that time was reported as still going strong, although his human Michael said he was 'taking it easy these days'. However, he was suffering from kidney problems, as is the case with many older cats, and in early January 2020 they got the better of him and it was felt best to put him to sleep. Michael said, 'His unique, outgoing personality swept us off our feet and he became a beloved member of our family. Somehow Cooper carried us all along on his photographic adventures and gave us a cat's eye view of our neighbourhood and the world.' Cooper has been succeeded by two rescue cats, Dr Grant and Malcolm, who look like him (see the Facebook page) – but they 'have shown little interest in photography'!

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(page checked April 2026)

Fleetwood, the pub-visiting cat (2007) Loanhead, Scotland

Fleetwood led quite an adventurous life accompanying his humans on their travels around Scotland and England in their camper van. In particular, he accompanied them into pubs (inns), and perhaps readers will enjoy reading about this unusual feline pastime. Here is Fleetwood's story, as related by owner Bruce Hogg in September 2007.

"My wife and I have kept cats for many, many years now, and have taken them with us when we've gone on holiday. This all started when our neighbour, who used to feed our cats if we were away, said to us once, 'She's fine if you're only away for a weekend, but if it's longer than that, she seems to get really upset.' One thing our cats have taught us over the years is that they are as individual as people, so each of our cats would merit a story — but Fleetwood, our ginger moggy, is particularly interesting. It was late August in 2003 and we were about to go to the Fylde Folk Festival in Fleetwood, Lancashire (northern England) in our camper van with our two cats, Chivers and Bramble. Chivers was a fit, strong, 13-year-old ginger ex-tom, and Bramble was his 11-year-old sister, a velvety black lady.



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"Just days before we were due to leave, Chivers was squashed flat on the road outside our house in Loanhead, near Edinburgh, Scotland. Naturally we were devastated, and as our cats were regular favourites at the festival campsite we phoned our friend Carol, who lives in Fleetwood, to tell her why Chivers wouldn't be coming. To our surprise, she told us she'd found a tiny ginger stray, covered in fleas, wandering near her house on the day Chivers had died. When we visited her that weekend, our first sight of this tiny chap was seeing him holding on to the tail of their female German Shepherd dog, being dragged around the kitchen floor! As Carol had been unable to track down an owner, we decided we would take the little soul back with us — always providing he could travel all right. On the day we were due to return home we brought the as-yet-unnamed kitten into our camper van to let him explore the space, and to meet Bramble, who eyed him with great suspicion.

"We sat for a while, then offered both cats some food. As the kitten tucked in, I started the van's engine. He looked up, slightly curious, and then just carried on eating. After idling the van for a little while, I gently moved off, expecting a flurry of ginger, all teeth and kitten claws. Instead, he took no notice whatsoever — and carried on blissfully eating! The journey to Edinburgh took about 4 hours, and was completely uneventful. The kitten lay on the floor, or sat on my wife's knee, while Bramble looked on balefully, frowning as only an elderly lady can do. The obvious name for our new kitten, born in Fleetwood and now living in Scotland, would be Mac, and we would have called him that except that one of our neighbour's cats is a large tom with that name. After a week or so mulling over possible names, we settled on 'Fleetwood'.



"Fleetwood settled into his new home with obvious relish, and he and Bramble soon seemed perfectly at ease with each other; but with the fate of Chivers still very much in our minds, my wife was petrified something would happen to spoil this perfect set-up. The obvious way to know what was happening to him was to have him with us when possible — so when we went shopping, he came with us; if we went to the pub, we carried him along. That's how the pub visits started.

"Naturally, the first pub he came to was our local, the Masons Arms in Loanhead. It's also the only pub he's been barred from! The reaction from other pub-goers to his initial visits was mixed, to say the least. Some were intrigued; some thought it bizarre; one or two were outraged; others thought it perfectly reasonable. One of the barmaids at the time doted on him, and would bring treats with her to feed him; but one of the other barmaids didn't like cats (or us very much, for that matter!) and asked the manager to have him excluded. The manager ruled that, as long as Fleetwood was well-behaved and didn't wander around, he was welcome, just as dogs already were. Shortly afterwards, the manager went on holiday, and during his absence the unfriendly barmaid persuaded the area manager to have Fleetwood barred on account of his 'bad behaviour'. This comprised 'being behind the bar' (he had been carried there by the doting barmaid), 'being on the tables' (he was trying to reach the treats put there for him by the same barmaid), and 'wandering around' (untrue, since we always kept him on a lead, close to us).

"The ban — which was specific to Fleetwood, not to cats in general — lasted for a couple of weeks, when the area manager contacted us to say that Fleetwood was welcome back. He had received numerous letters from punters requesting that the ban be lifted, as it was unjust. One complaint made to us by a customer we did feel was fair enough: he objected to Fleetwood being on the seats. At first we put our coats down for him, but then we bought a cat bed and put him in that. This worked amazingly well; he clearly knows the bed is his, and will go in it wherever it's placed. What's more, he stays in it without trying to wander off.



"My wife and I both have an interest in music, and most of our travels have a strong musical context (music festivals, pub music sessions, etc.). It was clear that Fleetwood enjoyed his pub visits, and it was equally obvious that he loved being in the camper van (you know pretty quickly whether a cat wants to do something or not), so we generally take him to the various pubs we visit. Even stranger is the fact that he seems to love listening to music, to judge by the deep, contented purring to be heard when he's in there beside the players! Of course, we always enquire at a 'new' pub whether he will be allowed in or not; we've found through experience that the question, 'Do you allow animals in on leads?' works best. If the answer is 'yes', then we point out that it's a cat; if the answer is 'no', we just accept it. If the answer is, 'We don't allow dogs in,' we point out he's not a dog; which more often than not has gained him entry. Though many pubs have rules about dogs, very few have a rule about cats! In his four years so far and up to September 2007 he has been in 52 licensed premises — which may say more about us than about him! Refusals are infrequent, though it did take until September this year [2007] for him to gain access to a pub in his home town of Fleetwood; our thanks to *The Steamer* for that privilege.

"Of course, life's not always fun, even for a cat. Two years ago he disappeared from home for three days, turning up again on Christmas Eve. Amongst other injuries, he had a dislocated tail, clearly the result of an encounter with a moving vehicle. We were distraught, and he was a regular at the vets for nearly three months, running up a bill for some £1100 (well over 1500 US dollars at the time). Fortunately he made a full recovery, albeit minus what had been a magnificent tail. For this reason, we occasionally refer to him as 'Fleetwood Manx'. He doesn't seem to mind!"

Very many thanks to Bruce for the account of Fleetwood's travels, for writing this account in 2007 and for supplying the photographs, of which more can be found at his web pages linked below.

Updates

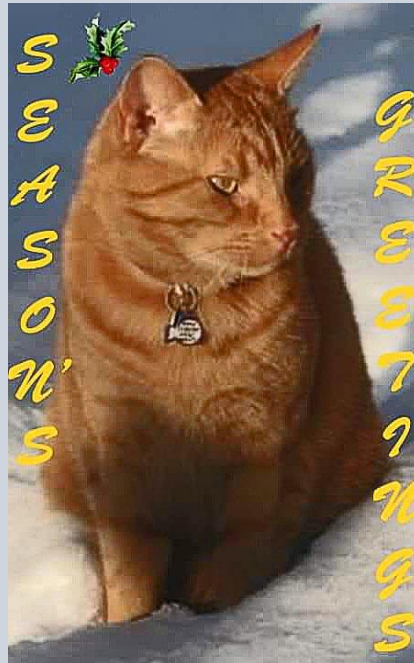
Fleetwood continued to get around, and by September 2013 the tally of licensed premises he's visited had climbed to 100.

He spent most of his pub visits just sleeping: as one commentator put it, 'He goes to folk sessions and sleeps through everything from banjo to bagpipes in his fleecy, tiger-striped basket!' By a curious coincidence, at one pub — the Sun Inn in Lothianbridge — Fleetwood met their resident cat, Tiger, who is also ginger and who also lost his tail in a road accident. Apparently they studiously ignored each other

[Catster](#) (Feb. 2010 – *archived copy*). There was a Facebook page, but in 2020 it seems to be no longer operational. There's an archived list of many of the pubs Fleetwood's visited [here](#).

In October 2018 Fleetwood was 15 years old and reported as still visiting pubs with his humans, Bruce and Gillian Hogg.

At Christmas 2019 he was aged 16 and a greetings card went out to his admirers, with the news that to that date he'd visited 118 pubs!



Fleetwood died in August 2022 from bone cancer. Following a stumble in the house, he was diagnosed with a broken leg caused by the cancer; because of his age and general health – he'd had kidney issues and other problems for a couple of years – it was deemed inoperable and it was thought best to gently put him to sleep. He'd been with his humans Bruce and his wife for 19 years, and in that time had visited some 120 pubs, although Bruce says they were a bit remiss in recording them later on. He says they still imagine seeing him out of the corner of their eyes and hear a faint, tinkling bell; they miss Fleetwood every day.

Below is his last 'pub photo', taken during 2022 at their local brewery.



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