

Featured Felines: Cats' Adventures & Travels 2 (2007+)

(page checked April 2026)

The Ginger Darlings, a trio who enjoyed long walks together in Pembrokeshire, West Wales

Maurice, Pixie and Elmo



2007

Artist, book illustrator and writer Jackie Morris lives in 'a ramshackle cottage held together with spider's webs', as she puts it, by the sea on the Pembrokeshire coast of south-west Wales. At the time of writing she shared the cottage with her children Tom and Hannah, two dogs, Bella and Floss — and five cats.

Max was a dark tabby who enjoyed posing for paintings and appeared in several of the books Jackie has illustrated. **Martha** was the oldest of the four ginger cats; she saw it as her duty to purr Hannah to sleep at night and to wake her in the morning. And then there were the 'Ginger Darlings', otherwise known as 'The Three' or 'We Three' — **Maurice, Pixie** and **Elmo**. The first two arrived after the death of Arthur, Martha's ginger brother; Jackie had meant to get one kitten, but 'Arthur had been such a big cat, and they were so small,' she said, that she took home two.



Max

They liked to curl up to sleep on top of dog Bella — so it was natural that when Bella went for a walk, the kits followed, 'prowling like tiny tigers through the forest of grass, running and hiding and tumbling'. As the youngsters grew, the walks became longer. Elmo, the third of 'The Three', was taken in after black cat **Bird** died of old age; right from the start he took to joining the walkers. They walked up to four miles a day.



Morning and evening, two dogs and three cats accompanied their human and made an unusual sight along the Pembrokeshire coastal path. The cats picked their way across moorland, learned to navigate stiles, and sometimes climbed up onto signposts. They didn't seem to mind what the weather was like, but they did carefully avoid boggy and muddy areas. Generally Elmo liked to lead, Maurice would wander here and there investigating things and running up hills and gateposts, while Pixie liked to stand as though admiring the view — and then leap out at Jackie as she walked past. The cats would mew for her and the dogs to wait if they got left too far behind.



Ramblers and other walkers, of course, did a double-take when they met Jackie and her entourage: 'But they're cats ...'. One walker told her, 'You're supposed to keep your dog on a lead.' Jackie replied, 'But he's a cat.' Generally the cats were wary of other humans, preferring to sit under a bush and watch them pass, but occasionally they'd say 'hello'. Wild ponies and the Highland cattle that came to share the hillsides made them nervous at first, but they learned to take most things in their stride. They especially loved bees and dragonflies, whose movements fascinated them, and in late summer they enjoyed watching and listening to the grey seals and their pups below them on the coast.



The remarkable trio were featured in *Your Cat* magazine, in local and national newspapers and on BBC Radio Wales. They were said to be looking for a book contract! They also had [their own website and blog](#) — which, said Jackie, received nearly as many visitors as [her own site](#) (*artist – current in April 20246*). Both sites have many more pictures and a great deal else; I found the cats' blogspot one of the best and most interesting I've come across, and it's beautifully presented, although sadly it hasn't been added to since December 2014. Jackie has an [Instagram](#) account and a [Facebook](#) page.



2013

Since the account above was originally written, towards the end of 2007, sadly three of the four 'gingers' had died and were buried in Jackie's garden. Martha, 'the old one', was first to go in September 2010, aged about 15. Of the three younger 'Ginger Darlings', as they were known, Maurice died in March 2011 from causes that weren't clear but may have been associated with breathing difficulties he had been experiencing. And Pixie died in September 2012; she also had been having breathing problems, but her actual death may have been down to a large dog that invaded the garden one day. All this is reported in the [We Three Cats](#) blog (*last entry December 2014*), and also Elmo at the time had his own Facebook page: [I am Cat](#) (also the title of a book by Jackie) (*last entry June 2016, but revived with more recent posts since 2023*).

In August 2012, not long before Pixie died, Jackie posted [A measure of life in cats](#) with a wonderful illustration of all her cats up to that point.

But then there were new arrivals! Rather than perpetuating the line of ginger cats, Jackie preferred to keep memories of them separate and special and take a new direction. From December 2012 there were two gorgeous Bengal kittens, brother and sister **Mr Genji** and **Lady Spittifer**, also known as [Baggage and Bundle](#) (*last entry December 2012*). As a pair they were referred to as the 'Bengal Babies'. Elmo became used to them, and there are numerous great images and short videos of them on his Facebook page and on the blog page, both linked above.



Mr Genji and Lady Spittifer ('Baggage' and 'Bundle')

In mid-June 2013 tragedy struck again, when Genji (*aka Bundle*) was also lost, this time to a road accident.



Following Genji's death, in December 2013 Jackie took on two more Bengals from the same breeder in Snowdonia as before; they were **Little Bear** (aka Bear or The White Cat) and **Little Leopard** (later just Leopard). They would walk with Jackie as the original Ginger Darlings had done.



Little Bear



Little Leopard and Lady Spittifer



The three Bengals: Leopard, Bear and Spittifer

Alas, more heartache was not far away. In early September 2015 Leopard went missing for five days, and unfortunately Jackie had to go away before he'd returned. When he did, she received news that he was being taken to the vet as an emergency, having clearly been in a vicious encounter. Somehow he had made his way home, but was dehydrated, weak with hunger and had serious injuries to his head and face that had become infected. Sadly, although given the best of emergency care, he died after a few days, his little body just lacking the strength to recover. The vet thought he must have fought with

something a few days before, possibly a badger, perhaps having 'poked his cat-curious nose' into the animal's sett.

Of the Bengals, only Spittifer and Bear then remained, together with the elderly ginger Elmo. One positive after Leopard's demise was that Elmo then felt able to rejoin Jackie, Bear and the dogs for a walk for the first time in months. Previously, although Leopard could be sweet, he was also something of a bully, and would pester Elmo constantly if they were out together.

By 2016 Jackie had written that 'His Lordship Elmo the Ginger, is now senior pack member, lord of misrule, and very much still alive. He sleeps the day away, curled up with Bear or Lady S.'

In spring 2020 Jackie reflected that while Elmo sometimes used to stay out all night in the tunnels beneath the gorse, 'these days he usually sleeps. He is old and stiff of limb, but yesterday he came for a walk ... it was so lovely to see the sunlight on his fur. He's a beautiful, wise old boy. I hope he comes again.'

Three years on, by early 2023, there was no further news of Elmo — which isn't to say there hadn't been any, but so far I haven't tracked anything down. Spittifer and Bear/The White Cat have been pictured in recent social media posts. It's to be hoped all are still doing well. In early 2026 the [Instagram](#) account remains active, but she was no longer on X/Twitter.

Grateful thanks are due to Jackie Morris for contacting us in 2007 about her unusual cats, and for her kind permission to use the superb photos illustrating this account. Many more can be found at the [We Three blog/website](#), which was regularly updated with new additions (until December 2014). See also Jackie's [YouTube channel](#).

There's a nice collection of beautiful outdoor photos of the Bengals [here](#) (June 2014).

We liked the ***Things Maurice taught us***, published after his passing, and reproduce them here with permission:

- The elegance of the feline creature.
- That it is possible to love unconditionally.
- Always, always, always be sick in the cat basket on the way to the vet. If you can poo as well, all the better.
- Between the eyes and a book is the best place to get attention.
- Training humans to catch mice usually results in great excitement and shouting.
- How to look upon furless humans with utter disdain.
- Always make sure they know you are there before you jump into their arms.
- Never eat the green wobbly bit.
- Nothing on earth is as beautiful as a cat.
- The kitchen table is not the best place to do a pee.

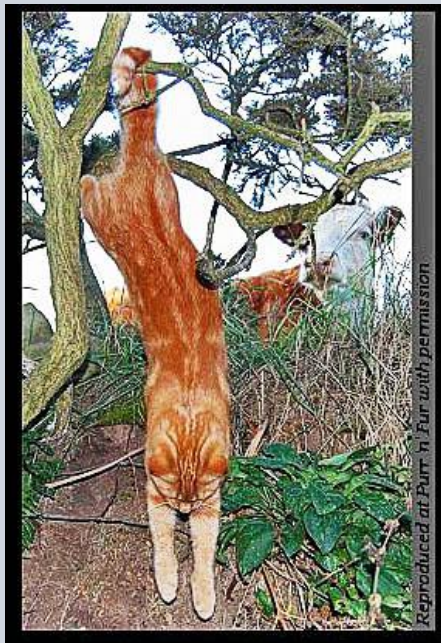
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Pixie



There follows a gallery of photos of the 'Ginger Darlings' on their rambles, individually or in pairs. Unfortunately In most cases I'm unable to identify which cat is which!



Reproduced at Furr 'n' Fur with permission



Reproduced at Furr 'n' Fur with permission

Pixie



Reproduced at Furr 'n' Fur with permission

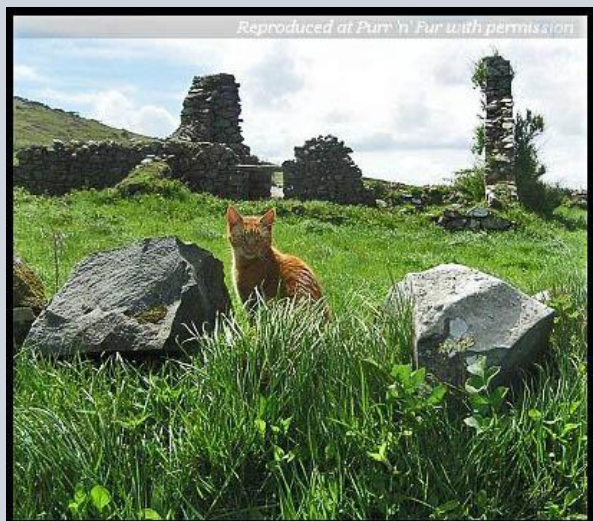




Elmo looking at seals



Pixie among the violets



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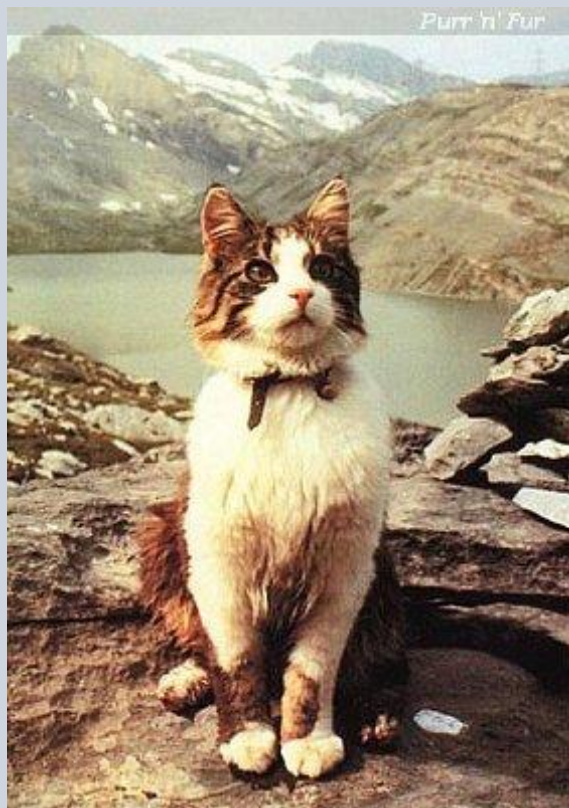
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Featuring Felines: Cats' Adventures & Travels 3

(page checked April 2026)

Mountain-climbing cat **Tomba**

**Schwarenbach,
Switzerland
(2011)**



Tomba was a long-haired cat from Switzerland, based in an Alpine hotel in the canton of Valais, who during the climbing season would follow mountaineers on their ascents and so reached a number of impressive summits. We're not talking of small hills here, but pinnacles of up to 3700 metres (more than 12,000 feet)! He seemed to thoroughly enjoy his outings and would wait eagerly for the next group of climbers to make their preparations. He didn't live a long life, succumbing to feline AIDS at the age of about 4½ — but it was certainly an adventurous one.

His exploits have been recorded in a lovely little brochure by the Peter Stoller Family, who run the [Berghotel Schwarenbach](#), near Kandersteg, from where Tomba went out on his exploits, and we're most grateful to the family for kindly sending us copies of the

brochure. Rather than paraphrasing it, the text has been translated directly from the original German and is reproduced below. The original text was written by Hedy Sigg, and the photos were taken on an ascent of the 3453-metre (11,330 feet) Rinderhorn on 6 September 1989 — when Tomba was just over a year old — by Max Pfiffner.

Introduction

It was on a stormy autumn evening at Schwarenbach in 1987 that we saw a cat running up to us. Perhaps she sensed that snow was going to fall the next day. This lovable creature felt very much at home with us and we were happy to take her in. The next summer, **Tomassa** received a male visitor. Feline love may not be able to move mountains, but it can certainly conquer them!

On 7 August 1988 a little kitten came into the world — a youngster born under a lucky star, but also a cause for concern, since the mother mysteriously vanished shortly after his birth, leaving us to fear the little one would die. Fortunately Tomassa returned after five days and then she wouldn't let her son out of her sight for another second, hissing and spitting at every passing stranger. Tomba, as we named him (partly after his mother and partly after the renowned alpine ski racer Alberto Tomba), thrived beautifully under such devoted care.



When barely old enough to walk, Tomba started making off straight away across the hills and ridges. He journeyed up the Spittelmatte, the Schwarzgrätli and the Gällihorn, across the Gemmi Pass and even down the Gemmiwand rock face towards Leukerbad. Time and time again we became worried about him, so we would set off out into the wind and rain with the intention of bringing the kitten back into the safety of our home.

However, when we learned that 10-month-old Tomba had escorted three mountain climbers up to the 3453m-high summit of the Rinderhorn, we knew we were dealing with a real mountaineer, who would be able to find his own way home. A few days later, the alpinists were amazed when Tomba went with them to the summit of the 3699m-high Balmhorn.

Many times he repeated these tours and, in good weather conditions, tomcat Tomba wouldn't even return to Schwarenbach, waiting instead by the edge of the glacier at the roping-up point for his next 'clients'. He was always pleased when mountain climbers came to stay with us and would sniff around their rucksacks, choosing his guests the night before so he could show them their route early the next morning.

One day he led a rope team to the summit and then set off on his return route, only to run up again with another group (he always had his crampons on him!). By doing this, he could receive his reward in the form of sausage and cheese from several different lots of mountain climbers. It was evident that he took great pleasure in preening himself afterwards, savouring the view and then starting the descent together with his guests.



Once, when Tomba was en route with a young married couple, he was suddenly reluctant to go any further and took himself off the path behind a large rock. The couple were curious, so they followed him, believing he'd found something there. Just then, an avalanche thundered across the path they'd been climbing up ... Tomba had actually saved them both from disaster!

Tomba escorts us up the Rinderhorn

The night before our mountain tour on the Rinderhorn, Max and I stayed overnight in the dormitory at the alpine Hotel Schwarenbach. At a quarter to five the other climbers left the hotel, and we started out at five o'clock. It was pitch-black and very soon we heard a rustling sound. In the beam of our helmet lamps we saw the eyes of a cat light up. I was reminded of the answer my landlady had given me the previous evening when I asked whether anyone else might like to climb the Rinderhorn, too? 'If anyone will, the cat will,' she replied. The cat would only follow us part of the way, we thought — perhaps for a



share of our supplies?

We marched along the Gemmiweg hiking path to the lake of Daubensee, branched off from there and zigzagged along the really steep scree slopes, using our lamps to find the way. When it gradually became lighter, we noticed that the cat was still following us. It was freezing cold and on the upper part of the slope the snow was frozen solid. We sat down on the col of the Rinder for something to eat, to fit our crampons and to get roped up. Tomba

immediately jumped onto my lap, no doubt to warm up his paws. We offered him some of our snack but he seemed not to be hungry, so it was evident that he wasn't following us on account of the food. Assuming that he would now turn back or wait for us there, I laid down a woollen scarf for him on the cold rocks. I couldn't have been more wrong, as our little escort got up when we did and followed us out onto the glacier. Staying nice and close to the rope linking Max and me, he padded up the steep firm slope. We couldn't help but be amazed. Tomba followed effortlessly, paused when we did, climbed onwards when we did. Over the summit ridge along the extreme edge he pranced, with his tail held aloft, fawning all over Max and evidently content. He had reached the summit, which was 3453m high.



Max wanted to carry him on his rucksack on the descent, but this offer was proudly turned down. Every time Tomba slid on the ice on the steep glacier, he would 'adjust his rudder' and immediately bring himself back on track. On the lower part of the scree slopes he then became tired; but if he dropped back a few metres behind me, he would immediately start to meow. So then I was obliged to wait and let him go ahead of me, as he wanted to walk behind Max.

Back on the Gemmiweg path a couple of schoolchildren came towards us, and couldn't believe their eyes when they saw two mountain climbers with rope and ice-pick, and a pet cat walking by! Tomba seemed uneasy with this attention and made himself scarce behind some stones. We returned to the hotel alone; the cat didn't drift in until night-time. Our four-legged friend had accompanied us for almost nine hours and given us the most unforgettable experience.

Epilogue

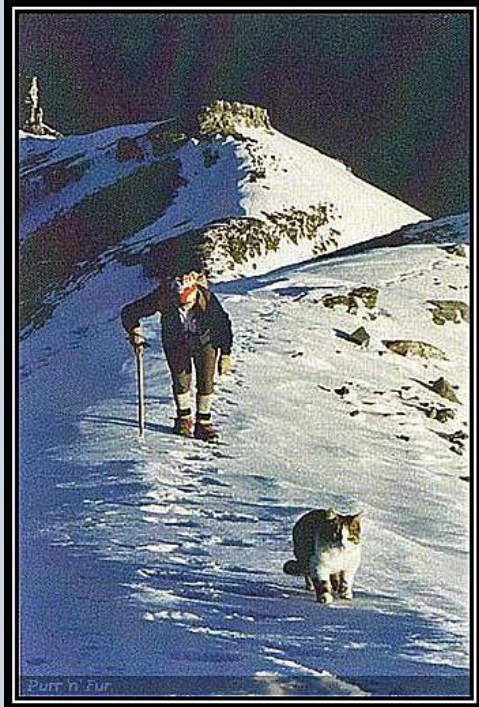
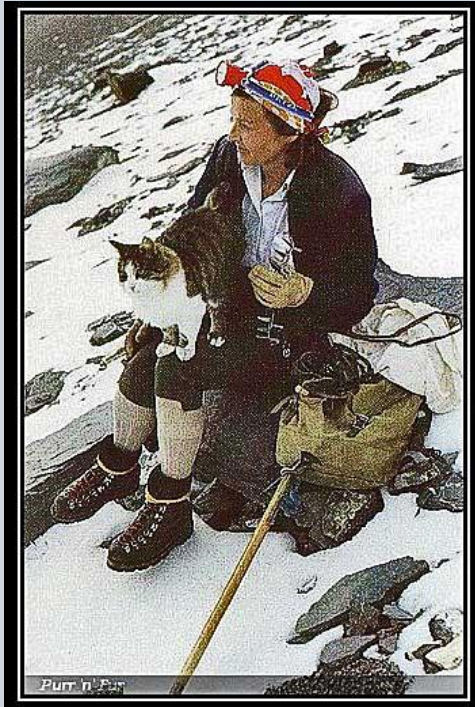
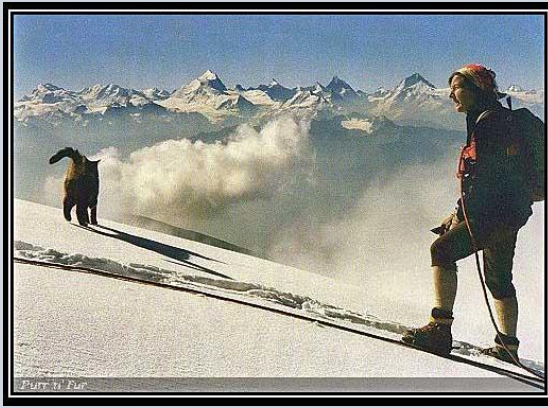
If you were ever to look deep into the eyes of this remarkable creature, you'd be inclined to think of reincarnation and suppose that a long-dead mountain guide was living on in his feline soul.

'Tomba lived a fulfilled life and his fame extended far beyond the borders of Switzerland, where he gained a lot of publicity. A mountaineering yearbook in Japan dedicated a double-page spread to him, complete with photographs; a South African weekly told his story; and in New York he became almost a household name. Newspapers across Europe wrote reports about him; Swiss TV came to Schwarenbach to film and they subsequently broadcast a fascinating report with impressive footage.

Our 'summiteer' stayed on with us for over four years – from spring until autumn at the alpine Hotel Schwarenbach, and then in winter we took him with us down into the valley to Frutigen.

On 27 January 1993 Tomba drew his last breath. He and his mother both had to be put to sleep; they were suffering from the immune deficiency syndrome known as feline AIDS.

Note: More about the Hotel Schwarenbach, which has quite a long and chequered history, can be found at a page by the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation, [Frozen ghosts haunt Gemmi Pass](#) (archived copy).



[One Hundred Mountains](#) (Feb. 2013)

For other mountain-climbing cats, see Mini Fragments 1 (Zermatt, 1950, and New Zealand, 1917) and Mini Fragments 2 (Azumino, Japan); also Featuring / Adventures & Travels 23, 27 and 28.

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