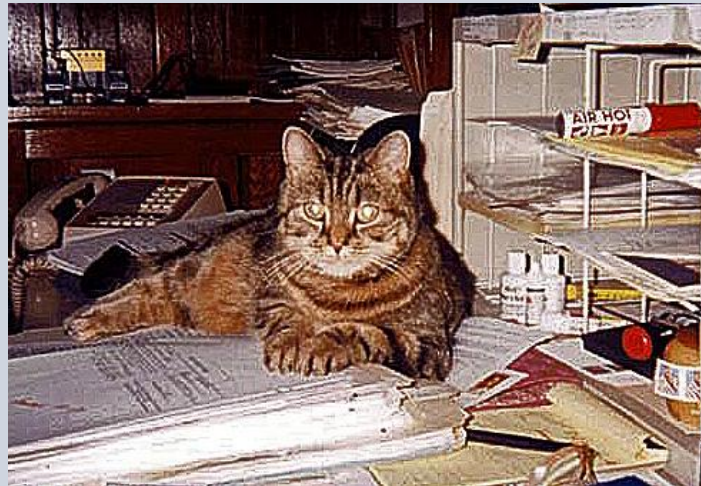


Featured Felines: Miscellany 5 (2020)

(page checked July 2026)

The Perkins Observatory Cat



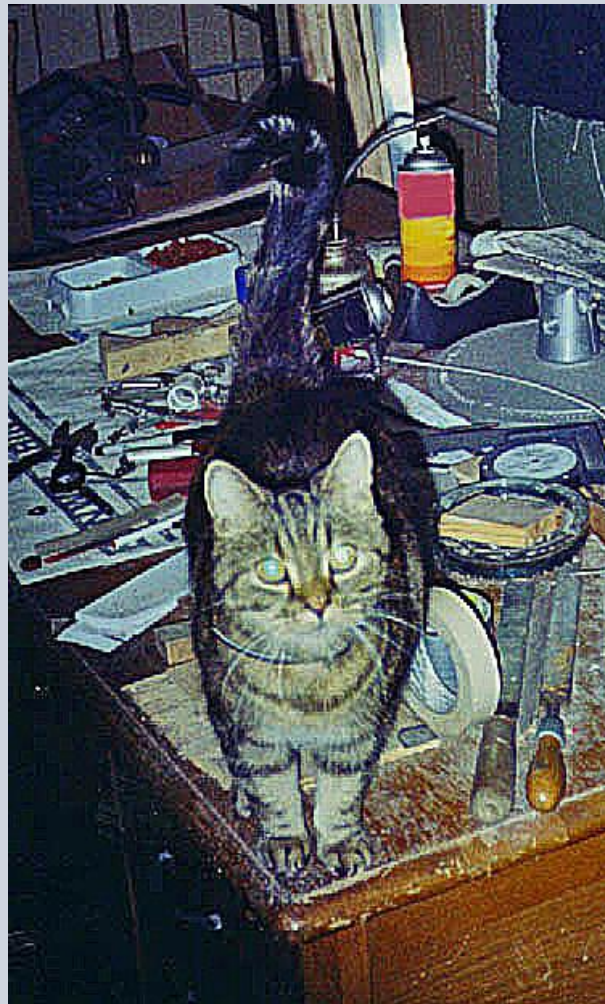
The Perkins Observatory, named after a leading nineteenth-century astronomer, is situated in Delaware, Ohio in the United States and is owned and operated by Ohio Wesleyan University. Construction began in 1923, and by the 1930s the observatory had the third-largest telescope in the world at the time. The telescope has since been moved to Arizona, but the observatory continues to support various public and academic activities.

For five years from 1994 there was a resident cat, simply known as **Cat**. She turned up one day on her own initiative, and adopted the observatory and grounds as her home. Skittish and a bit nervous, especially of sudden movement, she must have been someone's pet at one time, as she was spayed, but had clearly been a stray more recently. As time went by she grew more trusting and became the observatory's unofficial mascot. She liked to sit in the lobby to greet visitors – as long as they didn't come too close – and to 'help' with paperwork in the office, where she also had a favourite chair from where she could keep an eye on the bird feeder outside. Although she enjoyed attention and affection, she remained wary of strangers, and a crowd of them would send her scurrying off to hide somewhere.

At night she was normally shut up in her own room – unless there had been evidence of mice around, as the observatory did have something of a mouse problem. In that case she was left to roam around at night, and if she wasn't demanding to be fed next morning, staff knew she'd found her own snacks!

Cat died in February 1999 of an unspecified cause, and was very much missed. There's a lovely tribute page to her, still available as an archived copy [here](#).





This was the last photo of Cat

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Featured Felines: Miscellany 6 (2020)

(page checked July 20267)

Cats in Lighthouses



Estevan Point Lighthouse British Columbia, Canada

There aren't many manned lighthouses around the world today as most have been automated, but a few 'traditional' ones remain; one such is this lighthouse. Built in 1908, it's situated in a remote location on the west coast of Vancouver Island, bordered on one side by the Pacific Ocean and on the other by a sea of trees. There aren't many visitors, but resident keeper Maureen Schmidt had two feline companions to keep her company. She had to call in a weather report seven times a day, every three hours beginning at 3.30 a.m., and **Possum** and **Schnitzel** assisted her with that too! Schnitzel in particular, says Maureen, usually liked to accompany her up the five flights of stairs to the radio room and office while she made her reports.

When they went outside the cats were trained to walk near her, and they were never allowed out at night; there are cougars, bears and wolves around and they would certainly not have been safe.



The pair were at the lighthouse with Maureen since 2018. Possum is a large tabby-and-white cat weighing in at 10 kg. (22 lbs) and was seven years old in 2020. Maureen took him in as a kitten from a farm-supply warehouse where his mother had gone to have her litter. 'I went in to buy supplies one day, and came out with Possum,' said Maureen. He's been taught to do 'high fives', but basically is a laid-back cat who likes his cuddles. Schnitzel, the ginger, is smaller and much more high-energy. Maureen saw him on the SPCA's website, liked what she saw and made a four-hour round trip to collect him. Fortunately he got on with Possum more or less straight away, and by the morning after the day they met they were sleeping together and grooming each other.

Although they lived in an isolated spot, Possum and Schnitzel had many friends in the local community and beyond via their Instagram account. Apparently there are a number of other manned lighthouses on the coastline, and many of their keepers have cats. 'I think it's the introverted, independent nature of us both – we understand each other,' says Maureen. 'Cats bring a feeling of comfort and calm to a home, like all is well with the world and everything is as it should be. Cats and lighthouses just seem to fit!'

By 2024 I was informed that Maureen had moved to a different lighthouse where it was impractical to take the cats, and now the Instagram account shows them as being at the McInnes Island light station, also in British Columbia, so it looks as if they found a new home.

[Cats' Instagram account](#) (you have to follow it to see the posts) | [Your Cat](#) (Oct. 2020)



Possum



Schnitzel

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Point Arena Lighthouse Northern California, USA

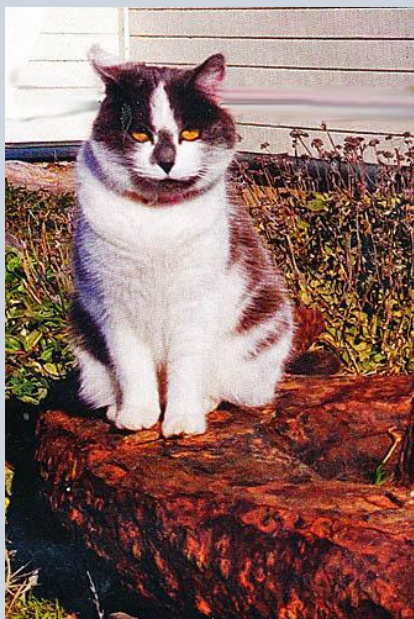


Although the lighthouse is automated, flashing its light every 16 seconds night and day, it has guest accommodation, a museum – and is situated in a wonderful spot for catching a glimpse of marine life, especially several species of whale. Since 2017 it has also a resident cat called **Arena Mina** – ‘guest relations manager and rodent-control specialist’. The lighthouse staff had been thinking of getting a cat, and in fact were due to visit a local rescue centre, when Mina turned up one day outside the lighthouse. She had been abandoned there, complete with cat carrier and feeding bowls; it must have been very scary for her, as there are coyotes, bobcats and raccoons in the area,

Brought inside, Mina hid for a few weeks, but with food and water supplied regularly she gradually came round, and turned out to be a very affectionate cat. A competition was held to name her. A trip to the vet found, surprisingly, that she’d been spayed and was microchipped – from Idaho, 900 miles away! It isn’t clear how she came to be in California, but the owners were contacted and were happy for

her to stay at the lighthouse. She has made herself entirely at home, follows guests around and is liked by most of them; she's said to be 'super-calm and mellow, and very good with kids'. During the day she likes to prowl around the beautiful grounds, where she catches mice and gophers and often brings them as 'gifts' to both staff and guests! At night she sleeps in the maintenance office.

There is holiday accommodation at the lighthouse site in the form of self-catering cottages. One of the guests, who had been married at the lighthouse earlier, liked Mina so much that she wrote a children's book about her, which is sold in the shop and is very popular. Profits from it are donated to the lighthouse. [Press Democrat](#) (Sept. 2023) | [Lighthouse at Facebook](#) (Mina still there late 2024)



See also: Cats of Withernsea Lighthouse (now a museum) at [Purr 'n' Fur / Working / Museum 15](#).

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