

Featured Felines: Escapes & Rescues 11 (2023)

(page checked January (2025))

Nelson, rescued from a rough life at a harbour
Hobo Highwaters, rescued from the streets of Rhode Island
BenBen, rescued from the streets in British Columbia

Nelson finally found a home

County Durham, England

In 2014 one-eyed tomcat **Nelson** was voted Cat of the Year in Cats Protection's annual awards because of his story of survival over a long period and against the odds.



His misfortune began early on, when as a kitten he and his litter-mates were cruelly tied up in a sack and thrown into the ocean at Seaham Harbour in County Durham. Fortunately for him the sack was rescued by a lobster-fisherman, but only **Nelson** and one of his brothers survived.

For the next 15 years or so Nelson eked out an existence as a dock cat at the harbour; he had some shelter in a fisherman's cabin, but no real home comforts and it could be bitterly cold in winter. He also had to contend with the threat of dog attacks, and the attention of local thugs who would throw rocks at him; it's thought it was such an attack that caused him to lose his eye. And then in 2009 work began at the harbour on a new marina, and the noise of heavy machinery unsettled and frightened him. .



But finally the old warrior's luck was about to change. One cold November evening in that same year, he seems to have decided a new home was needed. He followed Andrea Huntley-Crow and her husband Dave, who'd been visiting the harbour, back to their car and adopted them! They decided to give him his forever home, and he became a treasured member of the family. Despite being diagnosed with an inoperable heart tumour in 2014, he amazed everyone with his zest for life. I imagine that as I write in 2023 Nelson will have long since died, but his remarkable story is well worth recording; it's heart-warming to know that he knew love and comfort for the last five years or more of his life.



[BBC News](#) (Aug. 2014) | [Northern Echo](#) (July 2014)

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Hobo Highwaters

Rescued from the streets, Rhode Island, USA



Anthony Di Sano lives in Rhode Island and since around 2006 has been feeding and caring for the stray cats to be found in an alley near his home. If one looks as though it needs attention he does his best to help, and in return, he photographs them.

One day he noticed a white cat who seemed rather out of place and looked as if he didn't belong there. He was just as mean and 'hissy' as any of the others, but didn't seem to be doing so well, so Anthony decided to try to earn his trust. Eventually, in October 2018, he succeeded in capturing the cat and taking him home to join the three other rescue cats he had at the time.

As time went on **Mr Hobo Highwaters**, as Di Santo named him, went from being a rough, tough, dirty-looking cat to a pristine white long-haired beauty with a ruff to be proud of. He started to seek attention, loved to be touched and enjoyed playing. It was a remarkable transformation.





[Cattitude](#) | [Bug's Life](#) (both Sept. 2020)

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Ben Ben

Rescued from the streets, Vancouver, Canada



In April 2016, when he was thought to be only about six months old, a ginger cat in a sorry state was brought in by the British Columbia SPCA to the Animal Emergency and

Referral Centre in Vancouver. He had a badly mangled ear, damage to his spine, and a number of puncture wounds and lacerations. Clearly he'd had a hard time on the streets, and it seemed likely he'd been attacked by some larger animal.

BenBen, as he was named, spent ten days in the SPCA's animal hospital during which time his story was shared and, because of his expression, he became known as the saddest cat on the internet. Lots of people wanted to adopt him – until they found out about his medical issues. In fact he could barely move and vets thought he might never walk again; he just sat quietly in his cage, not eating or drinking, and seemed to have given up. He was thought to be unadoptable, and so he was scheduled to be put to sleep.



But then Sandy Windover, a veterinary technician at the Vancouver Centre, stepped in. She'd met BenBen when he was first brought in, and she and her partner Adam decided to give him a chance. They went to the shelter and sorted out the formalities, taking the cat home with just a day to spare.

As soon as they got home, everything changed. They sat down with him for an hour to help settle him in, and he was 'full of purrs and cuddles'. As for 'never walking again'. BenBen had his own ideas about that! His first steps were stiff, shaky and wobbly, but that didn't stop him, and gradually things improved, to the extent that he could soon walk, run, jump off chairs and do most things a normal cat can.



Later on, I think maybe in 2018, Sandy and Adam were married, and BenBen was guest of honour and very much part of the celebrations (*below*).

In 2023 they live in New Westminster, British Columbia, and Ben Ben – still a relatively young cat – is living his 'best life'. He deserves it after the very rough start he had, and the remarkable recovery he made.

He has an active [Facebook](#) page, with a huge number of followers, and even more on [Instagram](#)! (*both still active in mid-2026*)



[Cole & Marmalade](#) (Aug. 2021) | [Love is Cats](#) (Sept. 2022 – *archived copy*)

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