

## Newsletter: April 2021

### Dear Friend / Supporter

We are pleased to send out our Newsletter again. We are happy to announce a new project emerging and to share with you an interview with Jenny Remfry, a pioneer in TNR who was instrumental in making the use of eartipping to identify neutered stray cats widespread, both in the UK and throughout the world!

And last but definitely not least: this year we will celebrate 25 years of SNIP International! We do not yet dare to think how – will it need to be virtual or shall we meet in person? We hope to meet up with our friends and supporters for the celebration, but while we cannot predict the future, we start this jubilee year by publishing our new logo and website. You are the first one to hear about it!

### Chairman's Report

The last 12 months have certainly been unique!

Sadly, the ICAWC conference in Bulgaria, hosted by Dogs Trust International, was cancelled due to the worldwide COVID pandemic. The ICAWC conferences are an important part of the SNIP International year as it gives us the opportunity to distribute a very significant amount of TNR equipment to many groups from all over the globe. Not only that but in recent years we have also initiated separate distribution hubs directly aimed at the location in which the conference is held. This has been made possible by both our generous supporters and matched funding from the Pet Plan Foundation who have been very generous in 2020 by awarding SNIP International £4000 for our intended hub in Sofia. Hopefully the conference will be held eventually, and we will be able to resume our equipment distribution to Bulgarian and Romanian Groups as intended.

Despite COVID, the SNIP International Board of Trustees have been meeting on a regular basis throughout 2020 and into 2021 via the now familiar digital meetings platforms such as 'Zoom'. Whilst this format cannot compete with meeting face to face, we have certainly reduced our carbon footprint and will retain this format going forward with less frequent face to face meetings. You can be assured that we have still been able to distribute TNR equipment across the world albeit less than in a normal year.



*Nigel enjoying the great outdoors of Northern Ireland with the family rescue dog Dukey while respecting well the social distancing guidelines.*

I am also very pleased to announce that we have embarked upon a very exciting project with Dogstar Foundation in Sri Lanka. We will be partnering with them in a new initiative, 'Catstar' to neuter 9000 cats in an area they already work within. This will be a three year project and SNIP International will be a major sponsor thanks to the legacy left to us by Amanda Green. We will report further on this project as it gets underway this year.

Once again I end my report thanking my fellow trustees for their time, effort and friendship. SNIPi has enabled tens of thousands of cats and dogs the chance of a better life, through donations of equipment to caring people, for TNR/CNR schemes in their neighbourhoods all over the world.

Nigel Mason  
Chairman

## The first Amanda Green Grant for Catstar in Sri Lanka



*Cats are opportunists by nature. Here's one taking advantage of Dogstar's meal delivery for street dogs in Sri Lanka.*

A year ago, we told you about Amanda Green (1967 – 2018), a kind, caring and compassionate person who had chosen to leave a legacy for SNIP International. Animals had helped her in her life, and she wanted her legacy to return the favour to animals. It took us a while to find an appropriate project where we would feel comfortable using her legacy whilst also ensuring we were respecting her last wish.



*Amanda Green (1967 – 2018)*

Luckily, we heard about a dog rescue & TNR group, familiar to us, planning a new project and looking for sponsors, so we started discussions with them.



Dogstar Foundation is situated near Negombo in Sri Lanka. It has been working since 2006 and so far, they have sterilised over 47,000 Sri Lankan dogs. Their groundwork includes vaccination and treatment against parasites as well as taking care of sick and injured dogs. They have also run a Mission Rabies programme vaccinating over 67,000 dogs against rabies. Dogstar is known to SNIP International since 2006. We have been meeting Dogstar at ICAWC annually, which has allowed us to follow closely its growth and development and expanding its work to include animal welfare education for children and adults. Through education, Dogstar aims to develop community-responsibility for animal welfare and health, and transform the way that companion animals are cared for.

*Even feral cats may appear at the feeding stations when the meals are served.*

While the situation for the dogs in Sri Lanka has improved over the past years, for cats it's been getting worse. There is currently a feline overpopulation crisis, resulting from uncontrolled and irresponsible breeding. In addition, according to data collected by Dogstar, the feral cat population seems to have grown over the same period that the dog population has decreased. Most likely, it is due to the increase of food and shelter and decrease of predation.



*While the number of dogs has decreased in Sri Lanka, the number of cats has skyrocketed.*

So far, Dogstar has sterilised 3,900 cats. They have been cats whose owners have brought them to Dogstar to be sterilised. But now, a new project is needed to tackle the feline population in Sri Lanka: the objective for Catstar is to sterilise 9,000 cats over a period of 3 years. The target will be both female and male cats, regardless if they are owned, stray or feral. The cats will be sterilised, vaccinated and ear-tipped at two veterinary clinics that are partnering with Dogstar in this project.



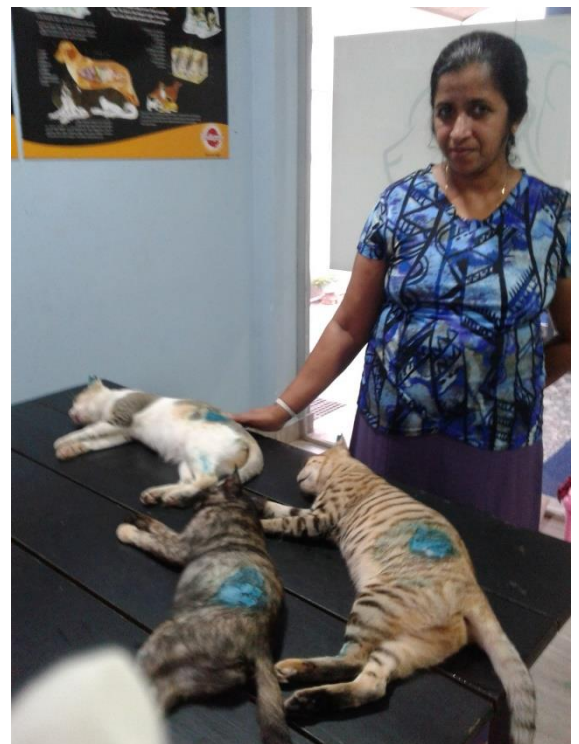
Catstar will be supported by several charities other than SNIP International, each of them with a well-defined objective. SNIP International will provide the basic trapping and holding equipment (cat traps, transfer baskets, hospitalisation cages) and surgical equipment (feline spay kits, spay hooks). We will also finance a vehicle (acquisition and running costs for the three years of the project) that will allow transporting cats in appropriate conditions minimising their stress and discomfort. Two local veterinary assistants will be hired, dedicated to Catstar, and SNIP International will fund this also, to ensure sufficient professional post-surgery care for the cats. In total we will be funding Catstar with £40,000 over a period of three years, and Dogstar Foundation has committed to auto-financing at least £64,000. Dogstar Foundation has underwritten the total cost of the project (£245,000), and are still in discussion with some other potential partner charities.

*On the left: a female cat being spayed at one of the Dogstar's partner veterinary clinics.*

Catstar is about to be launched and we will share with you news about it as the project moves on. We hope that the COVID-19 pandemic will not cause too much delay for Catstar and are excited to be part of this first ever feline TNR programme in Sri Lanka. SNIP International are confident in entrusting our first Amanda Green Grant to Dogstar, given their personal investment to the cause and their excellent track record.

We look forward to giving you more Catstar news from Sri Lanka!

Annika Lähdeniemi



*This cat owner could not have afforded to pay for her three female cats spaying. Catstar also includes owned cats in its neutering/spaying programme because owned, entire, free-roaming domestic cats are the source of stray cats.*

## A Q&A with Jenny Remfry

SNIP International spoke to TNR Pioneer Jenny Remfry PhD VetNM MRCVS about her career and work with feral cat management. Some of her answers have been edited for space.

### SNIPi: How did you become interested in the management of feral cat populations?



*Jenny with a cat in Rome.*

**Jenny:** It was in the 1970s, through the remarkable Ruth Plant. She had become aware of the large populations of feral cats in London, descendants of the cats abandoned by people fleeing London during World War II. Ruth was horrified by stories of people who had asked the RSPCA or their local council to help them control cats they were feeding locally, and then saw them being trapped and taken away to be killed. She met Roger Tabor, a biologist studying the colony of black-and-white cats in Fitzroy Square – descendants of the ones immortalised by T.S.Eliot as the Jellicle cats – and realised scientists were at last taking an interest in cat behaviour. The RSPCA were also having second thoughts about their kill policy. Then Ruth met Celia Hammond – the 1960s top model – who was rescuing street cats and finding them too wild to be homed. Celia had them neutered and let them live in her country garden, but there were soon too many of them, so she started taking them back to where she had found them and realised there were already people who would feed them. Next, Ruth heard about the Danish Cat Protection Society, who were controlling the population of cats in the fishing port of Esbjerg by giving them contraceptive pills wrapped up in raw fish. It looked promising, so I organised trials at a disused hospital in South Mimms and at the Maudsley Hospital. They were partially successful, but it was difficult to keep track of which cats had swallowed the bait. It would be easier and cheaper to trap the cats and get them neutered.

In 1977 Ruth Plant founded the Cat Action Trust (CAT). We talked to hospital managers, environmental health officers, park keepers and the feeders of the cat colonies, and soon there were Cat Action Groups all over London and beyond.

**SNIPi:** It is said that when you spoke at the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (UFAW) 1980 Conference - 'Ecology and Control of Feral Cats' - this was a "watershed moment" for feral cat management.

**Jenny:** Yes, because not only did people come to talk about cat behaviour, and the nuisance caused by cats, by then we were able to put forward practical proposals. The RSPCA's advice that feral cats should be neutered had stalled because vets had found the cats too dangerous to handle. But we had now found better traps and introduced squeeze cages. A cat could now be trapped and injected with a sedative so that anaesthesia and surgery (using soluble sutures) could be carried out safely on the unconscious animal. The still unconscious cat could then be put back into a carrying cage and when fully recovered taken back to where it had come from, to be supervised by its feeder (this is important, because it is a legal offence to abandon a domestic animal). This is the system that became known as Trap-Neuter-Return.

**SNIPi:** How did the situation change after this Conference?

**Jenny:** In 1982, UFAW published its booklet "Feral Cats – Suggestions for Control", which sold in great numbers and included instructions on ear-tipping. The Danish Society identified their cats in two ways: by a tattoo in the ear and by removing the tip of the left ear. A group of us including an RSPCA inspector thought

long and hard about this. Identifying a cat as neutered was obviously vital, to alert pest controllers and local inspectors to its status, but tattoos would not be visible from a distance and would be indistinct in black cats. Tipping the ear, on the other hand, would carry a very clear message, but the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) viewed the procedure as a mutilation and it was resisted by some vets. Eventually the RCVS gave its approval, because it would prevent the cat suffering the greater distress of being trapped and undergoing surgery a second time. Veterinary authorities in other countries have also shown reluctance, but usually agree in the end.

### **SNIPi: Was there resistance to TNR?**

**Jenny:** Surprisingly, some of the larger animal welfare charities did not approve initially. Their argument was that every cat should have a home, so they put a higher priority on neutering domesticated cats to prevent their unwanted kittens joining the ranks of the ferals. Others did approve of TNR in principle but found it too time-consuming and resorted to euthanasia. Then there was the problem of cats that did not have feeders and were a genuine nuisance. Ruth went to great lengths to find places such as farms or animal sanctuaries for them, but it often gave her a headache. Nowadays TNR is widely accepted and applied throughout the UK.

### **SNIPi: How did TNR spread worldwide?**

**Jenny:** It happened very fast. The UFAW booklet sold overseas and we were soon being asked to advise and help. My assistant, the entertaining Peter Neville, helped set up programmes in Tunisia, Greece and Kenya. In 1984 he spoke at a WSPA conference in Boston and this set off great interest in the USA, where we advised on the setting up of Alley Cat Allies. Pat Dymock used the proceeds from her book "Kismet" to fund programmes in Europe's holiday spots.

In 1983 Kate Horne set up the Society for Neutering Islington's Pussies (SNIP), with funding from the Greater London Council towards vets fees. She went on to organise C4, a consortium of charities, to spread the load and the cost of TNR in London. After a visit to Paphos in Greece she founded SNIP International, and thanks to Clarissa Baldwin (former Dogs Trust CEO who initiated the International Companion Animal Welfare Conferences) and the generous contribution of trapping equipment by Melvyn Driver (MDC Exports Ltd), TNR is becoming possible all over the world.

### **SNIPi: How important are educational programs that run with TNR projects?**

**Jenny:** Responsible pet ownership needs to be taught if the source of surplus kittens joining the feral population is to be stopped. People closely involved in TNR programmes may not have the time or skills to educate others, but several organisations such as the RSPCA are doing it in schools.

### **SNIPi: What about feral dogs?**

**Jenny:** In the UK there is not a great problem with un-owned feral dogs. Thanks to Ruth Plant, the number of free-roaming owned dogs has been greatly reduced by the employment of animal wardens and the use of microchip implants. I was surprised when the idea of TNR was taken up by countries where un-owned dogs are a problem, but it seems to work. Anything that will reduce the risk of rabies is worth a try.

Melanie Davies

### **SNIPi statistics**

Over the past 25 years, SNIP International has donated 1,558 pieces of equipment to 556 animal rescue groups in 87 countries.

In 2020, the donations went to Spain, France, Greece, Georgia, Crete, Turkey, Morocco, Montenegro, Portugal, the Netherlands, Ireland, Portugal and Uganda.



## Some thanks we've received

### PlakaKats – Greece

PlakaKats has been active since 2003 sterilising the feral cats in Plaka and the nearby Spinalonga Island in Greece. Due to the longstanding work in Plaka the new arrivals are spotted quickly and neutered. In Spinalonga an archeological team is helping out with the feeding and trapping. The equipment donated by SNIPi has been vital for quick and humane trapping.



From left to right: Arriving on the Spinalonga Island to capture feral cats. Lots of hiding places! Success – a female cat trapped to be spayed.

### Voorzitter Stichting Zwerfkatten Nederland – The Netherlands



Voorzitter Stichting Zwerfkatten Nederland gives support to other cat TNR groups. Their mission is to ensure that, through humane methods, stray and feral cats will no longer be present in The Netherlands by 2040! They aim to achieve this through TNR.

*“Dear SNIPi,*

*Already so soon after your donation, we succesfully used the great MDC-trap! Maybe you like to know that we have a mobile operation-room for neutering cats since shortly. With this mobile operation room, we drive to places where are lots of cats...like holiday parcs, farms and places like that.*



*For the cats, this is great because for them there is no stress by transport to a shelter, to the vet and back to the shelter and than back home for the return.*

*Now it's possible to neuter larger groups of cats....that's great! We can operate around 50 cats a day.*

*Thanks for your time.”*

Carie Radstake  
Voorzitter Stichting Zwerfkatten Nederland

Top: A cat in a cat trap. Above: Spaying of a female cat in progress.

## Heraklion Neutering Project – Crete

Heraklion Neutering Project in Crete is a small but active group that carries out TNR in the area of Heraklion. They manage existing cat colonies through neutering, feeding and veterinary care when necessary. The equipment donated by SNIPi has made the trapping process easier and faster.

*“Hello all!*

*I am sending this email to say how grateful we (me and the volunteers in Heraklion that I work with) are for your great help! I have no words to thank you! This equipment will make our life easier and we will be able to help cats that cannot be caught without traps. Thank you again for this generous donation! We are all very grateful!”*



*A cat approaching the trap.*

Katerina Boutsika  
Heraklion Neutering Project

## Causas de Caudas – Porto, Portugal

SNIP International has known Causas de Caudas since the ICAWC that was held in Porto in 2015. We have had the pleasure of seeing this small group of volunteers grow and develop. They sterilise over 300 cats per year, mostly TNR, but also put kittens and tame cats for adoption. The team of Causas de Caudas is exemplary also in the way it collaborates with other rescue groups and seeks agreement and support from municipal authorities. To our great enjoyment, Causas de Caudas thanks SNIPi in pictures.



*Causas de Caudas cat trapping in the Porto Metropolitan area with equipment donated by SNIP International*

These thanks were compiled  
for you by Johanna Lopez

## Our thanks

SNIP International is delighted to acknowledge support from The Ian Keith and Sylvia Keith Charitable Trust, Cats Protection, MDC Exports Ltd, DogsTrust, Petplan Charitable Trust and all the SNIP International Friends.



Very special thanks to Amanda Green for her legacy that will help thousands of animals as per her wishes.



**SNIP International**  
Founded 1996  
Registered charity no 1064664

**Protecting stray and feral cats and dogs  
Promoting neutering programmes overseas**

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SNIP International is a member of the EU Dog & Cat Alliance.

