

## FLORIDA'S BURMESE PYTHON: BOTH PREDATOR AND PREY

By E.M. FAY



Florida is a state rich in wildlife. The Everglades are especially welcoming to an abundance of bird, mammal, amphibian, and reptile life, and every year a huge number of nature lovers visit its magnificent wilderness. Wildlife-watching tourism is a big moneymaker for this vacation state, and the alluring presence of our own modern-day "dinosaurs," the alligator, is just one part of the attraction.

Alligators are not the only cold-blooded creatures found in Florida, of course. The year-round warm climate is receptive to all, including a multitude of turtles, snakes, lizards, and salamanders. Unfortunately, these native species of fauna have recently been joined by a non-native reptile: the Burmese python. This large snake has upset the eco-system in many parts of the state, changed the balance of the natural food chain - and was caused exclusively by people's carelessness.

Burmese pythons have been imported from Southeast Asia mainly to satisfy the exotic pet market; and considering that \$10 million in sales were recorded last

year alone, many Floridians are ignorant-ly purchasing these impressive, non-venomous constrictors. However, after the novelty of having a "vanity" pet wears off, some people then compound their mistake by letting the snakes go in the Everglades and other wilderness areas, leaving them to fend for themselves.

The cruelty of abandoning any pet is obvious. But in the pythons' case, this act has backfired on the whole state of Florida. Situated as they are at the top of the food chain, these resourceful predators have found plenty of food sources available to them, particularly in the Everglades wetlands. They are eating a wide variety of birds and mammals, including some endangered species, and are not only competing with the traditional top predator, the alligator, for their dinner, but consuming some alligators themselves.

Making matters worse, a private reptile-breeding facility near the Everglades was destroyed by Hurricane Andrew in 1992. This may be the cause of the original influx of large quantities of pythons appearing in the wild. As such breeding businesses have to be licensed by the state, the question must be asked: Why would a state already well-endowed with native snake species permit such a risky enterprise in the first place? And how was it regulated if the apparent storm-related "spill" was possible? The state instituted some new ownership criteria last year, including annual \$100 fees for possession and microchips to keep track of the snakes, but it is a case of too little, too late.

Wildlife officials have reacted to the proliferation situation with an all-too-common deadly approach: sanction the killing of as many pythons as possible. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Commissioner issued first-ever permits for snake hunting on state lands on July 17th. U. S. Interior Secretary Salazar has sanctioned snake hunting in Big Cypress National Preserve, and even though hunting is banned in Everglades National Park, he is considering making an exception for the pythons. Both Salazar and Florida Governor Charlie Crist are reported as being in favor of a placing a bounty on the snakes, in order to encourage hunters. So far, though, hunters are not getting a bounty, but they can sell the skins and meat.

An additional catalyst for this unusually vigorous targeting of the species was the death earlier this summer of a two-year-old child. Her mother's boyfriend had an unlicensed pet Burmese python, and it allegedly escaped its cage during the night and attacked the child in its crib. At least one official had the sense to recognize the reality of this tragedy. "It's becoming more and more of a problem, perhaps no fault of the animal, more a fault of the human," said Jorge Pino, a state wildlife commission spokesman. "People purchase these animals when they're small. When they grow, they either can't control them or release them."

<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,529709,00.html>

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The culpability of persons who release former pets into the wild seems not to have penetrated into the thinking of some officials, though. Said Everglades National Park spokeswoman, Linda Friar, "These pets were released by owners that do not understand the threat to the ecosystem." If this is true, then surely such ignorance needs to be addressed by a comprehensive statewide information campaign. Friar's stated belief that "The pet trade is pretty supportive in educating people," seems woefully inadequate. Surely, public safety ought not to be entrusted to an industry with a vested interest.

An estimated 30,000 pythons are living in the Everglades now, and over 100,000 are thought to exist statewide. In the Florida Keys, a careful capture program has been instituted by Alison Higgins, of The Nature Conservancy. Higgins is educating outdoor workers of many stripes - park rangers, wildlife experts, utility workers, and the police - to recognize the species and capture them safely.

Conservation Manager Higgins is especially concerned with preventing breeding by the snakes. "Our mission is to keep breeding populations from forming." She pointed out that this is not a problem exclusive to Florida or to

snakes. "The Everglades problem started from a handful of pets being released, and it can spread."

The procedure for volunteers who find a python is to put the snake in a bag, then into a crate for delivery to park service biologists. The snake is then studied and, usually, destroyed. One state-sanctioned snake hunter, Joe Wasilewski, was quoted on CNN as having a "soft spot" for the species. This purported affection did not deter him from exclaiming, after capturing one 12-foot specimen: "One down, 100,000 to go."

This cavalier attitude - "100,000 to go," as if they are things, not living creatures with feelings - is unjust to anyone who recognizes the intelligence and beauty of these beings. They were brought here against their will by people out to make a profit. Regardless of their putative status as "pets," they are routinely dumped in the swamps like so much trash. The resultant chaos caused by their proliferation is clearly not a consideration for the heartless humans who abandon them. 'Let others clean up my mess' seems to be the prevailing mindset.

The media does no service to the truth by using sensational language such as "invading pythons," implying willful behavior by reptiles who were, in fact, kidnapped from their homeland to enrich sellers and flatter the vanity of buyers. Once again, an implied blaming

of a wild animal for mankind's mistake.

Florida Sen. Bill Nelson has introduced a bill banning importation of python species into the United States. But this is the equivalent of locking the barn door after the horse has been stolen.

"Prevention is the simplest solution. People need to know what they're getting into when they buy an animal. They need to understand that they should never dump a pet."

The unintended consequences of such profit-motivated importations are not only devastating for local fauna, but inevitably result in needless suffering such as that now being inflicted on the innocent Burmese pythons.

<http://www.cnn.com/2009/US/07/30/florida.python.hunter/index.html>

Please contact us at [wildwatch@verizon.net](mailto:wildwatch@verizon.net) if you would like us to forward a series of photos depicting the killing and skinning of snakes for fashion items such as shoes, boots, bags, and belts. Please don't buy these products.



Red-eared slider

Another example of the release of store-bought animals into the wild is that of the **red-eared slider** in New Mexico. Here are the reasons why it is not a good idea to release them into the wild - for their own sake as well. "Released turtles might not survive the winter if released at the wrong time, they might starve from lack of food. They don't have the same genetic lineage as the native turtles and may have different needs or behavior." They suggest that unwanted turtles be turned over to groups that specialize in turtle and tortoise conservation or rescue where a better, safer environment can be provided than a willy-nilly release or give-away. For more information you can visit:

[http://www.wildlife.state.nm.us/publications/documents/NMWL\\_Winter\\_2010.pdf](http://www.wildlife.state.nm.us/publications/documents/NMWL_Winter_2010.pdf)

## THROUGH MY LENS

BY E.M. FAY

The decision in Florida to allow the killing of 100,000 pythons because a toddler was killed by a "pet" python, was disturbing on many levels. Aside from the human safety issue of keeping a python and child together in a house, there's the underlying question of the cruelty of keeping wild animals as pets.

The policy of allowing "exotic" wild animals into the country for the profit of dealers and vanity of the potential "owners" has caused untold suffering to wildlife. Snakes, parrots, and other kidnapped creatures are forced to live their lives in

completely unnatural circumstances, such as cages and terrariums, never to know the companionship of their own kind or freedom to be what they are.

Someone wanted to feel powerful by having a huge snake under his control, so an innocent child died. Do we react sensibly by banning the importation of such animals? Or by arresting those who buy and sell them? No, the snakes are blamed and thousands are killed. We need sensible, humane, enforceable laws. Please visit [www.lohv.org](http://www.lohv.org) and start a chapter or affiliate of The League of Humane Voters in your state.

# ARE ANIMALS FOR EATING?

## BAD NEWS FOR KANGAROOS

BY E.M. FAY



In a blatant example of deceit, an Australian industry that **kills kangaroos for their meat** has launched a competition to find a more acceptable name for what they describe as a leaner alternative to beef and lamb.

Unfortunately, kangaroo meat is popular in France, Belgium, Germany, and Russia. Australians have shown some reluctance to eat their fellow natives so far. The competition is seeking to

change this perceived "squeamishness" by coming up with a phony, harmless-sounding name.

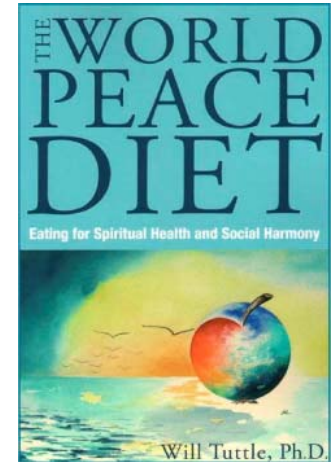
Even though Australians are allegedly sentimental about their national symbol, hundreds of naming suggestions have been submitted already, even including "Skippy," the name of a beloved old television series about a clever kangaroo.

The shocking fact is that four million of these beautiful, intelligent animals are slaughtered each year to cater to a multi-million dollar export business.

Photo from: <http://www.sciencenews.net.au/images/kangaroo-and-baby-joey1.jpg>

To read the whole story, go to <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4452704.stm>.

## THE WORLD PEACE DIET Read and Heed Its Message



While we don't consider the animals above to be food, we do think of other animals as food - simply because it is so ingrained in our culture. A book we highly recommend is **The World Peace Diet** by **Dr. Will Tuttle**. We suggest that you do yourself and our world a favor by reading and heeding its message.

<http://worldpeacediet.org/>



Photo with permission from the International Primate Protection League. Please visit [www.ippl.org](http://www.ippl.org) to see the excellent work that the International Primate Protection League is doing.

## PRIMATES AS MEAT?

Chimpanzees, gorillas, and other non-human primates face extinction from **illegal hunting for meat**, habitat loss, big-game hunting, and collection by zoos and research institutions. Please visit: **International Primate Protection League**, founded by **Dr. Shirley McGreal** at [www.ippl.org](http://www.ippl.org) and the **Jane Goodall Institute** <http://www.janegoodall.org/>

## MUST-SEE WEBSITES

### HELP THE MOONBEAR



If you like bears, you will LOVE moonbears. Sadly they are being killed for their body parts and flesh. Please see and sign their petition.

<http://moonbears.org/>

Photo from: <http://media.photobucket.com/image/Moonbear%20photos/emorynwong/Moon%20Bear/jasper.jpg>

### WILDLIFE WATCHING FOR CHILDREN

<http://www.sciencemadesimple.com/animals.html#ANIMALS>

DUCKS, GEESE, SWANS AND OTHER WATERBIRDS

Do you have a question such as, "I found a duck all alone, what should I do?" Visit:

<http://www.carolinawaterfowlrescue.com/bird411.html> for some excellent suggestions

Also, take a look at their website: [www.carolinawaterfowlrescue.com](http://www.carolinawaterfowlrescue.com) in NC.



### "How to Deer-Proof Your Garden in Five Easy Steps."

Please visit this informative and helpful website.

<http://deerproofyourgarden.com/>

Sandy Baker is a life-long organic gardener, past retail greenhouse/nursery owner. Her experience along with ongoing research opportunities keep



her material fresh and current. She has co-authored several articles and authored the guidebook above.

# THREE AFRICAN LIONS, THREE MOUNTAIN LIONS, AND ONE BLACK LEOPARD

**Wildlife Watch** will never forget the large cats that our donors allowed us to rescue from the Catskill Game Farm. There were so many pitfalls during those days, including where they would or could go. Time has borne out the fact that we and the cats were carefully guided by a power that had only blessings in store for them. This is a story of intervention in what would otherwise have been a dismal future for them. We are forever grateful to our donors, and to **The Wildcat Sanctuary** for providing these precious beings with THE BEST forever home. We hope you enjoy this follow-up.

## R.O.C.K. - Rehabbers Offer Care and Kindness

### Caring for the Catskill Game Farm Cats at The Wildcat Sanctuary in Sandstone, MN

BY ALICIA ICE



It seems like a lifetime ago when the three lions first arrived at The Wildcat Sanctuary (TWS) in Minnesota from the Catskill Game Farm in New York. Aslan, Asha and Shanti Deva have now been with us for four years. The breakthrough they all have made in both health and personality is amazing. After enduring many years of cramped, filthy cages and neglect, the three single lions have now formed a true pride. Aslan was once aggressive to people and would often charge the fence when confronted. He has now come to trust his keepers and no longer feels threatened by the presence of people. The two girls have also learned to trust and have calmed down considerably. They can often be found lounging in their fire-hose hammock or romping with Aslan. They are also fond of

chasing their neighbors, the tigers Titan and Lilly along their enclosure wall. While Titan is not impressed, Lilly believes she could take them all down, possibly in one swipe.

One of the first things done at TWS when a new animal arrives is an intake exam. This includes drawing blood, doing a full physical, spay or neuter and inserting a microchip. Before the lions arrived we knew we needed larger equipment for veterinary medicine. We already had two big cats but with the fast approaching arrival of Aslan's pride, the pressure was on. We obtained a stainless steel table for surgical procedures and an x-ray machine that both accommodate up to 500 pounds and also a larger anesthesia machine. Asha and Shanti Deva needed to be spayed so the new equipment was put to the test and passed with flying colors. We chose to leave Aslan intact since neutering a male lion causes them to lose their mane. Since the spays, the lions have not needed any veterinary care that would need sedation, thankfully. However, a new adventure for the keepers was getting the lions vaccinated without having to sedate them. Due to the new found trust in the keepers this procedure turned out to be fairly simple with a hand injection or small blow dart.

Thanks to our veterinary team including Dr. Baillie, Dr. Blake and the staff of Cedar Pet Clinic, we are able to perform all the necessary procedures on-site to keep our residents healthy. For each of our 100 plus residents



Aslan

they perform full physicals every three years, including taking blood work, help us vaccinate, and are at the ready should a resident become ill or injured. All of their services are donated and we could not do it without them. We have learned many new and surprising things about veterinary medicine in exotic cats. We surely will continue to strive to provide excellent care for all of our residents whether they are great or small.

Wildlife Watch urges you to put The Wildcat Sanctuary high on your list of organizations worthy of your contributions. Please visit: [www.wildcatsanctuary.org](http://www.wildcatsanctuary.org)

Contact: **Tammy Thies**, Director,  
(320) 245-6871 <http://www.wildcatsanctuary.org/> Sandstone, MN 55072

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Become a fan of TWS on Facebook and receive daily photos, videos and more at

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Wildcat-Sanctuary/185864382182?v=wall>.

**Alicia Ice** is a Wildcat Sanctuary Keeper at the Wildcat Sanctuary ([www.wildcatsanctuary.org](http://www.wildcatsanctuary.org))



Shazam having a good day.



Asha under sedation. No, you can't do this when the cats are awake.



The three artists: Max, Matty, and Mia.



Shanti Deva putting the finishing touches on her painting. She has always been a Jackson Pollock fan.



After the love of his life died at the Catskill Game Farm, Shazam became unapproachable. Here he is with his favorite keeper, Trista: She's the only human for whom he has this much affection.



Asha when she was spayed. Dr. Baillie was off camera

## WILDLIFE WATCH NEEDS YOU!

Wildlife Watch needs your help more than ever to continue providing this vital national service for helping injured and orphaned wildlife. In addition to our national hotline, Wildlife Watch lobbies for wildlife protection bills, does direct rescue locally, and contributes to the local rehabbers for their care of the babies we bring to them. Through our publication, the **Wildlife Watch**

**Binocular**, Wildlife Watch emphasizes the unique spirit of individual animals and promotes wildlife watching as a means of spiritually and ethically relating to other beings, and as an enhancement of our life enjoyment.

**Will you become a part of our team?**

**YES**

For additional articles, photos, and items of interest, please visit our enhanced website at: [www.wildwatch.org](http://www.wildwatch.org)

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# EYE ON THE NEWS

## CLIMATE CHANGE ACCELERATES FOREST DIE-OFF

SYNOPSIS BY E.M. FAY

The first major, large-scale study of the mortality rate of coniferous forests reveals disturbing data: the forests are dying off twice as fast as they were a mere 17 years ago. And climate change is the cause.

Seventy-six forested regions in six western states, as well as British Columbia, were studied by scientists over a period of 50 years. All ages of tree groups - including some up to 500 years old - have been affected by climate change, the researchers said.

As Jerry Franklin, Professor of Forest Resources at the University of Washington, put it, "Much of the world's population in North America,

Europe, most of China, and large portions of Russia, live near temperate forests, so what happens in these forests has global importance." ... "Forest loss has the potential to greatly exceed forest establishment."

Among the many related effects on trees of warmer temperatures are the longer life spans of such harmful insects as the bark beetle, better conditions for invasive species and pathogens, earlier summer droughts, and less snow pack.

Trees have long been known to be a major regulator of a healthy world climate because they give off oxygen while they store carbon dioxide. So, we are now facing a new danger in



Photo from: <http://static.guim.co.uk/sys-images/Guardian/Pix/pictures/2009/1/22/1232637728264/Global-warming-prompts-in-001.jpg>

the fact that trees emit more carbon dioxide when they die than they absorb.

As forests provide shelter and food for wildlife, the tree die-off is likely to have the most immediate impact on animals' lives. But the death of our forests has inevitable and tragic consequences for us

all. This is yet another reason to urge policy-makers to stop dragging their feet and take rapid action against climate change.

Read the whole story in the new issue of Jan. 2000 issue of Science, or at: <http://www.cnn.com/2009/TECH/science/01/22/study.forests.dying/>

## MUST-SEE WEBSITES

### TWO BROTHERS

LOOKING FOR A GOOD MOVIE ABOUT TIGERS? LOOK NO FARTHER.

The salutary message of this extraordinary movie, "Two Brothers," is that



we should revere tigers and all wild animals for the glimpse they give us of the beauty and diversity of creation. After this close encounter with these two magnificent tigers, you will want to add your voice and your donations to organizations working to save the lives and habitats of all the other tigers and Sanghas (the two tiger brothers) in the world. Photo and review excerpt above is from the following website: <http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/films/films.php?id=8565>

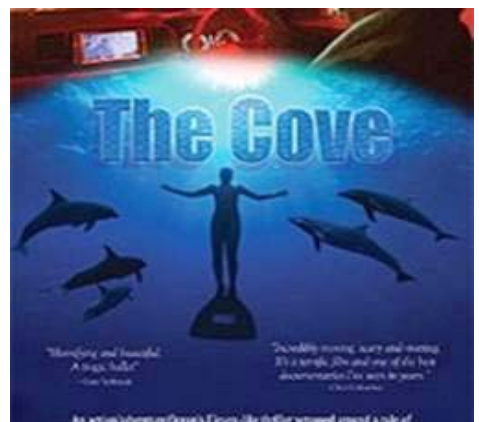
### FROM THE STREETS OF BROOKLYN TO THE CENTER OF GYRE

Two young people from Brooklyn, NY, set sail to witness a toxic area of the ocean that is the size of Texas - witness this shocking expose for yourselves by visiting:

<http://www.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/americas/02/16/vbs.toxic.garbage.island/index.html>

### "THE COVE" WINS...

"The Cove" is named the best documentary at U.S. Critics' Choice Awards. The documentary shows the slaughter of dolphins captured and killed for entertainment in a Japanese fishing village. The movie has captured public attention and prompted global criticism of dolphin killing.



# LET'S GO WILDLIFE WATCHING VISITING THE FLORIDA KEY DEER

PHOTO AND REVIEW BY ANNE MULLER



Florida is such a gem. I never tire of the beautiful wildlife. This year we had the good fortune to stay in Key Largo. What was nice about Key Largo was that it was a) affordable! and b) it was near the Everglades National Park, Shark Valley, Coconut Grove, and the other Keys. I had always heard about the key deer, but had never had the opportunity to see them in person. Why did I think they were the size of Chihuahuas? No, no, no! They're somewhat smaller than a small doe from our neck of the woods, but they are not microscopic, you WILL see them, promise. The trick is to go during dawn or dusk when they are out and about. If you go at night, you won't be able to see anything, and they tend

to hunker down during the day to stay out of the hot sun and, probably, avoid human activity. As neighborhoods have been built in what used to be exclusively their home, you will have to tour the neighborhood streets to see them on No Name Key. I'm assuming that the people who live with the deer have become quite used to them, and, as well, used to the tourists who drive slowly up and down their streets to catch a glimpse of the deer. In speaking to one resident, who suggested that we wait several hours longer to see the deer, it was clear that everyone loved and accepted the deer in their midst; and the feeling seemed to be mutual. The deer were quite relaxed as they crossed the roads and meandered past houses. Not having been harmed in those areas, they were very friendly - a wildlife watcher's dream. Why should animals have to live in fear? There are patches of woods between and behind houses, but basically Key deer habitat these days is in neighborhoods. While there were several pocket parks to visit, the deer were either very well hidden or not there.

Judging by the debris left behind in one park that we self-visited, my guess is that the deer felt safer in areas that had more human oversight. Although it wasn't the forested habitat that I anticipated, rather asphalt and houses, I still highly recommend that you pay a visit to the Key deer when you get to southern Florida. It's only a couple of hours from Miami, it's on the way to Key West, and it's close enough to the Everglades so that you can build the detour into your travels. We saw the deer on No Name Key, but the deer easily swim from island to island, so you will see them on other Keys as well. IT'S RATHER DAUNTING TO REALIZE THAT IT'S THE ONLY PLACE ON EARTH WHERE YOU CAN SEE THE LITTLE KEY DEER! Visit: [http://www.fws.gov/nationalkeydeer/national\\_map.html](http://www.fws.gov/nationalkeydeer/national_map.html)

## Indian Elephants Released from Zoos

SYNOPSIS BY E.M. FAY

In a move welcomed by animal advocates everywhere, Indian officials have decided upon the remarkably enlightened policy of releasing all the elephants in Indian zoos and circuses into wildlife parks and game sanctuaries. The animals will be allowed to move about and graze freely, although mahouts, traditional elephant trainers, will monitor them.

Approximately 140 elephants from Indian zoos and circuses will be in this program. It is believed that this new policy was brought about by complaints from animal rights activists who noted that captive elephants are often kept in chains while living in zoos and with circuses. It is a known fact that captive elephants suffer more from such diseases as arthritis and obesity and die prematurely compared to wild elephants.

Elephants have long been acknowledged to be intelligent, social animals with strong family ties and active memories.

Unfortunately, the thousands of elephants still living in temples and used as timber lifters in logging camps are not included in this program. Perhaps if animal advocates worldwide show their appreciation of the new Indian policy, and continue to speak out against all forms of enslavement for elephants, these, too, may some day be freed.

As John Cannon, a well-known poet from the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, put it, "*At least some individuals and countries are becoming aware of the need to transition from keeping wild animals in captivity to honoring the rights of these animals to be free. Around the world, the transition will be slow and piecemeal, but at least there is a growing awareness of the impracticality (and, hopefully, the immorality) of keeping wild animals captive.*"

Read the whole story at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8356553.stm>



**If you need help  
for wildlife, call  
1-877-WILDHELP  
OR  
1-877-945-3435**

Wildlife Watch maintains a Wildlife Help Hotline to help humane folks who have found an injured or orphaned wild animal. We maintain lists of wildlife rehabilitators throughout the country, and we will do our best to help you find the wildlife care professional closest to you. Our hotline helps us to help hundreds of people and animals annually.

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## HAVE YOU LOST A COMPANION ANIMAL? NEVER GIVE UP -- TWO STORIES OF HOPE

BY ANNE MULLER

### IT CAN TAKE WEEKS, MONTHS, OR EVEN YEARS, BUT FINDING THEM CAN AND DOES HAPPEN



<http://www.nbcchicago.com/news/local-beat/Money-Is-No-Object-in-Search-For-Missing-Pooch-72612147.html?yhp=1>

This article caught my attention and came as another reminder that no matter how bleak the situation looks, you mustn't give up.

I recently read about a man who had left his dog, Casey (photo above) with a pet sitter for a week. While he was gone, Casey jumped a four-foot fence and took off running. After a diligent search a week later, she was found hanging around someone's home who had been feeding her. "She went crazy when she saw me," her human guardian said. "She was whining with joy for about a half an hour." So was he, no doubt! ☺

I was reminded of my own experience: Several years ago I had some furniture removed from my house, and later that evening discovered that one of our very skittish and semi-feral cats had gotten out of the house during the

commotion. I could only think that he had been hiding inside the sofa that had been taken to a landfill. We drove hours to the various landfills to find our sofa and check inside, but we met with no luck at all. For months, I imagined my poor, frightened boy freezing, starving and huddled inside of the sofa springs. I imagined the sofa hoisted in the air by trucks, then dropped and smashed into bits and buried. Not good!



Photo of BeeBee - left with the elfin face - his brother, Bee, right.

After our landfill search yielded nothing, I began to post everywhere in our neighborhood thinking he might have jumped from the truck prior to being hauled away. I didn't really believe that scenario, but was willing to try anything. The first round of fliers brought a couple of calls, and we followed those leads without success. He had been gone for two months and a bitter cold winter had set in. The howling snow

storms buried my hope of finding my boy alive. I called my old friend, Ellie, to commiserate with her because the last time we'd talked she was grieving over a lost cat. I was the one who had turned her on to cats many years before. I got her to adopt just one little black cat named Toby, and left her with the comment that went something like this, "How would you like to never interact with another member of your own species?" That comment led her to pick up six more cats from the street. She was then the only member of her species in her house. Anyway, when Ellie answered the phone, she told me that she had gotten her cat back after TWO YEARS of trying, and the cat was purring happily next to her at that moment!!! "Post again," she told me. I did. Not too many days later, a neighbor reported that he had seen a cat fitting BeeBee's description. He said he was hanging out with a few "little old lady cats" in back of his house. You guessed right, it was indeed BeeBee!!!!!! He had been living within 1,000 feet of my house. Through the brutal weather, he had wood piles that were covered with tarps to sleep and hide in, and hot potatoes that my neighbor fed the cats outside. So he was taken good care of by the other cats, my neighbor, and whatever name you want to give to the healing force of the universe. No, never give up!