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The Great Sicilian Cat Rescue: One Englishwoman's Mission To Save An Island's Cats



Synopsis

One woman goes to great lengths to save the feral cat populations of Sicily, learning much about the culture and people along the way. Numerous visitors to Mediterranean countries have found their holiday punctuated by trips to feed hungry feral cats. Some try to save injured and sick felines. Not many have gone to the lengths of Jenny Pulling with her one-woman campaign, *Catsnip*. Set against the beautiful and sinister backdrop of Sicily and its enigmatic people, the book charts Jenny Pulling's journey as passionate defender of the island's often abused and ill-treated cats. With no previous experience, she raises funds and organizes teams of British, American, and German vets to work in improvised and clandestine surgeries. On Jenny Pulling's voyage of discovery she encounters the wonderfully eccentric gattare (cat ladies) who devote their time to saving colonies of feral cats; she challenges Sicilian bureaucracy and risks prosecution by the authorities, unwittingly transporting veterinary but illegal drugs from the UK; and she discovers an unknown Sicily, beautiful but scarred by years of domination. Lighthearted but often incredibly moving, this is the story of one woman's mission to rescue an animal she loves, as well as an insight into a unique culture and landscape.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Jennifer Pulling is a writer, playwright, and journalist who has worked for the Guardian and the Telegraph. Her plays include *End of Story* and *Swallow*, and she is the author of *The Best of Taormina*, *The Caring Trap*, and *Feasting and Fasting*.

Jennifer Pulling has made Sicily and the world aware that animals are important beings and deserve our love and respect. WHY isn't this book being published in the United States?

Gift...recipient was very pleased.

Pretty badly written, slow and boring. Dissapointing.

The Great Sicilian Cat Rescue by Jennifer Pulling A chance encounter with a tiny cat with horrific injuries to her leg, set the course for Jennifer Pulling to almost single-handedly challenge and change the way feral cats are viewed in Sicily. Not wanting to leave the cat to die a slow and painful death, she engaged the help of a local man who then took her to a vet, much to the amusement and bewilderment of the local people. Lizzie, as Jennifer named the cat, was the catalyst for what became a life-long mission to improve the welfare and well-being of feral cats. Set in the impossibly beautiful Taormina, under the brooding presence of Mouth Etna, Jennifer finds local gattare (women who care for feral cat colonies) are at first suspicious of her intentions to help them, but then they welcome the idea of trap/neuter/return. With a cast of extraordinary women, and willing vets, all prepared to go more than the extra mile to save a feline's life, Jennifer, time and time again, comes up against the bureaucracy that is steeped in historical mistrust and Mafia-influenced beliefs where promises are made but immediately broken and life, especially animal life, is given no importance or respect. Jennifer's writing is poetic and beautiful. If you have never been to Sicily, by the time you've finished reading the book, you will be familiar with the twisting cobbled streets, the amazing views, the scent of the almond trees and the colonies of feral cats that live in the shadows. Not only does Jennifer write about Catsnip, an organisation she set up for the trap/neuter/return of the feral cats, she discusses the historical and cultural history of Sicily, which shapes how decisions are still made today, the corruption and deep mistrust that resides in many town halls and in the hearts and lives of the local people. The frustrations that Jennifer felt at being given the run-around by the officials in the town halls is palpable. To be so near, yet so far, knowing that hundreds of feral cats needing health care as well as neutering to stop the population explosion and the threat of sickly kittens dying, are what drove her on until she achieved her goals. Speaking fluent Italian helps but many holidaymakers who encounter feral cats for the first time, who cannot speak the language, often give up in desperation and frustration when seeing a sick cat in need of medical care, and not being able to make their plight understood. Many people

on holiday feed feral cats that come begging for food, but what happens to those cats when they return to their own countries? Bureaucracy and red tape mean that it can be a lengthy process requiring mountains of paperwork, a pet passport, neutering, micro-chipping, and injections against rabies, before a cat can be brought back to the UK. And many airlines will not allow a cat to travel with the person who has adopted it; cats must travel in the hold with the luggage; dark, noisy with noxious fumes – very scary, indeed for a feral cat to experience. The Great Sicilian Cat Rescue is a book that you will not be able to put down and is one that I would suggest you want to read repeatedly, such is the beauty of the writing, and the gift that Jennifer has of painting such a vivid picture of life in Sicily. At the back of the book, Jennifer includes a practical chapter outlining suggestions and what to do and in the final chapter, she lists various organisations that will help cats in Italy and Sicily. The aims of Catsnip are as follows: To pursue a catch/neuter/return programme of feral cats in Sicily on a longer term and to alter the mindset of local people, particularly young people. To attempt to persuade them to see animals as sentient beings capable of the same feelings as human beings and also with needs and rights, which should be respected, particularly because they cannot speak for themselves. To gain permission to take vets to Sicily on an official basis for catch/neuter/return sessions. To address the running of kennels and catteries in tourist areas, where animals live in atrocious conditions.

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