

A Unique Feral Colony

The Castañeda family found a small colony of feral cats in a nearby park that did not look well. Robert, Kathy and their kids loved animals. They saved a stranded dog and took in three kittens with no mother cat showing up to feed them into their own home. None of them could bring themselves to just allow the cats to suffer.

To trap-neuter-release the cats would take some time, as none of the adult cats or the kittens would come to them, so the family bought some kitten food to get all of them on the road toward health, giving them both canned and dry food and plenty of clean, fresh water. The kids all enjoyed watching the kittens, especially, sneaking up on the food, then devouring it.

Enjoying the trips to the park to see the cats became a routine venture for all five. However, the kids noticed that some raccoons had begun to poke around the food bowls, and they wanted to feed the raccoons, too. The kids were delighted with the way that the raccoons scooped up the food with their human-like hands and put it in their mouths like people eat popcorn.

The cats were beginning to look a bit healthier, with brought joy to the hearts of the Castañeda family. The raccoons already looked pretty healthy. The whole family enjoyed a trip to the store to make certain that all of the cats and raccoons had plenty of dry food, wet cat food for the colony of cats. Robert, Jr. looked up information on what raccoons eat and he learned that they like corn, so he selected frozen corn to thaw for the gaze of raccoons. The kids were so happy to be feeding the animals.

After a few weeks, children began gathering to watch the cats and raccoons eating. They were all delighted to see them and the animals happy and eating. Occasionally, a child would bring something from home to add to the buffet. Unfortunately, none of the cats or raccoons would come to the children, which disappointed them, but it wasn't too bad. The younger animals began to intermingle with each other, as well, with kittens and baby raccoons eating together from the same bowls. This was a treat for everyone, even Robert and Kathy.

After a while, when the Castañedas were out feeding the cats and raccoons, now there were opossums joining in the meal. It was surprising that opossums were out while the sun was still up, but the days were getting shorter. A mother with her children were walking past and she noted that she had never seen cats, raccoons and opossums eating together. She would have thought that they would be fighting, not getting along.

As the days were shorter but the family wanted to maintain the feeding schedule, more opossums joined in. In addition to the cat colony and the gaze of raccoons, now a passel of opossums is in the large family of animals.

The cats were beginning to greet and play with the Castañedas, especially the kids. This is what the family had looked forward to from the time they began feeding the cats. They all looked good and healthy now, as do the raccoons and opossums. Since the cats appeared healthy now, it was time to begin the series of trap-neuter-release with the cats which would have them generally checked out by a veterinarian and get them vaccinations.

It was an amazing sight when the first five cats were returned to the group. All of the animals greeted and welcomed the cats back home. There were fifteen cats in total, so this occurred three times, and all three times all of the cats, raccoons and opossums met the returning cats back to the gaze-passel-colony. It is surprising the ways that animals respond to one another when they rely on the same source for food and water, but they don't have to battle for it.

As time went on, more and more people began coming to help feed the miniature zoo and to see and enjoy the inspiring sight. If only humans would behave with such camaraderie.