



E.J. Harris/EO Media Group

Robin Harris of Mission found this cat, Cleo, in her hay barn in Pendleton last weekend and called the number on her tags to find the owners. It turns out the 7-month old kitten was wandering for the last two weeks after its family lost the cat during a wreck in Interstate 84 near Harris' house.

A long way back home

Kitten survives wreck and two weeks alone

By KATHY ANEY
EO Media Group

PENDLETON — A cat named Cleo will reunite with her family after a car wreck and days of wandering unfamiliar country.

The saga started Nov. 28 when a tire blew on Amanda Egan's van. Egan was in the process of moving from Utah to Washington and drove on Interstate 84 about a mile east of the Wildhorse Resort & Casino. Her husband Shane was ahead of her in a Ford Tempo. He had pulled off at exit 216 to gas up and was waiting for her. Amanda had the couple's three young daughters and the family's pets — Cleo, a seven-month-old kitten, and a black Chihuahua-pug mix named Irene.

"The van started to shake. The tire on the driver's side blew apart," Egan said. "I tried to move to the side, but we swerved and rolled over and landed on the top."

Egan believes she may have passed out for a short time. When she swam back to consciousness, she heard Elinor, 5, Molly, 3, and Adeline, 1, screaming in fright.

Amazingly, all were fine, except for scratches and bruises. A police officer at the scene asked if anyone else was in the car and Amanda instantly remembered the animals. Both had vanished. Soon came the discovery that the dog had run into traffic and been killed. No one could find Cleo.

Egan felt anguished as she assessed the kitten's chances of survival. The family stayed in Pendleton three days to regroup. After renting a trailer and searching unsuccessfully again for the cat, they finally set off with heavy hearts for their new home in Bellingham, Washington.

That was that. The girls cried for several nights, but life went on.

Big surprise

Then, two weeks after the accident, the family got a surprise phone call from Robin Harris, who lives about a mile north of the accident site.

"I have this gray cat," Harris said. "Her name is Cleo."

Harris explained she had seen a blur of motion in her hay barn and spotted the kitten scampering up into the rafters. At first, she thought the cat was wild or had been dumped, then Harris noticed the cat wore a polka-dotted collar with bright pink tags. She climbed up a stack of hay to get a closer look at the tags and found the name Cleo and a phone number. The kitten snuggled into Harris' arms.

Egan greeted the news with both exhilaration and incredulity.

"Oh, my gosh," she said to Harris. "You found her?"

The girls, she said, had been missing their animals. Molly had slept each night since the accident with two stuffed animals she had gotten from the EMTs the day of the wreck — she'd named them both Cleo. After the call, Egan quickly shared the good news with her daughters.

"They were so excited when I told them Cleo had shown up," Egan said. "Their mouths were wide open."

Harris, who serves as a board member for the Pendleton Animal Welfare Shelter (PAWS), is working out a way to get Cleo back to her family. Unless she can find someone who is heading to the Seattle area soon, on Saturday, PAWS board member Cindy Spiess will likely add Cleo to a group of animals she is transporting to Portland and meet the Egan somewhere for a transfer.

Harris will have a hard time saying goodbye. Cleo won her heart and was quickly upgraded from the barn.

"She's living in the house now," Harris said.

Harris said she sees the kitten's survival as a marvel considering the cold and the coyotes.

"I don't know how she survived for two weeks with the temperatures we've had," Harris said, "and I saw two coyotes just recently."

Harris gave kudos to the Egan family for placing a tag on Cleo with contact information. Even better, she said, would be a microchip that contains information that can be accessed at most veterinarians and animal shelters.

Cleo will head home soon as can be arranged. For those heading to the Seattle area and willing to transport the kitten, Harris urged them to email PAWS at pawspendleton@gmail.com.

Conservatives seek an ally in Trump in Western land disputes

By JOHN FLESHER
and BRADY McCOMBS
Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY — Conservatives who have long complained about the government's control of vast Western lands hope they will have a new ally in Donald Trump, who has sent mixed signals about how he might manage land and whether he would relinquish federal authority over millions of acres.

The president-elect has pledged to honor Theodore Roosevelt's tradition of conservation in the West, with its expansive deserts, snow-capped mountain ranges and red rock canyons. But he has also said he will "unleash" energy production there and has railed against "faceless, nameless bureaucrats" in land-management agencies.

Dozens of demands for land handovers have surfaced in Western state legislatures in recent years, and more are sure to be offered in Congress during the Trump administration.

"Those who are championing these issues certainly see this as a rare opportunity," said Karla Jones, director of a task force for the American Legislative Exchange Council, a Washington-based organization that develops bills for conservative lawmakers.

On Tuesday, Trump offered the post of interior secretary, the nation's top custodian of public lands, to Republican Rep. Ryan Zinke of Montana, who has not said whether he will accept. The retired Navy SEAL insists that he does not favor relinquishing federal control of the land, as Democrats allege.

Western states

Twelve Western states contain more than half of the nation's 640 million acres of federal public lands. Those lands comprise more than 60 percent of Alaska, Idaho and Utah.

Resentment of government control has simmered across the West for decades, occasionally boiling over into show-downs such as the armed takeover of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge headquarters in Oregon last winter.

Only a few extremists resort to such tactics. Yet the frustration is evident in countless protests, resolutions and bills demanding a greater say for local residents or seeking the sale of millions of acres to private buyers.

Many conservatives accuse federal managers of putting more value on endangered wildlife than on people and jobs. Trump's election raises hopes for more oil and gas drilling, mining, grazing and timber harvesting.

How far the Trump administration will go is unclear. But those who have long dreamed of overthrowing a system they consider tantamount to colonialism say the time is now.

"The founding fathers, when they drafted the Constitution, never intended for the federal government to own land like this," said Kirk Chandler,



AP Photo/Don Ryan

A large fir tree heads to the forest floor after it is cut by an unidentified logger in the Umpqua National Forest near Oakridge. For conservatives who have long believed federal managers of America's vast public lands put more value on endangered owls than people and jobs, Donald Trump's election raises hopes for significant increases in oil and gas drilling, mining, grazing, timber harvesting and perhaps even a shift of control to state or local governments.



AP Photo/Keith Ridler

Demonstrators gather near a national wildlife refuge to protest against a group occupying the land near in Burns in January. For conservatives who have long believed federal managers of America's vast public lands put more value on endangered owls than people and jobs, Donald Trump's election raises hopes for significant increases in oil and gas drilling, mining, grazing, timber harvesting and perhaps even a shift of control to state or local governments.

a rancher and county commissioner from Weiser, Idaho. "It's supposed to be the people's land."

Gearing up

Environmentalists and their supporters in Congress are gearing up for a fight, saying strong federal regulation is needed to protect water and wildlife habitat.

"Any admin that tries to reverse 100-year history of #PublicLands that belong to every American is going to have to do it over my dead body," Sen. Martin Heinrich tweeted after Trump's election.

The Democrat from New Mexico later told The Associated Press that cash-strapped states would probably sell at least some lands to help cover fire suppression and other management costs. "No trespassing" signs would pop up in places where public access has been taken for granted, he said, raising the ire of outdoor sports enthusiasts.

"I think you will see a real populist uprising when you start taking away access to people's local fishing hole," Heinrich said.

Local control

Supporters of state or local

control seethed as the Obama administration created or expanded more than two dozen national monuments that protected hundreds of millions of acres, imposed a moratorium on new coal production and canceled dozens of oil and gas leases.

Despite their shared preference for local control, activists do not have a single plan for accomplishing it. Much will depend on Trump, who told Field & Stream magazine in January that he opposed transferring federal lands to the states.

"I don't like the idea because I want to keep the lands great, and you don't know what the state is going to do," Trump said. "I mean, are they going to sell if they get into a little bit of trouble?"

Yet he endorsed state control in a guest column for a Nevada newspaper, a position the Republican platform strongly backs. A transition team spokesman did not

return email messages seeking comment.

Zinke, Trump's choice for interior secretary, has walked a tightrope in Montana, where opinions about federal dominion are more divided than in some Western states.

During his re-election campaign, Democrats accused him of signing a pledge in 2012 declaring Montana's lands as sovereign and not subject to federal control. He said he did not remember doing so and resigned as a GOP convention delegate over the platform's stance. Yet he has criticized federal land management and voted for demonstration projects allowing states to manage portions of national forests.

Republican Rep. Diane Black of Tennessee plans to re-introduce a measure from last year that would authorize states to administer energy leasing and permitting on federal lands. The previous version of the bill was never called for a vote.

Transfer of acres

Another bill that could be offered again would allow the transfer of 2 million acres of national forests to the states. Rep. Mark Amodei, a Nevada Republican, has sought to reduce the portion of land under federal control in his state from more than 80 percent to about 75 percent.

Skeptics consider federal land transfer a fringe issue, and industry groups tend to avoid it. The National Mining Association has no formal position, focusing instead on specific battles such as a government proposal to ban mineral development on 10 million acres to protect the imperiled sage grouse.

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