36 Facts About Cats - mental_floss List Show (Ep.221)

List Show
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Hi, I'm John Green. Welcome to my salon. This is Mental Floss on YouTube. And this is Lyla. You know, Lyla, we have a lot in common: we're both friends with Meredith, we both live in Indiana, we both hate mice. The major difference is that you do your own grooming, whereas I rely upon Mark for my makeup.

Anyway, did you know that Mary Todd Lincoln was once asked if Abe Lincoln had any hobbies? And her reply was "cats."

That's the first of many cat facts that I will be sharing with you today in this video presented by our friends at Geico. Hold on a moment, I have to go find Lyla.

(Intro)

Since I'm talking about historical figures who loved cats, Charles Dickens once said, "What greater gift than the love of a cat?" You have to remember he lived before the Xbox One.

John Lennon was also a big fan of cats. Over the years, he had cats named Salt and Pepper, Major and Minor, Tim, Sam, Mimi, Bernard, Sally, Elvis, and Jesus. Do you think Jesus walked around just thinking he was, you know... Jesus? Of course he did, he was a cat.

Poly-dactyl felines are sometimes called Hemingway cats because Ernest Hemingway once had a six-toed cat named Snowball. He let it run wild outside his Key West home and now some 40-50 six toed descendants of Snowball who are still allowed to roam around his house.

Speaking of which, outdoor cats somehow time-share areas to prevent fights. Like, even if multiple cats like going to the same place, they seem to have some way of knowing how to avoid each other.

In 1884, Thomas Edison reportedly made the first viral cat video. He filmed two cats hashing it out in a tiny boxing ring, with a bit of help from human handlers, of course. It's a great video, but I'm gonna stick with keyboard cat.

The cat who played Crookshanks in Harry Potter endured a great indignity in service to his work. His trainers would gather bits of his shed fur, roll it into balls, and clip them back onto him in order to really pump up his rough and and slightly mangy appearance.

Onto another famous cat- Mr. Bigglesworth, the hairless sphinx from the Austin Powers movies, is named SGC Belfry Ted Nude-Gent.

Anybody- Nude-Gent? Eh? 'Cause he's a sphinx.

Some cats who had nothing to do with the film industry still managed to get famous- for example, Humphrey was the first feline to be named 'Chief Government Mouser' in the United Kingdom.

The black-and-white cat wandered into number 10, Downing Street in 1989, and was quickly employed by the cabinet office. He remained in the esteemed position for three successive Prime Ministers, proving that while it's hard out there for a cat, it's harder out there for a Prime Minister.

Anyway, nowadays, the British Government employs over 100,000 cats to keep mice away- that's almost double the population of Greenland.

Bill Clinton's cat, Socks, didn't love the family's Labrador Retriever, Buddy, which is an example of irony, because his name was *literally* Buddy.

A cat named Tibbles, along with several other cats, caused the Stephens Island Wren to go extinct, as a result of over-hunting, which leads to the question- who would name their cat Tibbles?

No wonder he acted out in anger and hunted down all those Stephens Island Wrens!

The mayor of Talkeetna, Alaska, is a cat, named Stubbs. He is now responsible for the town's steady stream of around 30-40 tourists daily, which is pretty good, or a town of just 900 people.
Some of us know Talkeetna, Alaska, because of the Talkeetna Bluegrass festival, which is famous because that's where I got dumped one time.

In 1963, France sent the first cat into space, but in the two years prior, they had sent several rats into space- no word on whether the cat was able to you know, like, track down the rats... Probably not, though- I've seen Gravity.

This cat's on its way to space, but I don't see George Clooney so I'm a little nervous.

In the early 1800s, Trim the cat, along with his owner, Captain Matthew Flinders, completed the first ever circumnavigation of Australia.

And since we're talking about history, scientists once believed that cats were domesticated in ancient Egypt, approximately 4,000 years ago; but new research, published in 2013 shows that a breed of once wild cats lived in close proximity to farmers in China some 53 hundred years ago.

Hairballs were once though to cure epilepsy, the plague, and poisoning; like during the middle ages hairballs were even set in gold. You can also set a cat in gold.

In the 1870's a Belgian village trained 37 mail cats to deliver letters. Conceived by the esteemed Belgian Society for the Elevation of the Domestic Cat, the plan was to wrap waterproof mail bags around each feline's neck and the plan failed.

But some cats have jobs that they're actually pretty successful at, like Tama, the cat who's a station master at the Wakayama Electric Rail Station in Japan, and has two assistants who are also cats.

A study done in 2008 found that Tama helped bring in annually 1.1 billion yen, or 10.44 million dollars, to the local economy thanks to tourism, because who doesn't wanna go to a station that's run by a cat?!

Russia loses about 800 million dollars a year from illegal sturgeon fishing. So in 2003, police in Stavropol hired a cat named Rusik to sniff out sturgeon smugglers.

Speaking of Russia, in the 1960s America deployed the first cat ever used to spy on the Russians. It cost 20 million dollars, and was immediately hit by a taxi after leaving the CIA van. This cat had recording devices surgically implanted into it, and it made it, like, one minute into Russia.

In 1997, Ketzel the cat jumped on a piano and created a song. The cat's owner transcribed that tune and submitted the piece to a Parisian music competition, where it won a prize! That's awesome, even cats are less tone deaf than I am.

Then of course we have fictional cats, like Hello Kitty, who was actually partially named after Alice's cat, Kitty, from Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*. The creator added the "Hello" later. Why is Hello Kitty in a jar by the way?

Speaking of name origins, Tom, of the Tom and Jerry cartoons, was was originally named Jasper.

Nyan cat was created by 25-year-old Christopher Torres while he was participating in a donation drive for the Red Cross. One person suggested he draw a poptart, and another person suggested that he draw a cat. He ended up creating the first hybrid poptart-cat.

Some cats are actually allergic to humans. Like, 1 in every 200 cats is diagnosed with cat asthma, which is worse when they come into contact with humans. Some people are allergic to cats, of course, but I find that 1 in 200 people lie and say they have a cat allergy, when in fact, they just don't like cats.

According to Psychology Today, quote "The brains of cats have an amazing surface folding and a structure that is about 90% similar to ours." The cerebral cortex, the part of the brain that's responsible for cognitive information processing, is actually more complex in cats than it is in dogs and cats have some 300 million neurons, whereas dogs only have about 160 million.

Speaking of cat brains, cats also have their own form of Alzheimer's disease. Also like us, they can get fat. In fact 55% of American cats are either overweight or obese. Cat's also can't taste sweet food, which makes me wonder- how are they getting obese?!

Cats purr when they're content, but they also purr then they're giving birth, or sick, or nursing, or wounded, or in a stressful situation.

Ugh! Cats! Can't you be straight-forward about any of your feelings?! They're astonishingly emotionally complex. Or maybe they just hate me. I can't tell, actually.

Speaking of how complicated a creature the cat is, some cats prefer licking their paws to drinking out of a water bowl, if they don't like the shape of the water bowl. Some also experience what's called "Whisker Stress". They may not like the pressure of their whiskers while they eat or drink.

Cats spend between 30 and 50% of their days cleaning themselves, which means that even though your cat poops in the house, it's still cleaner than most hipsters. Meredith, We can't say bad things about hipsters, that's our core audience!

Hairballs,by the the way, aren't just for cats. Cows and rabbits are especially prone to hairballs, but their bodies aren't designed to vomit them up.

Fascinatingly, it seems that cats that tumble from great heights have a much better chance of survival than those who fall from 5 stories or fewer. Obviously, don't try this at home, but it may be because terminal velocity for a cat isn't that high and if it comes from really high up it has some more time to like get ready for the fall. Don't try it at home!

And finally I return to my salon to tell you, and also Lyla, the record for a cat surviving a fall, 43 stories. Lyla, I think that's taller than the tallest building in Indianapolis, so you should be fine.

Thanks to Geico for making this video possible, and thanks to you for watching Mental Floss here on YouTube, which is made with the help of all these nice people.

Every week we endeavour to answer one of your mind blowing questions. This week's question comes from Amanda Stewart who asks "Where is the hole in the ozone, in relationship to Earth's land masses? Does it stay in the same place or does it move?"

Well Amanda that's a fascinating question that I feel unqualified to answer, after all, I am not a scientist. But we have one here in the studio today, Lyla.

If you have a mind blowing question please leave it in comments. We endeavour to answer as many as we can. Thanks again for watching, and as we say in my home town, don't forget to be awesome.