



NASH BRIDGES – SURVIVOR

by Nancy Mc Arthur

"We are visiting from SoCal and went to visit Natural Bridges and we saw the skinniest feral cat. It came close to us meowing but it wouldn't let us get too close. We are leaving today. Any cat lovers out there please help this poor baby!" (Anna's post on the CHS Facebook page dated Sept 4, 2015).

Word of this apparently abandoned kitty reached Kathy Arentz who contacted me and asked if I was up for a rescue mission. And of course I was! We made plans to meet at 9:00 am on Friday, September 11 and to hike in to try to find this cat and save it if we could. However at 7:30 that morning Kathy called me and said she wouldn't be able to make it – the Butte Fire was just a mile from her house and she needed to start packing her animals for evacuation. So I asked my husband and he agreed to go with me although we were both skeptical that we'd find the cat after a week with no food or water.

After hiking the .7 of a mile to the entrance of the cave we called for several minutes but saw no sign of the cat. We had just started across the creek (luckily for the cat there was still plenty of water flowing) to check the other side when I heard a very weak meow. I turned around and there she was – a very skinny, but pretty little tabby – sitting just outside a thicket of berry vines. She darted off as we approached but came out soon to gobble down an entire can of Friskies and several handfuls of dry cat food. She was very wary and any movement at all sent her back into hiding. It was difficult to leave without her that morning, but we had no choice.

For the next five days my husband and I hiked in every morning to feed her and to get her acquainted with us. She got closer every day and more trusting, even to the point of eating off a fork in my hand. She would never get close enough for me to touch her.

Finally on the sixth day Kathy was able to go with us and by then Nash Bridges (after the TV show of the same name) was accustomed to her morning feeding time and she greeted us as we came down to her favorite spot. Kathy got the trap set up and we all sat back waiting on pins and needles...We HAD to be successful on the first attempt. But Nash was aware of the three of us hiding and watching her every move and avoided the trap – she definitely didn't like any kind of change in her territory. Finally after about 45 minutes we heard the trap snap shut and she was in! Poor thing, she was so scared, but so hungry - I watched her take one last bite of food before she turned to run and realized that she couldn't go anywhere.

But she did get to go somewhere - to a much better place. We brought her home and set her up in a quiet room where she could recover from her traumatic experience. It was obvious immediately that she was not feral but just a very scared sweet kitty who had once enjoyed human contact. It has taken a couple of months, but she now trusts us and looks for our attention. She loves to be brushed, and to have her chin scratched and is learning how to play. She is no longer the skinny cat we found hiding in berry vines and drinking from the creek. She gets a healthy helping of Friskies Mariner's Catch (her favorite) twice a day, plus lots of treats...and she definitely lets us know when it's feeding time. She is very content and happy not to be begging for food from visitors to Natural Bridges. And she loves her new cozy warm bed...much better than the cold ground!

Note: Anna, the person that contacted Calaveras Humane Society to report Nash, maintained contact with us following Nash's rescue and in the end pledged in honor of Nash Bridges to donate \$1000 by sending \$100 a month for \$10 months. Thank you, Anna.