

---

## Local man establishes a cat-in-tree service

Posted by TreeTramp - 09/26/2007 08:38am

---

09/24/2007

Local man establishes a cat-in-tree service, for free  
William Kaempffer , Register Staff

NEW HAVEN — It isn't that Marc Mathews lacks activities to occupy his time or that the Fire Department is unsympathetic. He runs his own tree removal business, has a Morris Cove house to keep up, a live-in girlfriend and a high-maintenance pit bull terrier and Siamese cat adopted from the animal shelter.

Even so, the 28-year-old Mathews has launched a new enterprise: rescuing cats that are stranded in trees. For free.

"There's nobody around to do it," he explains. "I can't see leaving them up there when I have the skill to get them down. Not everything is about money."

At a glance, it appears to be a wide-open niche industry. Despite the Rockwellian image of a friendly fireman pulling a cat to safety, most fire departments don't provide the service anymore.

Some tree services will do it for a considerable fee.

Branford resident and cat lover Eunice Lasala, who founded the Branford Compassion Club, a cat rescue group, has enlisted Comcast Cable, Connecticut Light and Power and fire departments in the past, but availability is catch as catch can.

Enter Marc's Cat-in-a-Tree Rescue Service.

"We're very happy to see him," said police Officer Stephani Johnson, who runs the city's animal shelter. "I can't tell you how many calls we get where we just tell people that we really can't help them."

The usual strategy the staff suggests is to put some food — the fishier smelling the better — at the base of the tree and the cat will eventually come down.

Since Mathews dropped off a flier at the Fournier Street shelter, staff has made referrals for stuck cats and baby squirrels that fell out of their nests. If they can't be put back in, they have to be taken to an animal rehabilitator to be fed because the shelter doesn't have the capacity.

"We don't have the equipment or the tree climbing skills to get the animals down or back in" their nests, Johnson said. "The Fire Department doesn't do it anymore because, well, they have to fight fires and go on medical calls."

That's not to say fire departments are unsympathetic. The New Haven department has rescued a puppy that accidentally fell down an ash chute in an unused fireplace and plenty of animals from other precarious spots, but it typically doesn't respond to tree calls.

A bizarre rescue in Meadville, Pa., illustrates the challenges — and unpredictably — of cats and tall perches.

In April, a cat trapped in a tree for three days was rescued by the Crawford County Scuba Team members, who waded through swamp waters to reach the feline. After several unsuccessful efforts, a decision was made to cut down the tree. The tree — and the cat — came down with a splash, but the scared feline scampered up a second tree. When that tree was felled, it climbed up a third. After the third tree came down, the scuba team was able to toss a blanket over the cat.

Mathews' avocation as a cat rescuer — he pays the bills cutting down trees with his business, Connecticut Tree Care — has been brief but, so far, unblemished. He has plucked three from trees, although technically one of them was a favor for a friend and the impetus for the idea for the new service.

His advertising has been limited to a bunch of fliers he printed and left at local animal shelters and veterinary offices and that's generated several referrals. Earlier this month, a woman from Whalley Avenue noticed a cat mewing in a tree in her apartment complex as she left for work and saw it still there when she got home. She called the New Haven Animal Shelter.

The cat, later named Oreo, ended up coming home with Mathews, since he learned it was a stray after the rescue. A week later, Lasala came and retrieved the cat. Mathews gave her the \$20 donation the woman had given him.

Since then, he went up an 80-foot tree to rescue another feline.

---

"There is a real need for this and I think it's wonderful that instead of charging (for the service) he's donating to animal rescue organizations," Lasala said. "I'm sure if the word gets out, he'll be very busy."

Incidentally, Oreo is up for adoption.

Marc's Cat-in-a-Tree Rescue Service can be reached at 812-0555.

=====

### Three cats under his belt

Posted by treeman - 10/01/2007 02:13pm

---

My hats are off to this guy. I did it for free for a while too. It gets a bit more tiresome the more you do it however, especially after a hard day in the trees doing tree work. It is certainly stimulating- rescuing animals and such. You often end up with a crowd of onlookers AND you get to be a celebrated hero of the day. How often do you get that in real life? Just wait until you go after a pet bird. It's a flight of fancy (rarely successful). They up and leave the community when you get near them! That's when you get the other side of the coin as far as hero status.

=====

### Re:Three cats under his belt

Posted by rmbnxs - 10/01/2007 04:54pm

---

Peter, did you hear Bill McDade's story at Rendezvous about rescuing a cat for a little girl at a rest area? Great stuff.

=====

### Re:Three cats under his belt

Posted by treeman - 10/05/2007 05:13pm

---

I did. The way I heard it it was a stroke of luck. A chance stop at a rest stop, pet cat stuck in tree and owners about to pull away because no one could get up into the tree. Bill shows up by chance but has to overcome the hurdle of convincing the local authorities he is up to the task. He gets permission, bags the cat (literally), and for a few moments becomes a much celebrated hero! Not bad for an off chance pit stop.

=====