



Chris Schindler and the HSUS Animal Rescue Team remove seven cats from an apartment that had been badly flooded during Superstorm Sandy. The cats were safely relocated to a temporary shelter.



LOCATIONS: Nassau County, N.Y.; Ocean and Monmouth counties, N.J.

ANIMALS ASSISTED: 257 rescued in the field

The typically bustling seaside towns along New Jersey's barrier islands lay eerily quiet. Days earlier, Superstorm Sandy had cast out residents and made mincemeat of the dense beach communities. Homes were gouged out. Debris lay everywhere.

"I don't think anybody expected this much devastation and flooding," says The HSUS's Chris Schindler.

While most residents had fled with their dogs, many had left cats and other small animals behind with food and water, thinking they'd be back in a few days. When evacuees were prohibited from returning to their homes, an onslaught of frantic calls to the governor's emergency hotline brought a request for support.

In the days and weeks after Sandy swept through, The HSUS responded to those calls—and more. The Animal Rescue Team coordinated search and rescue in hard-hit coastal New Jersey and New York, helped open emergency shelters for displaced pets, and joined door-to-door efforts bringing pet food, supplies, and medications to those who stayed behind.

Wearing winter attire, with flashlights in hand, they searched cold, wrecked houses and temporarily took in pets from struggling owners—many of whom had weathered Sandy only to lose their homes after a second storm dumped 6 inches of snow.

In Monmouth County, field responder Jennifer Kulina-Lanese and her team set up a feeding station, stocked daily with food and water for too-quick-to-catch cats. In a doghouse the team had excavated from the rubble and set up as a shelter, four cats were later seen snuggling inside.

Back in Ocean County, rescuers responded to a backlog of calls about trapped pets. Their first day, several cats were found in a house that had floated a block from its foundation. Another cat was later saved from the rubble of a just-bulldozed home, while six more were rescued from a house that a day later disappeared down a sinkhole.

All told, rescue teams helped save cats, dogs, ferrets, hamsters, parakeets, chinchillas, snakes, rats, iguanas, and even hermit crabs. Schindler remembers finding a goldfish floating on his side in an aquarium, nearly two weeks after the storm. "Nobody thought he was alive until we saw him open his mouth."

Back at the shelter, the goldfish swam with new fervor. And the chinchillas enjoyed a dust pile set out for their bath. "They leapt in that dust and rolled around the cage and were so excited," Schindler says. "They were warm and had all they needed."

ON THE IPAD: View multimedia coverage of the Sandy response.



ANIMALS ASSISTED: nearly 500 given emergency shelter

Kayla Patterson and her 5-year-old daughter, Jazmyn, didn't have time to grab anything as they fled their Lavallette, N.J., home during the storm—not a cell phone, a change of clothes, or even their cat.

In the days that followed, bouncing between friends and an emergency shelter, their worry over Jazmyn's 6-month-old kitten grew. "They were so distraught that other people staying at the shelter felt sorry for them and called our hotline for help," says The HSUS's Hetti Brown. The little girl, she was told, kept asking if Fluffy was dead.

Brown worked with local officials to help find the cat, and soon Fluffy was curled up in a fuzzy blanket at one of three HSUS emergency shelters. "Fluffy came in healthy and happy to be somewhere warm," Brown says, noting of the reunion that followed: "It was emotional. Kayla broke down immediately when she saw Fluffy. The cat was so happy, and Jazmyn just held her."

Nearly 500 displaced animals came through the shelters after the storm. The HSUS assisted additional shelters as well and enlisted boarding facilities to care for special needs pets, like a traumatized

pit bull named Champ who needed a calmer place to chill. At press time, ongoing efforts included working with shelter partners and St. Hubert's Animal Welfare Center to create a long-term fostering network for those still unable to care for their pets.

Overall, the response to this super-storm marked an encouraging step from the drastically less organized aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. When rescue teams arrived in ravaged areas, numerous pet-friendly shelters were already in place. The HSUS had been instrumental in New York City's no-pet-turned-away policy, and New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie made no bones about pets being integral to evacuation plans.

By mid-November, more than 250 animals had been reclaimed by their owners—including Patrick Glenn's pets, who found refuge at an HSUS shelter after he called for help. "I'm so happy ... for what you've done," he said. "You went and rescued my cats, and you even saved two of my goldfish. ... I got my family back again."



Jazmyn reunites with Fluffy.

From left: Michele Elliott embraces her dog at the emergency shelter in Uniondale, N.Y.; Panda receives a visit from her family at the emergency shelter in Monmouth County, N.J.; Patrick Glenn reunites with Jeter.



Other Relief Efforts

Search-and-rescue and emergency sheltering efforts weren't the only focus of responders. The HSUS also helped stock distribution centers with tens of thousands of dollars' worth of donated pet food and supplies for individuals and shelters, from blankets and cushy beds to collars, leashes, kitty litter, and toys.

Days before Sandy made landfall, The HSUS's five-person emerging media team rolled up their sleeves, posting on

Facebook and tweeting information about pet-friendly accommodations up and down the East Coast. They worked closely with federal and state government agencies to ensure accurate, up-to-date details reached residents in the storm's path. Their unique "#sandypets" hashtag gave at least a million Twitter users immediate access to pet-related information: emergency hotline numbers, a checklist of must-haves for disaster preparedness, suggestions on how to help victims, even advice on getting dogs to relieve themselves in the rain.



Being located in Barnstable, Mass., means the Cape Wildlife Center is often exposed to violent Atlantic storms. But that location also means the rehabilitation facility is perfectly situated to receive wildlife injured during those same storms. In the days following Sandy, the center—operated by The Fund for Animals in partnership with The HSUS—took in turtles, ducks, an infant gray squirrel, songbirds, and many hapless seabirds who'd been blown off course, such as two petrels and a wayward brown pelican found foraging in a landfill.