



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Born Free supporters choose their 'top cat' for 2018

***Charlie claims the title by a whisker, with Max a purrr-fect runner-up!
Mini-fundraiser Thea Caine raises over £700 for big cats***

Cat lovers up and down the country have been casting their votes to decide the winner of this year's Big Cat Nap, the annual sleepy pet photo competition in aid of international wildlife charity Born Free.

The charity, based in Horsham, West Sussex, received hundreds of entries during the week-long competition (2nd-8th July) which raises awareness of the plight of big cats in the wild, and also raises funds for Born Free's work to protect threatened species such as lions, cheetah, leopards and tigers.

Two incredible cats – Charlie, a super-relaxed 10-year-old black and white rescue cat from Cambuslang in Glasgow, and Max, a chilled-out 12-year-old Bengal, adopted from the RSPCA in London, were chosen as finalists and social media users asked to decide between the two, with Charlie taking the top spot by a whisker!

Charlie's owner, Deborah McKibbin said: "We're all very proud that Charlie has won the Big Cat Nap! He loves nothing more than snuggling, especially with his Dad and two brothers. He's had a lot of health issues to overcome but is always sweet and understanding. We love him very much."

Max's owner is children's author Lauren St John, whose new mystery novel, Kat Wolfe Investigates, is about a girl who starts a pet-sitting agency to make extra pocket money, and features a huge rescue cat called Tiny.

She said: "Max and I are so excited that he's runner-up in Born Free's #BigCatNap. Like Born Free, I believe that every individual animal matters, and it was in that spirit that I went in search of a rescue Bengal 10 years ago. Max was two when I found him and, since birth, had been locked in a tiny cage with nine other cats in a back bedroom. I like to believe that he chose me. Writing can sometimes be isolating but not with Max around. He's so incredibly smart, loving and mischievous. I can honestly say he's my best friend."

Both Charlie and Max's photos will be used to promote next year's Big Cat Nap.

Six-year-old super-fundraiser Thea Caine from Burnopfield, in Newcastle, raised over £700 for Born Free by taking part in big cat themed activities all week. With help from mum Cheryl, pet cat Charlie and family and friends, Thea successfully undertook a mini-triathlon, a game of tiger tennis at her tennis club in Blaydon, wild cat reading, lion wall art, a tiger swim video, sci-fi cosplay as M'ress the Catian from Star Trek, big cat themed baking, and even her own Big Cat Nap, which saw her stay in bed for 17 hours!

Thea also produced an incredible lion documentary (<https://youtu.be/1gY41mzZP4U>) and hosted a Big Cat Nap party for 14 of her friends from Burnopfield Primary School, in County Durham, where they did tiger face painting, lion art, played tiger tag, sang karaoke (amazing renditions of Katy Perry's Roar!), musical catues (freeze in a cat pose) and musical bumps.

Thea is also running the mini Great North Run with her dad Paul, who will be dressed in full lion costume, on 8th September. Her sponsorship page is still open at: www.justgiving.com/theacaine

To find out more about Born Free's work with big cats, and see more about the Big Cat Nap, please visit: www.bornfree.org.uk

-ENDS-

Image: © Born Free

Notes to Editors:

About Born Free

Born Free's mission is to ensure that all wild animals, whether living in captivity or in the wild, are treated with compassion and respect and are able to live their lives according to their needs. Born Free opposes the exploitation of wild animals in captivity and campaigns to keep wildlife in the wild. Born Free promotes Compassionate Conservation to enhance the survival of threatened species in the wild and protect natural habitats while respecting the needs of and safeguarding the welfare of individual animals. Born Free seeks to have a positive impact on animals in the wild and protect their ecosystems in perpetuity, for their own intrinsic value and for the critical roles they play within the natural world. For more information about Born Free please visit: www.bornfree.org.uk

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