

Weather forecasting and other ship's cat jobs

Lacking an opposable thumb it has taken Bengie more than a year to update her crew duties as a cat on a cat with **Christine Danger's** *Take it easy*.



My name is Bengie. I am ten years old, a female Bengal and have been the ship cat on *Take It easy* (and *Medina* before that) since I was a three month old kitten. So, I am well-travelled: lots of time spent on boats, in cars, even on planes although I could do without a repeat of that mode of transport.

One of my main jobs on board *Take It easy* is to contribute to weather forecasting. You see, my humans might be good at using technology but nothing beats the experience of a cat on a cat. I can just sniff the breeze, watch the wet stuff all around the boat, feel the movement and I know what is coming and take appropriate action.

As a rule I like to be wherever the bipeds are, so I can supervise them. When I know it is going to be a nice, sunny day with hardly any breeze, I go on deck and laze around in the

sunshine. Sailors do not like motoring, but I don't mind it.

My favourite point of sail, which also happens to be the favourite of my humans, is when the breeze is lightly from our stern. That is when 'Big red' our spinnaker comes out and we go for a great downwind sled ride. I looove downwind sailing. It is fast, really smooth and, when it's hot, you can sit under the shade of our big red balloon. Luxury!

It is not always downwind sailing unfortunately. Sometimes the wind picks up from the beam or worse, from the bow. I have learnt it gets a bit breezy up on deck and we need to be a little more vigilant, so I claim the helm seat. I get a good view, I can see the instruments, I am next to the wheel and can give my orders from here.

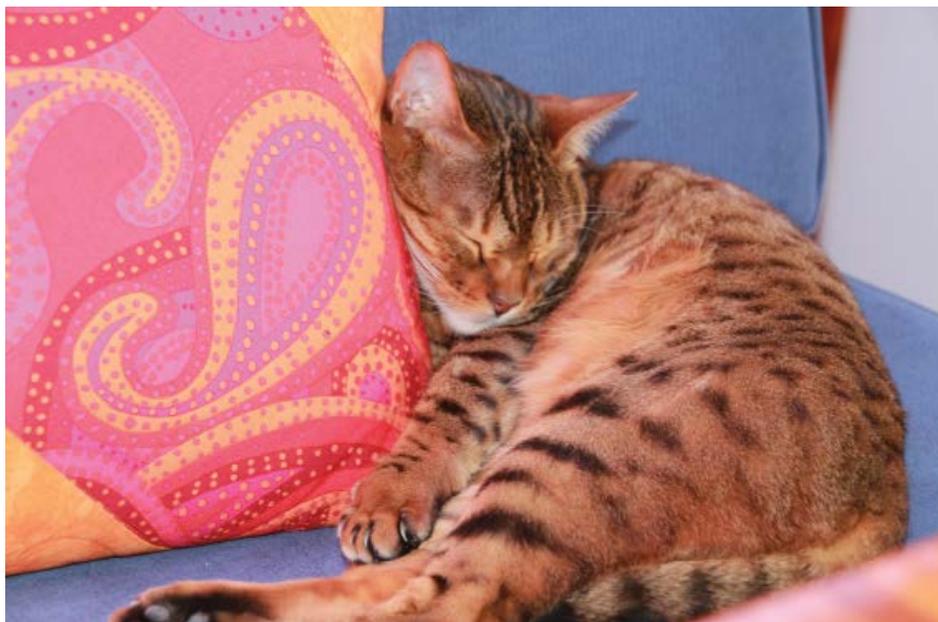
My humans tend to get excited when the breeze really picks up and there is a bit of swell, but I do not.

It gets rather bouncy perched at the helm seat, so I find it is time to go inside: not too far from them, mind you, just on the saloon seats where I can still keep an eye on things. I must admit it is so comfy that I often have a little kip.

Sometimes the wind and swell just get too much for my liking. I can see the sea rushing by from the side windows. It is so bouncy I have trouble walking around and the noise ... the slapping of the waves along the hulls and under the bridge deck just get too uncomfortable. I know it is time to go down below, on their bed preferably, even under

TOP LEFT & LEFT: On guard duty; This forecasting is tiring work.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Sorry, but the forecaster is not in today.





the quilt covers if it is really bad. You see, I have found that if I cannot see anything, I can pretend it is not really happening out there.

My bipeds laugh and call me the ostrich. How rude! At least it also settles my stomach. I do not get seasick, but sometimes I feel a bit borderline and a nest in a warm bed ensures I keep my stomach in check!

I think after all these years the humans are finally listening to me and taking notice of my behaviour underway. They now take account of what I do for their weather routing!

I posed for the photos and dictated this quick reference guide so they could share this with you.

My workload is never done

I double up as a guard cat too! Any suspect noise and I am on the lookout, especially when we are at anchor.

You never know who might just come on board unannounced! I look a bit like a meerkat when I do this and I growl to ward off intruders.

The humans tend to relax a bit too much for my liking in calm weather. So I take it upon myself to run regular patrols. It also ensures no birds land on the deck. We particularly dislike deposits from seagulls, terns or those little poop machines called Welcome swallows.

I also keep an eye on the winches and miaow loudly if I think the sails need trimming or I feel we are slowing down! This way we extract just that little bit more speed, since all of us on board love sailing fast.

So there you have it. My life as a ship cat. The humans often say "sailing just is not the same without Bengie". Just as well, I say.

I would rather be with them than in jail at the cattery. 🐱

cruisinghelmsman Christine Danger



Chris and her partner Wade Bishop are Melbourne based. They have been sailing on catamarans of various sizes for the last 15 years. Their favourite cruising grounds include the Bass Strait Islands, Tasmanian waters and Australia's east coast. They live for the day when they can give up work, cruise full-time on *Take it easy* and explore further afield. Follow their adventures on www.sv-takeiteasy.com.

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