

Tips For Finding A Lost Indoor-Only Cat

By [Jack Kitsch](#)

Skippy Lou's Lost and Found Pets

When indoor cats escape, chances are good that they are still close by - many times, in your own yard or hiding in a close neighbor's yard. Unlike dogs, most times indoor-only cats will quickly duck for cover in a spot that they feel is safe and remain there. They do not normally run far and fast like a dog would unless they feel threatened directly. Many times, cats will NOT respond to their owner's voices so remember, just because your cat is not coming or calling to you does NOT mean that they can not hear you. Remember, their entire world has just been turned upside down and it is very jarring.

Since your cat's usual territory is indoors-only, he will not have the usual scent territory around the perimeter of your home that an outdoor or indoor/outdoor cat might have. The following tips will help you create that scent territory and hopefully, keep your escaped cat close to home. **Do these *immediately* when an indoor cat escapes:**

1. TAKE A LOOK: Get down very low and look in any tiny spaces that he could have ducked into to hide - bushes, crawlspaces, under sheds and cars...any and every small spot. Even lift your car hood and look inside with a flashlight just to make sure that he is not inside. Think like you would if you were your cat and have just escaped your safety zone. Where would you go and hide?

Along the same lines, **LOOK UP.** Many times, cats will run up trees and other vertical places to hide and may not be heard when they meow.

2. MAKE A SCENT TERRITORY: Take the **dirty** litter from his litter box and sprinkle it around the perimeter of your property. Note: If you have other pets that use the same litter box, continue to sprinkle their dirty litter around your yard each day when cleaning their box. This will be a continuous source of scent.

Also, take your worn clothing or used bedding and put that outside as a scent article.

The final step is to empty the contents of your vacuum cleaner bag around your yard as well. You can keep doing this daily as your home contains your cat's fur and fibers that smell like you and your family.

These steps are VERY important as they will show your cat by scent where his home is. This will help him to know to stay close - and oftentimes if your cat hasn't gone too far away, the scent will lead him back home.

3. MAKE A FOOD SOURCE: Put out very, very smelly canned food and keep it fresh. He might not come out while you are watching but during the night when it is really quiet, he might sneak out for food. Having a food source can keep him from panicking further. We recently had a lost cat who was lost for weeks and came to eat at her own home every single night. Without this food source, she likely would have moved further and further out to find food.

If food is being eaten but you do not see who is eating it, there are very cheap wildlife cameras that work by motion activation that can help you know exactly who is eating at your home. These cameras are simple to use and even work in the dark. A low-fi option to know if a cat is eating at your feeding station is to put a thick layer of sand (smoothed out) around the food bowl. If there is no rain or wind, flour will also work in a pinch. A wildlife camera is always best because you will have photos of exactly who is feeding at your food bowl.

If you feel like your cat is coming to this feeding station, they can be safely trapped in a humane trap. If you need to borrow a trap, speak to the page moderator and we can give you some folks to try.

4. PUT UP SIGNS: On the chance that your cat went further, photo signs will be very important. Even if you can't put up photo signs on the same day that your cat becomes lost, some signs written in bold marker that just say "LOST CAT (with a description of your cats appearance" with your phone number could help as someone may have seen him since he got lost.

Keep in mind that unlike dogs, when most people see cats running through their yard, they don't think "Lost Cat" but instead, "There is someone's cat who is allowed to roam." These signs will make a HUGE difference in setting your cat apart from the roaming cats if a neighbor comes across him. Be sure and put signs in your yard as well as on your mailbox. Also put them on your car windows so that you will become a moving billboard for neighbors to see as you drive around. Ask your mail carrier, bus drivers, UPS drivers, etc. to keep an eye out by giving them one as well. PHOTO SIGNS are key.

5. TALK TO NEIGHBORS: Immediately let your neighbors know that your cat is missing and give them your phone number. Talk to them personally, leave flyers at homes and use any online neighborhood bulletin boards that are made available. Always mention "reward" when talking to neighbors.

6. ALERT AREA CHILDREN: Children see things that adults never see. If you have neighborhood children, give them a flyer of your cat and tell them to come get you immediately if they see your cat. Tell them in no uncertain terms are they to call to or chase your cat but should play the quiet game and come get you or call you right away. Tell them that there will be a reward if they help you find your cat. NOTE: If you do not know the children personally, ask their parents for permission to get their assistance before approaching them. Remember "stranger danger".

6. PLACE ADS: Place ads in all online and print mediums with a photo of your pet. Keep in mind that a photo will make your cat stand out in peoples' minds. Always mention a reward even if you can only pay a small one.

NOTES: When your cat becomes lost, try not to yell for him. If you must call out to him, sit calmly in your yard and talk to him like you would while he is safely inside of your home. When you yell and your cat senses fear or worry in your voice, he may believe that you are mad at him and will be afraid to come home.

If your cat has a certain treat that he likes or a canned food, try shaking the treat bag softly or opening a can of that food so that he may hear and come out.

Even if you did not see your cat hiding nearby during the day, go outside at night with a flashlight and check every spot within your yard and neighbor's yards again. Your cat's eyes will reflect the light and you might just see him hiding when you couldn't during the day.

If your cat has a favorite cat tree or scratching post, put this outside in a area where it won't become wet from the weather. We have seen cats end up back on their favorite cat tree outside of the home as it is their comfort zone and is absolutely covered with their own scent!

ALSO: Some EXCELLENT advice from Missing Pet Partnership. Please read:

<http://www.missingpetpartnership.org/recovery-tips/lost-cat-behavior/>

