

How to find a LOST CAT

Lost indoor-only cat



IT'S IMPORTANT TO KNOW WHERE TO START
We've put together this file for owners of lost cats/Triangle NC

IT IS IMPORTANT TO KNOW WHERE TO START

Most lost indoor-only cats are found by methodical searches & actions by the owner—not other people

We have compiled this file to help owners of lost indoor cats in the Triangle Area to get helpful information and search tips with easy links to the professionals who provide the info (if advice is not solely from our experience). Please be sure to click on the links to read further details on these sites. Before reading the file, it will be helpful to watch [THIS VIDEO](#) from Front Street Animal Shelter. It goes through the steps and misconceptions cat owners should know. Then read the file for further details. Information is separated into the following sections:

PHYSICAL SEARCH

Aggressive search of your home and yard

IN THE COMMUNITY

Flyers, door hangers, posters, etc

WEBSITES & SOCIAL MEDIA

WHOM TO NOTIFY & ASK FOR PROFESSIONAL HELP

MYTHS & INCORRECT ADVICE

Feline Temperaments Can Influence How Far They Travel & How They Are Recovered

Temperament influences actions. How a cat behaves when in its normal territory will influence how it behaves when it becomes “lost” or displaced into unfamiliar territory. Search strategies can be made based on a cat’s home behavior -MPP

Curious/Clown Cat

These are gregarious cats that get into trouble easily, run to the door to greet a stranger, and are not easily afraid of anything. When displaced, these cats might initially hide but then they will most likely TRAVEL. Strategy for recovery should be to place florescent posters within at least a five block radius. Also, interview neighbors in a door-to-door search, thoroughly searching possible hiding places in yards of houses and other areas within a close proximity to the escape point. Do not assume that the cat will come when you call!

Care-Less Cat

These aloof cats don’t seem to care much about people. When a stranger comes in, they stand back and watch. When displaced they will likely initially hide, but eventually they will break cover and come back to the door, meow, or possibly travel. Strategy should be to search hiding places nearby, interview neighbors door-to-door and search their yards. If these efforts do not produce results, consider setting a baited humane trap.

Cautious Cat

These cats are generally stable but they show occasional shyness. They like people but when a stranger comes to the door, they dart and hide. Some of these cats peek around the corner and eventually come out to investigate. When displaced, they will likely immediately hide in fear. If not pushed (scared off) from their hiding place, they will typically return to the point where they escaped from or they will meow when the owner comes to look for them. This behavior typically is observed either within the first two days (after the cat has built up confidence) or not until seven to ten days later when their hunger or thirst has reached a point where they will respond. Strategy would be to conduct a tightly focused search in neighbors’ yards and to set baited humane traps.

Catatonic/Xenophobic Cat

Xenophobia means “fear or hatred of things strange or foreign.” Xenophobic cats are afraid of EVERYTHING that is new or unfamiliar. Their fearful behavior is hardwired into their character; it is caused by genetics and/or kitten hood experiences (nature or nurture). These cats will hide

when a stranger comes into their home, and they typically will not come out until well after the company has left. They do not do well with human contact (being held, petted, etc.) and they are easily disturbed by any change in their environment. When displaced, they bolt and then HIDE IN SILENCE. They tend to remain in the same hiding place and become almost catatonic, immobilized with fear. If they are found by someone other than their owners, they are typically mistaken as being untamed or “feral.” The primary strategy to recover these cats would be to set baited humane traps. Xenophobic cats that become “lost” are routinely absorbed into the feral cat population

-The above was from Missing Pet Partnership’s old website which has changed to [Mission Reunite](#)

LET’S EXPLAIN MORE ABOUT THE TWO IMPORTANT FACTORS MENTIONED ABOVE

1. [The Silence Factor](#): “Missing Pet Partnership coined (this term) to describe the behavior when a sick, injured, or panicked cat will hide in silence. It is a natural form of protection for a cat to find a place to hide under a house, a deck, a porch, bushes, or any place they can crawl. The Silence Factor *kills many cats* because while the cat is sick or injured and hiding under a neighbor’s deck, cat owners are typically busy “looking” for their cat down at the local shelter or they are busy posting flyers on telephone poles. Instead, the proper search for most cats in most situations is to conduct an aggressive, physical search of the immediate area while understanding that the cat might be close by but hiding in silence.”
2. [The Threshold Factor](#): “Many of these cats initially hide in silence, but eventually break cover and meow, return to their home or the escape point (window or door), or finally enter a humane trap. While some cats take only hours or a few days to reach their threshold, many others take several days (typically ten to twelve days) before they break cover. We suspect the threshold is reached due to their thirst, although more research needs to be conducted into this behavior.”—Missing Animal Response

STUDY CONFIRMS WHERE & HOW LOST CATS WERE EVENTUALLY FOUND

In 2017, [a study was conducted by the University of Queensland, Australia](#) (Kat Albrecht and Dr. Jacquie Rand conceived the study and UOQ and MPP collaborated on the study). Here is a summary of the study results:

- 1,232 cat owners who’d lost a cat took part in the study.

The number one method that was the most successful in recovering a missing cat was conducting a physical search of the area.

- The median distance found (how far the cats traveled) for missing outdoor-access cats was 315 meters (344 yards). This is roughly a 17-house radius from their owner’s home.

- The median distance found (how far the cats traveled) for displaced / escaped indoor-only cats was much less—it was only 50 meters (164 feet) which is roughly a 2 ½ house radius from their owner’s home (In the suburbs)

WHAT DOES THE RESULT OF THE ABOVE STUDY MEAN?

It means your cat is likely to be closer than you think (unless accidentally or intentionally displaced). It's your job, as your kitty's guardian, to conduct a very thorough search of the area. Read the following steps to give your kitty the best chance of returning home.

PHYSICAL SEARCH

The question is: "Where is my cat hiding?"

Check inside first

We've had a number of owners think their cats got out of the house but they were hiding inside instead—silently. This often happens when someone comes to work inside the home. They've been found in places like:

- Cupboards
- Vanities
- Closets
- Behind drawers
- Inside walls
- In the garage
- Under beds
- Inside furniture



From where did your cat escape?

Start from where they escaped. "Follow the edge of the house or building: A panicked indoor only cat will typically follow along the side of the house, rather than risk slinking or bolting out into the open. However, this depends on what happens the moment that cat escapes — if the mail man is walking up the sidewalk the cat could bolt and run directly across the street. But most times, indoor cats will either slink left or slink right following the edge of the house. Look for the closest hiding spots: deck, access under a house, shed with opening, open garage, etc. — and focus on that area. Then do the same to the left." -From [the administrators of Lost And Found Pets Of The Triangle](#)

Tools and tips to use while searching

- *Flashlight*: a flashlight will not only let you see in dark places, but will illuminate your cat's eyes. Shine it into sewers, in wheel wells of cars, underneath cars, up trees, in bushes
- *Infrared thermal cameras*: can be purchased but they're not cheap. You can also [rent one](#) from Home Depot store and have them show you how to use it.



You'll be able to see inside your walls, behind vanities and multiple other hiding places indoors and out.

- *Favorite treats in the bag:* you can make crinkle noises once or twice while walking around then be silent and listen.
- *Your calm voice:* resist the urge to yell or sound anxious. This will confirm to your cat that there IS something to fear because YOU'RE scared, too. They stay silently hidden. Instead, sit in your backyard and have a calm conversation (to someone on the phone or to yourself) and wait.
- Your cat is more likely to be active in the night/early morning hours
- Bring a towel to lay on the ground if the ground is wet or full of stickers...you'll be crawling on the ground.
- Understand cats can get into places we would have never imagined. Get down on their level as you're thoroughly checking your yard and others to see things from their view. Check out these [hiding places](#) to give you ideas where you should be looking
- Look for tufts of fur that will help you know which direction they went



Searching your neighbor's yard and garage

Handing your neighbors a mini flyer and asking them to search their yard is helpful but ideally

YOU want to search their yard. **YOU** need to complete the methodical search of each yard. Your neighbor isn't going to crawl on their belly to check underneath porches, bushes, inside sheds, etc. We know you may feel uncomfortable asking but your cat is depending on you! Use your flashlight to see if you catch a glimpse of eyes shining back at you. Although many will likely not be comfortable with you searching their garage, still ask. If you can't, ask them to. Cats have been known to run into open garages then get locked inside and hide.

Listen to the birds

“Should your cat ever escape, listen to the birds. They will issue raucous alarm sounds to let others know there is a predator in the area. Even if you just want to know where your outdoor access cat is at the moment, learn to listen to bird language to know when your cat has been spotted by these air

spies. Blue jays and mockingbirds are very vocal when they spot a cat and make a specific call you can learn and tune into.” -[Lost Cat Finder](#)

Just because you've completed a thorough search once, don't stop! Continue your physical search. Owners giving up too soon to is a leading cause of cats never making it back home

NOW WHAT?—AFTER YOU'VE COMPLETED A THOROUGH SEARCH OF THE AREA DURING THE DAY

Set your house up to allow your cat the best chance to make a mad dash inside

- Leave your sliding door slightly open using a dowel in the track to prevent it from opening any further than your cat needs to slip in. Place your worn clothes, slept on pillow case or his/her cat tree just inside the door. If you don't have a sliding glass door, open a window (remove the screen) that was the closest to his/her escape point. Cats feel safer to move around at night may make a mad dash for home. Leaving them a way in has helped many owners find their cats.
- Sleep downstairs next to the point of escape or the door you've left ajar. We have had owners do this and they heard meowing from outside. Because they were downstairs, they were able to get their cat back inside.
- You can also leave a trail of food from the outside, through the slightly opened slider and into your home. You'll need to stay awake so once you hear the “crunch, crunch” of your cat eating (make sure its your cat and not a neighbors cat or wildlife), you quickly shut the door...essentially using your own house a trap.
- If you don't want to leave your window or door open, you can try the garage. Leave the roll-up door about 5” open. Put your cat's tree and your scented items inside. We've had owners come into the garage the next morning to find their cat lounging on their tree.

★ Be sure your other animals are kept away from the open door/window

★ *This advice is at your own risk. Know the wildlife that frequents your area and make informed choices on which tactics to use.*

Timing is important

Cats feel more comfortable moving around or attempting to get back home in the wee hours of the morning (around 3am). Set your alarm, get up, grab your flashlight and head outside utilizing the tips (if your area is safe to do so and buddy-up...safety first)

Cameras

- “[Remote cameras](#) are helpful to determine if a missing pet is in the area. Sometimes a frightened cat or dog will hide and only come out in the middle of the night to eat or drink. The camera will prove that the pet is nearby and can help you focus your search and recovery techniques. You will want to set up your camera where it will capture the pet's image but not violate anyone's privacy. There is also a risk of the camera being stolen as it is left outside. A [Missing Pet Consultant](#) can help you set up a remote camera.” -[Mission Reunite](#)

You can also get further information about types of cameras and setting them up on Missing Animal Response's [surveillance cameras page](#)

- “Regarding the "House As Trap" mentioned in [this video](#), we now recommend that you get a cheap [driveway alarm](#) and set it about 4 feet away (outside) of your door (or window) so that it will BEEP (actually, I think it makes a ding-dong sound) and that will alert you that something is coming into your door. You'll want to wrap the driveway alarm in a towel to muffle the sound (otherwise it might scare off the cat). It is also a GREAT tool to set up in front of your humane trap so that you know that something broke the bean and is entering your trap. --Missing Animal Response
- You can use a **baby monitor** to quickly look at what your driveway alarm is chiming for, check your traps or place by the open door/window if you're unable to sleep by it.

Humane Traps

ONE OF THE BEST WAYS TO GET YOUR INDOOR CAT BACK HOME!

Many indoor cats will quickly become “uncatchable” and a humane trap is often what is necessary to get them back. They are extremely helpful and easy to use. Some members in the group have traps owners can borrow and some home improvement stores have them for rent. [Tru-Catch](#) is the brand of trap that most who trap frequently recommend. There are specific do's and don'ts for trapping so please watch the video below or ask us for help.

★ Please watch this [YouTube Video](#) from Missing Pet Partnership founder Kat Albrecht where she discusses traps, cameras and other tips that may greatly help you in your search

IN THE COMMUNITY

Although most cats are found by the owner or due to the steps the owner takes to lure or trap their cat, it's still important to get the word out to your neighbors. They may have seen your cat or even taken your cat into their home; not realizing he belonged to you and was lost. The following explains steps you can take to spread the word.

Posters & Flyers

Surprisingly, there is a right and wrong way to create and post posters and flyers. Please follow

THESE instructions so your hard work has the best chance of getting your cat home



FIVE + FIVE + FIFTY-FIVE RULE

At any typical intersection, you only have five seconds and five words to get your message across to drivers who are passing through the area where your pet is missing. (They) have had success in recovering lost pets several weeks after they disappeared by helping people create posters using the following rules:

- 1) Make them GIANT so that people driving by cannot miss them.
- 2) Make them FLUORESCENT so that the color attracts the attention of everyone.
- 3) Put them at major intersections near where you lost your pet (and in areas of sightings).
- 4) Keep them BRIEF and to the point.
- 5) Let them convey a VISUAL IMAGE of what you have lost.

There website linked above has many more tips for creating successful flyers and posters, please read thru it.

[Here is a YouTube Video](#) by Kat Albrecht where she shows you how to correctly hang and choose locations for your posters based on local laws and best visibility

Offering a Reward



Please read Mission Reunite's [current stance on offering a reward](#) based on scientific research of how people think and the effects of social media. Then, decide whether you want to offer a reward.



KNOW YOUR LOCAL ORDINANCES—OPTIONS INSTEAD OF FLYERS & POSTERS ON LIGHT POLES

Mini Flyers

You can save money and make it more likely someone will keep your flyer handy but creating 4 to a page or even doing business cards. Hand them to your neighbors and anyone you pass by while out searching. You can leave one on their door or taped on the outside of mailboxes (putting anything inside mailboxes is a federal crime).

If you notice a flyer has not been picked up by a neighbor (meaning they may not be home) or they were packing up for vacation, be aware that your cat may have slipped into their garage and then the door was shut. This has happened! So, please beware that is a possibility.

Door Hangers



A great option to get the word out. Flyers on light poles can be overlooked by many people but a sign hanging from their door about your beloved missing cat may help them not only notice but sympathize with you as well. Microsoft word has templates for door hangers or simply use any program and cut the shape you need.



Security Cameras

While you're out talking with neighbors, see who has home security cameras. Ask anyone who you can see has them (or any houses really as they may be hidden) to please check their cameras. They may have gotten a glimpse of which direction your cat went in or that your cat is always seen in a certain area at a certain time of day or night. Ask them to continue checking daily and notify you if they see your cat on camera

A-frames on lawns

If you can get old realty or campaign signs, you can tape your poster to them and stake it into your front lawn and any other lawns of neighbors who allow it.

Tagging your car

This tip is usually for lost dogs but if you park a car in front of your house, you could use it as a large sign. Any neighbors passing by would see it. You could also park it and other friends/family's cars at all the



exits from your neighborhood to be sure everyone around sees. This also gets around the city's ban on taping things to their property. Here's the details on [how to tag your car](#)

WEBSITES & SOCIAL MEDIA

AS STATED BEFORE, MOST CATS ARE FOUND BY METHODOICAL SEARCHES, NOT BY OTHER PEOPLE. BUT, LOST PET SITES AND SOCIAL MEDIA IS STILL A TOOL THAT SHOULD BE UTILIZED

Websites to post to (not a complete list as there are many)

- [PetHarbor](#): They are linked to the shelter system as well as the public. Register your cat as LOST thru them and choose which shelters you want to keep track of (We'd recommend shelters within at least 50 miles and make sure you choose both city and county shelters). This is not 100% fool-proof so always check the shelters yourself as well. People sometimes find cats have hitched a ride in their car to another city and drop the cat off at the shelter they are familiar with. Some people may be worried about dropping cats off at kill-shelters so they find no-kill shelters or humane societies instead so don't forget to check those, too.
- Be sure to check your local shelter website and view the cats brought into each. Unfortunately most shelters do not offer this option. Make sure to check all shelters in and around your area. [county shelter website](#)

- [Craigslist](#). We do recommend you post on Craigslist but you need to be aware that there are less than noble people trolling the site. It is, however, frequented by so many lost and found personnel that it is a resource that *needs* to be utilized. Choose the San Fernando section of LA County then community then lost & found. Make your title clear. "Missing Cat" is ok but "Lost/Missing Female Black Cat with Yellow Eyes" will catch people's eye better. Describe your cat but leave a few distinguishing characteristics out of both the description and picture. That will help you determine if the person calling you actually has your cat.
Also, be sure to search the adoption/re-homing ads as someone may be re-homing or selling your cat instead of looking for you.
If you choose to meet up with anyone from the site, please do so in front of a police station, veterinary office or public place.
- **Rescue Organizations.** All rescue organizations should be checked. Your cat could be turned into a shelter the day he/she goes missing and unless microchipped. Even if microchipped (not 100% reliable), has only days until available for adoption. A private party can adopt or a rescue could pull him. So, in case you missed him at the shelter, be checking the rescues for “adoptable cats” matching his description. Pet Harbor is a good place for this as it checks many rescues (not all of them)
- **Local newspapers** should do lost ads free of charge. Remember that many people are not on social media or the Internet at all for that matter.

Websites with more tips, tricks and info

- [Mission Reunite](#)
- [Missing Animal Response](#)
- Kim Freeman/Lost Cat Finder [Lost Cat Finder](#)

Social Media

- **Facebook:** You'll want to utilize your personal profile, any groups and pages geared towards pets. Lost Pet Research and Recovery has put together a comprehensive **how-to for post wording and sponsoring** so please go [here](#) to understand how. If you want to watch a video we've made on how-to make your cat a page and “boost” or sponsor it, please click [here](#). (Keep in mind this is

geared toward lost dogs as they behave differently. But, its another tool you can use) Then, just type Triangle Area or your City into the search bar and post to any and all pages who's rules allow it

- [NextDoor](#) is the free private social network for your neighborhood community. You'll reach your immediate neighbors best using this service...**USE IT!**

We automatically Publish Most Posts to Instagram & Twitter. We do not update on those platforms as we do for Facebook. If you want to see, share your listings, or comment on them to keep them current please see our account information below:

- **Twitter**

Our handle is @lost_nc To sign up for or log into Twitter:
<https://mobile.twitter.com/i/signup?lang=en>

- **Instagram**

lostandfoundpetsofthetriangle To sign up for or log into Instagram:
<https://www.instagram.com/accounts/login/?hi=en>



WHOM TO NOTIFY & ASK FOR PROFESSIONAL HELP

Microchip Company

Find their microchip number and call the manufacturing company to ensure they have all your current phone numbers and have your dog in their system as LOST. You can also register the chip number with [Found Animals](#)--it's a free automated service that some rescues and vets will check if your dog is scanned (in addition to the manufacture of the chip).

The Animal Shelter

The **Local Area Shelters**: report him/her missing. You'll want to visit the shelter to put a flyer on their board as well as check the board for any found flyers matching your cat. Go to the shelter every other day; not all pets are posted online and the ones who are, are not always labeled correctly. Be sure you ask them to allow YOU into the medical ward and even the section not open to public. So, don't just walk thru the main kennels; talk to the staff and ask to see ALL cats. Don't rely on them to check the kennels for you or to call you if a cat matching your cat's description is brought in—that's your job. As sad as it is, ask to also check the deceased pet log in case animal control picked up your pet after he/she had died. Continue looking for as long as you have a glimmer of hope...**the shelter is the FIRST place most owners look for their lost pets but the LAST place many finders take them** do to fear of euthanasia. REMEMBER, do to how cats behave, someone may not turn your cat into them until weeks or even months later.

Your leasing office

They are often the place where someone who finds a cat will go. Have them take down your information and leave them a flyer.

Security guard

Many houses have security who patrols their area or stays at the entry gate. Be sure to let them know because they are driving around all day and may see your cat. Hand them a mini flyer.

HOA

Some HOAs will send letters or emails to residents.

Mail Carrier & Other Delivery Services

Your USPS carrier is also driving your neighborhood every day. Hand them a flyer, as well as Fed Ex, Amazon, & UPS drivers.

Veterinary offices

Use the Internet to find all the veterinarians in our area. Make sure they all have a flyer either by you dropping it off, via fax or email. Many people who find cats will take them to a veterinary office to have them scanned for a microchip or for medical care. Make sure the flyer stays up on their boards for months...it takes many cats that long to be found by others

Neighbors and their kids

Hand each neighbor a mini flyer or put it on their front door if they're not home. You want everyone knowing just who to call if they see your cat. Don't forget about the kids in the neighborhood, too. They're always outside and may have seen your cat.

PROFESSIONAL ADVISE AND PERSONALIZED HELP

It's hard knowing what is good advise and what is bad advice with so much floating around online. Sometimes, you just want to hear from certified professionals or people who have researched lost cat behavior. We get it! So, here is a list of people who can give you trusted general or personalized advise to help find your cat

Mission Reunite has [Missing Pet Consultants](#) whom you can speak with on the phone. They ask for a small donation for their services.

[Lost Cat Finder](#) completed Missing Animal Response Technician Field Course and offers a few different services. Currently, she offering her e-book and downloaded DVD guide for \$25 and she is guaranteeing that you find your cat in 10 days or you get your money back. What do you have lose? Check out her website to see her other personalized services



Missing Animal Response trained dog teams: [Lost Pet Detection](#) and [Pet Search and Rescue Investigations](#)

MYTHS & INCORRECT ADVICE

The Litter Box Trick

This advice has gone viral...claiming a cat can smell their used litter from up to a mile away and scent their way home. According to experts, this can be very detrimental to your lost cat's well-being and ability to return home. Please read why this is considered bad advise [HERE](#)



Coyotes killed your cat

We're sure you've heard it already, "There are coyotes in the area" "Try to move on. Your cat was likely killed by a coyote." Yes, North Carolina has always been home to a vast array of wildlife, including numerous coyotes. But, regardless of what your friend or neighbor tells you, the professionals disagree. It IS possible your cat has become a victim; but, unless you see tufts of fur or collar with blood or other evidence that a predator took your pet from the yard, KEEP LOOKING! Believe it or not, indoor cats are LESS likely to be taken by a predator because they are scared and keep hidden very well.

Just give up and move on

No! Unless you have proof your cat met an untimely death, don't give up! Cats are amazing survivors. Weeks and months can pass before they are even seen by someone. By that time, if you've given up, you won't notice if they take your cat to the shelter

Your cat was old, he probably "went away to die"

Cats don't do this. What does happen is older cats who escape or don't return home can become disoriented or injured easily. They then follow their instinct and hide. Go find them!

This has been compiled by [Lost & Found of The Triangle](#) for owners of lost indoor-only cats in Triangle area. We are not professionals. Each owner decides what information, if any, they choose to use and do so at their own risk/discretion.