

# *Finding* HOME

*Amazing True Stories  
of Animal Recoveries*



# **Finding Home**

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## **Introduction**

Whether it's a puppy you had as a kid, a cat who shares your life and your apartment, or the pleasure of getting to know a friend's pet, most of us have been touched in some way by animals in our lives. They provide companionship, affection, they are friends when we are lonely. They play and make us laugh. In many cases we love them like family members. They can become so entwined with our lives that we take them for granted. Until something happens and they aren't there anymore. Sometimes the unimaginable happens and your dog runs out the door after a rabbit and you can't catch them. Your cat inexplicably disappears during a move. Your horse bolts and a search turns up no trace of him. A parrot's cage door can spring open. Turtles, iguanas and snakes can go missing.

Most of us have lost a pet at some point. There is no way to describe the desolation that comes from being unable to find a lost pet. You may search for days, weeks, months -- even years. Long after logic tells you to give up hope you may still dream that you will see your missing pet again.

In this volume you will find stories of people who lost their beloved pets and found them again. Some of these stories are amazing, even miraculous. Some are humorous. All of them are inspiring to anyone who has ever lost a pet.

The novel and films based on *The Incredible Journey* and *Homeward Bound* were fiction. What you will find in this e-book are true stories of animals who found their way home again against incredible odds.

## **Dogs**

Microchipping has revolutionized the number of missing pets being reunited with their owners. We found numerous stories of missing dogs, cats and other animals who were able to be returned to their worried families because they could be identified by means of their microchip.

Microchips aren't without controversy, however. Occasionally microchips can "migrate" and move away from the site where they were implanted. In these cases even if the pet is scanned the scanner may not find the chip. Additionally, not all vets and shelters scan every pet that is brought to them for a microchip so it's possible that some chipped pets are found and adopted out to new families. There is also evidence that in some very small percentage of microchips in animals may cause cancer. So, you will have to form your own opinions about the benefits of microchips.

The fact remains that the AKC's Companion Animal Recovery program reports that over 340,000 pets have been reunited with their owners through microchipping. AKCCAR has enrolled everything from cats and dogs to zebras and elks.

### **Happy ending: Dog missing 9 years back home with family**

In February 2009 a German Shepherd Dog named Astro was reunited with his family after more than nine years thanks to his microchip. The Geary family of Louisville, Kentucky, had given up on ever seeing Astro again. They had moved three times since Astro had gone missing in Florida in 1999. They were shocked when they received a call from an animal control officer in Tennessee who had picked up Astro as a stray. But when the officer scanned the dog he had quickly found the microchip.

Owner Dennis Geary said that he wasn't sure that Astro would remember him but when Astro saw him he sat down and began licking Geary.

<<http://www3.whdh.com:80/news/articles/bizarre/BO105949/>>

### **Lost dog found after 4 years — 1,100 miles away**

In 2007 a Boston Terrier named Mickey was reunited with his family after being missing for four years. His owners lived in Missouri and Mickey had been found in Montana. The little dog was over 1,100 miles from home.

According to Kristal Ward, the office manager at an animal shelter in Billings, Montana, "Some lady from the public walked in the back door. She found the dog running up the street. She tossed him to me and that's how it started."

Ward called the maker of the dog's chip, Avid, and she was given the contact information for the dog. That led her to a veterinarian in Lee's Summit, Missouri.

"I called that vet clinic because they were the one that should have a record of that chip, she said. "I gave them the chip number, and the woman kind of started screaming. She goes, 'Oh my God! Is that a Boston Terrier? Oh my God! It belongs to Kari Mitchell. She used to work here.'"

Ward then called Mitchell and was able to confirm that the dog they had in Montana was, indeed, the missing Mickey.

The family said that Mickey looked different and didn't remember his name. His teeth showed signs of wear and tear, but that wasn't unusual for a dog who had been missing for four years.

Mitchell said, "We're happy to have him home. I just hope whoever was taking care of him, I hope they were just glad he's home."

<<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/17965426>>

### **Dog gone! Lost beagle back after 5 years, 850 miles**

In 2003 young Natalie Villacis was heartbroken when her Beagle, Rocco, slipped under their fence and disappeared. Although she was only five years old at the time, Natalie said that she could remember the fear.

"I was actually scared that I was never going to see him again," she said. "I literally said, 'I will probably never see him again.'"

The little girl from Queens, New York, hung posters and flyers and searched for her dog throughout the neighborhood, but she thought it was hopeless.

The family was shocked and stunned then when, five years later, in 2008, they got a call from a shelter in Hinesville, Georgia, some 850 miles away, saying that their missing Beagle had been found. Rocco had a microchip and the shelter had found it when they scanned him.

During the intervening years the family had gotten another dog -- Bonita, a Poodle. But even another dog had never been able to erase the pain of losing Rocco. Cristina Villacis, Natalie's mother said, "She got over it, but she was always wishful that he'd come back. She'd always make wishes."

Mrs. Villacis said that Natalie had been devastated when they lost Rocco. All they had left of him was a little red toy. "She kept his toy. She had a scrapbook with his picture."

When they got the call from Georgia about the dog Mrs. Villacis said they thought it was a mistake. "We were so surprised. At first, of course, we thought, 'it's the wrong dog. It can't be.' But I think the turning point was when they said, 'His name is Rocco.' Right there, we said, 'OK, it's ours.'"

According to Mrs. Villacis when the family told Natalie the news she just "cried hysterically."

"She actually wanted to go to Georgia to pick him up, but the ride back was too long."

Several other family members flew down to Georgia to pick up Rocco and drove him home in a rental car.

Rocco was in great shape considering he'd been gone for five years. Shelter workers said that he had a

cut under his left eye and a spot behind one ear. He was brought in by someone who found him at a local military base.

No one knows how Rocco got all the way to Georgia from New York. Or how he kept his original name.

Mrs. Villacis said, "Somebody must have taken him there; I honestly don't think he walked there. It's OK as long as we have him back."

Whoever took care of Rocco all those years has the gratitude of a little girl in Queens.

"Too bad we couldn't meet them or see them," Natalie said.

<<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/25700149/>>

### **Owner Reunited with Dog Missing from Airport**

Traveling with dogs can be a hair-raising experience. Whether you are traveling by car or by plane, many pets seem to find ways of getting away while they're in transit. Animals can be easily spooked by loud noises from passing trucks. They can get loose when they make sudden movements and pull a leash out of their owner's hands. Or, if they are traveling by plane, a crate door can come open while the crate is being moved around. Very often animals are far from home when they are lost on a trip. It can, indeed, be a miracle when a pet returns home after being lost while traveling.

An airport is such a large place that it can be very hard to find and catch a dog if he becomes lost at one. Janelle and Jason Kosten of Alaska were at Portland International Airport in 2008, waiting for a connecting flight to visit family in southern Oregon. They were taking their dog Bear, a six-year-old Blue Heeler, with them on the trip. They thought all was well. Bear was in his crate, ready to continue the trip.

That's when a baggage handler let the dog out of his kennel to go to the bathroom. Bear, probably frightened by all of the noise from the airplanes, took off.

It took a week of searching and a lot of media coverage but eventually the Kostens were reunited with Bear. A man who lived near the airport spotted Bear and recognized him as the dog who was missing. He contacted authorities and Bear was finally restored to his distraught owners.

<<http://pets.kansascity.com/article/3402&pt=Owner-reunited-with-dog-missing-from-airport>>

Some dogs return home and the reunion is bittersweet.

### **Dog Whose Owner Died in Big-Rig Accident Now Home**

Robert J. Shields was a truck driver from southern California. He was killed in a big rig crash in Omaha, Nebraska in March 2009. With Shields that day in his truck was his constant companion, Zak,

a 20-pound Basenji mix.

Little Zak was found in the cab of the truck with Shields at the crash. He had only a scratch across his nose. He was taken in by the local shelter.

When Shields' family learned about his death they quickly called the shelter to try to find out how to bring Zak home.

An Omaha TV station did a news story on Zak and the efforts Shields' family were making to bring him home. Donations began to roll in to the shelter until the Omaha general manager for American Airlines donated a flight to take the one-year-old dog home to southern California.

Jamie Pickett, Shields' daughter said, "It means everything to all of us. It's the only thing we have left of my father."

Pickett had tears in her eyes at the airport as Zak jumped and barked, his leash held by Shields' widow, Terry Shields.

Shields had been a truck driver for 14 years. He'd had little Zak for the past year. His son, Bobby Garrison, said he traveled with Zak for companionship and to keep thieves away at rest stops.

According to witnesses, Shields' big rig drift on the Interstate and hit a bridge support. Hospital staff said that he may have suffered cardiac arrest.

Zak made the trip back home safely even if his owner didn't.

<<http://www3.signonsandiego.com/stories/2009/mar/05/1m5zak00240-dog-whose-owner-died-big-rig-accident-/?zIndex=62229>>

Many troops in Iraq and Afghanistan have been making friends with some of the locals -- local dogs, that is. It may be against military rules to adopt pets on bases but some commanders turn a blind eye to the practice. Local dogs have become mascots for some units. In some cases very strong bonds have developed between soldiers and dogs. Here's one such story.

### **Iraqi Dog Walks 70 Miles To Find Soldier**

In February 2008 the world got to know an Iraqi dog named Nubs. Nubs began life as a fighting dog. He was badly abused and ran in a pack of dogs in Al Anbar province. His ears were cut off to make him look tougher and so his fights would last longer. Without ears to grab they couldn't be injured during a fight. But life got a lot better for Nubs when he met Marine Major Brian Dennis.

Major Dennis cared for Nubs for four months. Then his unit was ordered to move and he had to leave Nubs behind. But Nubs wasn't ready to say goodbye to Major Dennis. He appeared at the unit's new location two days later -- and 70 miles away. Nubs had tracked the unit for 70 miles across the country in 18 degree weather while he was still injured.

Major Dennis continued to care for Nubs until he was told that the dog had to go or he would be shot

on the base. The major found a way to get Nubs to Jordan, found a family to care for him there and ultimately brought Nubs back to the United States. The two of them were reunited later in San Diego.

Nubs has been adjusting to good care, putting on weight and his coat has gotten smooth and shiny for the first time. Major Dennis and Nubs seemed destined to be together.

<<http://petprojectblog.com/archives/dogs/iraqi-dog-walks-70-miles-to-find-soldier/>>

<<http://petprojectblog.com/archives/dogs/nubs-marine-brian-dennis-reunited/comment-page-1/>>

## **Sheltie Dog Returns Home After 24 Days, 80 Miles**

Other dogs seem intent on seeing the world. Maybe they just don't like being excluded from family activities?

In 2001 a Sheltie named Winston decided that he didn't quite like it when his owners left on vacation without him. In Rockford, Michigan, the Beaudoin family was headed out of town for a 10-day vacation when they dropped 11-year-old Winston off at the pet-sitter's house on their way out of town. Only a couple of hours later Winston pushed open the back door, sailed over a deck railing and hit the road.

Pet-sitter Kathy Burch arrived just in time to see Winston's little behind disappearing into the distance.

Ms. Burch said it was the first time she'd ever lost one of her clients. She searched the area for four hours alone before organizing a search party. Over the next four days more than a hundred people in six counties -- most of them strangers -- searched for Winston, passed out flyers, drove through the countryside, and investigated sightings of the dog. One couple even searched for the dog in their private plane.

Winston's family cut short their trip and returned home to search for him. They were amazed that so many strangers would help in the search for their dog.

"What an amazing thing that people would take all of this time to come out and do this," said owner Chris Beaudoin. "It says a great deal about the quality of this community and the people, that they would do so much to help someone they don't know."

Sightings continued to come in about Winston over the next three weeks. He wandered across the state of Michigan, through cornfields, along country roads and over frozen lakes. Eyewitnesses saw him but they couldn't catch him.

Finally, after 24 days, a storm blew up and Winston, now five counties away, took shelter with a family that had seen the flyers. They called the search crews and Mr. Beaudoin arrived to collect his wandering Sheltie. Winston had lost about 10 pounds and was more than a little matted but, otherwise, he was fine.

After that Winston's family resorted to "feeding him hamburger and rice in bed." Winston's wandering days were over.

<<http://dogsinthenews.com/issues/0104/articles/010420b.htm>>

### **Blind, Deaf and Smart Dog Travels Four Miles Home**

Even an old, deaf and blind dog can decide to go walkabout.

If you've ever lost a dog or any other pet then you know how much you worry about them. It's so easy to think of all the terrible things that could happen to any pet when they're away from home. How would you like to have a lost pet who was virtually blind, deaf and 13 years old? It's hard to imagine just how worried you would be in that case. How could such a dog -- a small Shih Tzu -- survive?

Well, not only did Tigger the Shih Tzu survive but she managed to find her own way back home, four miles away. In 2001 Tigger's family took her to a friend's house for the day while a wedding party was being held at their home. But the next day when Tigger was let outside to use the bathroom she vanished. The friends who were keeping her searched everywhere to no avail. Tigger was gone.

Later that afternoon they got in their car and drove to the home of Tigger's owners to tell them that they had lost Tigger. That's when they discovered that Tigger had already beaten them there. Somehow the little dog, who was blind in one eye and didn't see very well out of the other one; who was deaf; who was elderly, had traveled four miles across town on her own, from a place she had never been before, to find her home. Not only that, but she had to cross an interstate to get back to her home.

Bonnie Lila, one of the friends who was (unsuccessfully) watching Tigger said, "How does a dog know to get home? She might have always heard the train tracks. It's just amazing."

The family had been considering having Tigger put to sleep because of her handicaps and old age but this episode changed their mind. She obviously had a lot of determination and will to live.

<<http://dogsinthenews.com/issues/0106/articles/010625a.htm>>

Here's a story about another wandering Shih Tzu. We had no idea the breed could be such hardy travelers!

### **Dog Goes Out for a Walk, Comes Back 7 Years Later**

In 1994 a Shih Tzu named Ewok disappeared mysteriously on Vancouver Island, British Columbia.

After the disappearance of the little lap dog in 1994, his owners, Jim and Barbara Reed, were left completely baffled. Barbara describes, "We always thought someone had picked him up. One day he just disappeared. No trace. He was gone. We didn't know if he was hit by a car or what happened."

Then, in 2001, the little dog reappeared just as mysteriously. He simply wandered back into town. He showed up at an antiques store and made himself right at home. Albert Walsh and his uncle Bob, the owner, were locking up for the night when the furry visitor arrived.

"About 45 minutes after we closed, a dog walked in the back door—a little Shih Tzu," Mr. Walsh recalls. "He looked at me, then went into the living room and jumped up on my Uncle Bob's knee."

The next day they went to a local shelter where a volunteer found an identifying tattoo on the dog's ear. She was able to trace the dog back to the Reeds and Ewok was on his way home.

"It's one of those stories you do want people to read about so they don't give up looking for their pets," said Mrs. Robinson of the shelter.

A few days later a man showed up at the antique shop asking if they had seen a dog.

Mr. Walsh describes, "A guy comes in the store, asking if we had found a little dog. He even knew the dog's name. My Uncle Bob says, 'Did you know that dog was stolen?'

"Before [Uncle Bob] could get a piece of paper and a pen to write down the license, the guy was spinning gravel out our driveway."

Ewok's owner, Barbara Reed, said that Ewok was a bit slower and grayer "but he's still cuddly" after being gone for seven years.

DogsInTheNews.com offers this list of reasons for not coming home in seven years:

**"I was out chasing cars..In Italy."**

**"I was abducted by a UFO.**

**(Hey, it looked like a giant frisbee.)"**

**"Seven years without a B-A-T-H!"**

**"I got lost, and the dog ate my roadmap. Oh, wait... I'm the dog. Never mind."**

**"I don't know, but it's the cat's fault!!!"**

**"Seven years? How long is that? You never taught me how to tell time."**

**"I just wanted to take care of a few things before that neutering, ya'know?"**

<<http://dogsinthenews.com/issues/0109/articles/010904a.htm>>

## **Woman's Relentless Search Leads to Dog...8 Years Later**

Denise Tuttle lost her white German Shepherd, Jake, in 1993. On that July day Jake and another dog -- Duchess, ran off after a rabbit. As so often happens, when she called them, Duchess came back but Jake didn't. He kept going after the rabbit and that was the last time she saw the year-old pup.

For eight years Ms. Tuttle searched for her dog. She never gave up. She put out flyers and posters. She called shelters, vets, police departments and road crews within 50 miles. She kept calling long after most people would have given up. After that, she became involved with organizations and rescue groups. She kept up a network of contacts in the dog community. She did everything possible to stay in touch with people who might come in contact with her Jake.

Finally, after eight years, she got a call about a 9-year-old German Shepherd who needed a home. The dog was being given up by a woman who had kept him for two years. Before that he had been kept by

a man for six years.

Oddly enough, the dog's name was Jake. Could it be?

Denise Tuttle's search was finally over. After eight years of refusing to give up hope she was reunited with her own dog, Jake.

It seemed that whoever had Jake had known his real name and not returned him. Dates and descriptions all seemed to match.

Ms. Tuttle verified that Jake was, indeed, her dog by checking for a crooked tooth and an "inkstain" birthmark on his tongue. Both were present.

"I was crying like a blubbering idiot when I saw him," she said, "and he kept licking my face."

<<http://dogsinthenews.com/issues/0106/articles/010615a.htm>>

Many times we don't know how a pet survives when they are lost. How will they find food? How will they handle cold weather? Will someone take them in? Many times our pets are surprisingly resourceful and a lot tougher than we imagine, as in this story of a Golden Retriever who survived in extreme conditions.

### **Dog found after 6 months — and a cold winter Golden retriever was found in 27-below weather in rural Montana**

In August 2009 the Halter family was on vacation in Montana when their Golden Retriever named Buck darted away from the family's son at a rest stop. He was spooked by a sudden train whistle. Buck was missing for six months in some of the toughest weather in the country -- heavy snow and temperatures well below zero. He was finally found by local people in the middle of winter who recognized him from the flyers the family had put out. The dog was trying to shelter in a collapsed building.

"I've never had a miracle happen to me, so I don't really know what to think," said Kim Halter, Buck's owner.

Mrs. Halter described how Buck had gotten away from the family: "The dog was normally never on a leash. Big mistake," Halter said. "But he was always next to my son. He never left his side, so we never really had a problem. We were under the trestle when the horn blew. When Buck heard the whistle, he took off like a shot. None of us even saw him."

Halter said Maxine Woods, who lives across the highway, was waving her arms and trying to tell them that their dog ran away.

"He just basically disappeared," Woods said. "He was just going faster than any dog I've seen run."

Woods joined the search for the dog in the Chester, Montana area.

"She got in her car and then she started calling people and before you knew it everybody around there was looking for our dog," Halter said. After two days of unsuccessful searching, the Halters, brokenhearted, resumed their travels.

"We went to the library and the librarian in Chester made us posters and wouldn't charge us a dime for them," Halter said. The family put up posters in banks and post offices in the small towns around the area.

"That was about all we could do," she said.

Halter said they had word of a few false sightings but that was about all they heard for the next six months.

As fall turned into winter, heavy snow fell in the Chester area and temperatures occasionally fell into the 20-below-zero range.

"Every time we'd hear about the weather we would just cringe," Halter said. "I would just cry even harder, thinking 'Where is my Buck?' And of course I couldn't let my son (17-year-old Jason) know. I never let him see me cry because he kept the faith and kept the hope.

"He would tell me all the time that Buck's coming home," she said of her son, who had had the dog since it was a puppy. "He actually thought he was going to walk home like in (the movie) 'Homeward Bound.'"

In January 2009, almost six months after Buck had disappeared, Jason Wanken spotted a stray dog on his family farm near Chester. It was about 27 degrees below zero that day.

"We spotted this dog out here on the farm, just on and off, going through the creek and whatnot," Wanken said. "We just never had a prime opportunity to go over and get him."

Later in the week, Wanken used a snowmobile to bring some food to the dog, which had taken up residence under a collapsed building.

Wanken's mother had remembered the name of the golden retriever that had gone missing last summer and told Wanken to see if the dog would answer to the name Buck. "The next day, I took the boys out with me and I had a full bag of food with me and I just rattled that bag," he said. "I started to feed it and could actually pet it then."

Wanken and his wife used the bag of food to lure the Golden Retriever into a kennel and took the dog to Maxine Woods' house.

"I thought it couldn't be this dog, though, it's been too long," Wanken said.

Woods called Halter on Saturday, January 31.

"She e-mailed me three pictures and when I was on the phone with her I received the pictures, and we both started crying and I said that was him," Halter said.

The Halters drove all night to make the 750-mile trip.

"When we got to the Wankens', he ran right up to us and it was absolutely without a doubt him," Halter

said. "It was a miracle. He looked at us and we looked at him and we were all crying. It was beyond amazing."

No one seems to know where Buck had been between the time when he disappeared and when the Wankens' saw him on their farm.

"From the time he left us until the time Jason Wanken found him, there is no clue where he's been or what he's done," Halter said. "Only he knows. I almost feel like taking him to a pet psychic to see if they could tell me. Only he knows his secret and he's keeping it to himself.

"I tell ya one thing, he hasn't stopped smiling since he got home and neither have we."

<<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/29068865/>>

### **Vivi the Whippet: Saga of a Missing Show Dog**

One of the most famous missing dogs has still not been found. Vivi the Whippet went missing just after going Best of Opposite Sex at the Westminster Kennel Club dog show in 2006, one of the high points of any dog's show career. Vivi was being loaded on board her plane back to California in her airline kennel when the door to her crate seems to have come open. She was last confirmed seen on February 15, 2006, running across the tarmac, through a barbed wire fence, and disappearing into the marshland of the 4900-acre complex at Kennedy International Airport. A Whippet can sprint over 35 mph, which is faster than a white tailed deer.

Vivi, whose full name is Bohem C'est La Vie, was ranked among the top Whippets in the country. She had earned an invitation to the 2007 American Kennel Club National Championships.

Vivi was a seasoned traveler, comfortable in her crate, which had a security bar.

A massive search was conducted, including by helicopter. When she wasn't found, her owners sadly returned to California, but the search went on. Rewards, flyers in seven languages, and a media circus turned up no sign of Vivi.

Delta Air Lines paid out \$2,800, as it would for a lost piece of baggage of that size and weight. Vivi's value was estimated at \$20,000.

Today her whereabouts remain a mystery.

From those who love her:

*The day after Westminster 2006, "Vivi," the California Whippet Ch. Bohem C'est la Vie, was lost after check-in at JFK airport.*

*The search for Vivi continued for months. Media coverage was unprecedented, with front page stories in the NY Times and LA Times, two full pages in People magazine, mention of Vivi in Newsweek and almost every TV news show. Footage of her at Westminster was replayed endlessly on screens across America.*

*In spite of all efforts, Vivi has still not been found. Frequent sightings for several months were confirmed by tracking dogs.*

*In November, nine months after her disappearance, the NY Times headlined a story about Vivi: "Saga of a Missing Show Dog becomes N.Y. Urban Legend." To us, Vivi is still a living, breathing dog, and we will always wait for the phone call telling us she's been recovered.*

*Thanks to all who helped: Westminster Kennel Club, the Port Authority of NY, AKC, the American Whippet Club, Honi Reisman and Bonnie Folz who led the search in New York, Denise Flaim of Newsday, a devoted band of volunteers, and dog lovers worldwide who sent thousands of letters, emails, and donations to the Vivi Fund. Excess money is going to "Bobbi and the Strays" at JFK.*

*It is our hope that all the attention paid to Vivi has heightened awareness of lost dogs everywhere. Please support your local rescue organization!*

*Jil Walton & Rick Patterson, Owners  
Paul Lepiane, Co-owner & handler  
Bo Bengtson, Breeder*

<[http://www.petville.com/pet\\_community/2007/02/vivi\\_the\\_whippe.html](http://www.petville.com/pet_community/2007/02/vivi_the_whippe.html)>

<[http://thepoodleanddogblog.typepad.com/the\\_poodle\\_and\\_dog\\_blog/2008/02/whatever-happen.html](http://thepoodleanddogblog.typepad.com/the_poodle_and_dog_blog/2008/02/whatever-happen.html)>

## Cats

Although many pet cats live indoors these days they seem to be just as likely to go missing as dogs. When they do get lost they may go on some extensive journeys, judging by the stories we found. We discovered cats that traveled to Europe (cats seem to prefer France) and southeast Asia, cats that flew on planes, and cats that stowed away on ships. We also found many cats who had been affected by Hurricane Katrina. Here are some of their stories.

### **Purr-fect ending to Top Cat's travels**

Most of us enjoy a little catnap now and then, but for one cat in Cornwall, England, his nap took him on an extended European vacation.

In 2002, when neighbors in St. Neot were having some things packed up in a moving van to be taken to France, Top Cat decided he'd like to have a snooze in the van. Apparently, when he woke up, the 10-year-old Oriental Red was 500 miles away, in Bordeaux, France.

His owner, Jayne Manley, had no idea where her cat had gotten to until she got a call from France two days later.

"On Monday we started looking, we couldn't find him anywhere then on Wednesday I get a phone call saying 'we have found your cat, he's in Bordeaux'."

Unfortunately (or not), Top Cat couldn't go straight home. He would have been put in Britain's quarantine facilities since he didn't have a pet passport. So, Ms. Manley had to make other arrangements for her globetrotting feline. She arranged for him to spend the next seven months in Malaga, Spain, with a friend while he met the requirements for his pet passport.

Ms Manley said: "He had a lovely time. He sunbathed a lot and often joined friends on the terrace for a drink."

Ms. Manley said her cat's journey would cost her in the neighborhood of £750 -- and that would buy a lot of cat food.

<[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/england/1906615.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/1906615.stm)>

<[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/england/2499761.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/2499761.stm)>

### **Stowaway cat flies home in style**

In 2005 an American cat decided to see France. Emily, a year-old tabby from Wisconsin, sneaked into an office supplies company near her home in Appleton and hid in a container of paper bound for France. She took a three-week sea voyage. She was much thinner upon arrival in Nancy, France, but still healthy.

When she arrived in Nancy the people who found her were quite amazed by her presence but at least they took her to a veterinarian. She was wearing an ID collar with her own American vet's phone number which allowed them to trace her owners. It's a good thing she was wearing a collar -- otherwise she would probably have been euthanized. That's what usually happens to feline stowaways.

Emily then spent a month in quarantine and was allowed to go home. But she didn't have to go back in a shipping container on a ship or even in the cargo hold of an airplane. Emily was upgraded to business class on a flight from Paris. Continental Airlines provided free business class seats for her and her escort.

On her trip home Emily passed up peppered salmon filet on the menu and "opted for her French cat food" and some water, airline spokeswoman Courtney Wilcox said.

Apparently she liked her French cat food so much that when her owners picked her up at the Milwaukee airport they said that not only had she regained the weight she lost on her sea voyage but that she was even plumper than when she left.

That was not the only change owner Lesley McElhiney said.

"She seems a little calmer than she was before, just a little quieter, a little, maybe, wiser," Ms McElhiney said.

Emily got the full red carpet treatment when she arrived home, with newspaper people and photographers on hand. Quite a change from her outward journey and her stowaway arrival in France.

<<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/4491716.stm>>

### **Cat returns home after 10 years**

Lynx disappeared from her home in Hook, Hampshire, in 1997, and her owner, Patricia Charnet, thought she would never see her pet again.

In 2007 a stray cat was found in Oxfordshire, quite a distance away, and handed in to the Blue Cross shelter in Burford. A scan showed that the 12-year-old tabby was microchipped and the shelter tracked down the owner who lived 60 miles away.

The owner, Patricia Charnet, had only had a few snapshots to remember Lynx by. When the animal shelter phoned she thought they must have made a mistake. It had been 10 years.

"You still have it in the back of your mind," she said.

"And it happened this time, for real. That was unbelievable, it is a wonderful feeling. If only she could talk she would have a story to tell."

Mandy Jones, from the Blue Cross said staff at the center were amazed to discover that Lynx had been missing for 10 years.

"I still can't believe we were able to reunite her with her owner after such a long time -- it goes to show how important microchipping is," said Ms. Jones.

<[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/england/hampshire/6253634.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/hampshire/6253634.stm)>

Pet detectives can be an important way to find missing pets. When you're panicking about losing your pet, many times they can take charge and carry on a systematic investigation. They have many resources already lined up. They can provide mailing lists, prepare flyers and posters, and send out postcards with pictures of your missing pets. They can give you solid information about what to do to help you find your missing pet. They do cost money but they can help.

Here's a story of a woman who was able to find her cat with the help of a pet detective.

### **Claws for celebration: Ohio cat home after 7 weeks**

Cats aren't the easiest animals to find when they go missing. Very often they hide when we're looking for them. They may not respond or come when we call them. Finding a missing cat can be very difficult.

So, when Norma Meece's three-legged cat, Hope, disappeared in the Cincinnati area in 2008, she hired a pet detective to help her find the cat. The pet detective was able to plaster her neighborhood with missing posters and provided other ideas to help her find her missing pet. Meece also coordinated an extensive search for Hope.

Hope finally turned up seven weeks after going missing. She was caught in a humane trap set up near her home.

Hope is a former stray whose left front leg had been amputated.

Meece said that Hope was very happy to be home but that she had lost weight while she was missing. She also had some scrapes on her nose. Who can tell where she was or what she had been doing during the seven weeks she was gone?

According to Meece she spent more than \$500 for the services of the pet detective. But, having Hope back home is all that matters.

<<http://pets.kansascity.com/article/3870&pt=Claws-for-celebration:-Ohio-cat-home-after-7-weeks>>

Information from: The Cincinnati Enquirer, <http://www.enquirer.com>

### **Missing Cat Back In California Home After 13 Years**

In 2008 in California a couple was reunited with their cat who had been missing for 13 years, thanks to his microchip.

George had last been seen in 1995. He was more recently found in a mobile home park, weighing less than half of the 14 pounds he used to weigh. He ended up at an animal hospital where the staff found a microchip when they scanned him.

Melinda Merman said after George went missing she visited animal shelters and wrote to veterinarians in search of the gray, yellow-eyed cat

George was 17 when he was finally brought back to his owners. He was found just three miles from his home and no one is sure how he got there. They say that he had been known to jump into cars occasionally, so maybe he hitched a ride.

When George went missing in 1995 one of his owners, Frank Walburg, posted signs, searched animal shelters and offered a \$500 reward in an effort to find him -- but to no avail.

"We always thought about him," he said.

Merman and Wahlburg say George isn't quite as lively as he used to be but they're happy to have him back.

"The selfish part of me wants him back and healthy and ready to play again," Walburg said. "I don't know if that's even possible, so I've found myself making small bargains with a God I've never believed in and want whatever is best (for) him."

<<http://www.peoplepets.com/news/heart-warming/lost-found-george-the-cat-returns-home-after-13-years/1>>

<<http://pets.kansascity.com/article/3442&pt=Missing-cat-back-in-California-home-after-13-years>>

### **Missing cat returns to school**

You know that old saying, "The rumors of my death have been greatly exaggerated"? Well, it might have been said by Wickie the cat in Queenstown, New Zealand.

Wickie has lived all of her 15 years at Queenstown Primary School. She's the school mascot and much-loved there.

She was last seen on January 4, 2009. Soon, people began to worry. Where could she be? After a while the difficult decision was made to tell the kids that Wickie must be dead.

The children were "very upset."

A teacher drew a memorial picture, which was framed and hung in the entrance to the school's office.

Just when the children at the primary school -- and the teachers and staff -- were beginning to accept the idea that Wickie was gone -- Wickie the cat made a triumphant return to Queenstown Primary School some seven weeks after disappearing.

"A boy came running up to me this morning saying he had found Wickie," Stuart "Podge" Cochrane, school caretaker and Wickie's caregiver said.

Fearing he would have to dig a grave, he asked where she was only to be told the cat was "in a cage at the vet."

Someone had found her and taken her to the veterinary clinic.

Although the staff at the clinic said Wickie had been "a bit light" on arrival, she was given a clean bill of health and had regained her lost weight.

However, with dozens of excited children eager to see and hold the school's cherished cat, the 15-year-old mascot disappeared again during the lunch break. She was found hiding under room 11 and came out at dinner time, Mr. Cochrane said.

For a cat who had been declared dead only days before, and with moves afoot to find a replacement, Wickie seems to be doing just fine.

<<http://www.odt.co.nz/your-town/queenstown/44486/missing-cat-returns-school>>

Hurricane Katrina devastated not just the human population of New Orleans but also the pet population. There are numerous stories of people who lost pets during the hurricane and the terrible flooding afterwards. Thankfully, there are also many heartening stories of people who were able to be reunited with their missing pets.

### **One year later Katrina cat, owner reunited**

Tammy Hupin was 35 years old when Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans and she had to give up her 3-year-old cat Lucy.

"I had to give her up because I lost my house," Hupin said on the way to Agate Bay Animal Hospital. "But I found out she had never been adopted."

Thanks to rescue organizations like Noah's Wish and veterinarians like Dr. Bree Montana, many animals were rescued and brought to shelters for help. Many owners had to take their pets to shelters because their homes had been destroyed following the hurricane.

Dr. Montana traveled to Louisiana to work at a temporary animal shelter where displaced pet owners surrendered their animals in the weeks immediately after the storm. Strays were plucked from the attics and treetops of the flooded region.

Hurricane Katrina, which rolled over coastal Mississippi and southeast Louisiana on August 29 2005, claimed the lives of 1,836 people, devastated 100 miles of the Gulf Coast, flooded 80 percent of New Orleans and caused \$81.2 billion in damages.

Montana described her triage work in Louisiana for the marooned animals as one of the hardest experiences in her professional career.

Most of the cats that Dr. Montana worked with found homes within a few weeks. Twenty were then flown to Sacramento, California.

That's when Dr. Montana received a call from a Noah's Wish official.

"They all needed shots, and tests...many were ill, or shocked -- it was a tough few weeks," Montana said.

Many pets suffered from anxiety problems following their experience with Hurricane Katrina.

One by one, the cats were vaccinated, cared for and adopted -- except four of them. Lucy was among them.

Terry Hupin discovered that Lucy had not been adopted yet and, through Noah's Wish, she was able to reconnect with her displaced cat. They had been separated for nearly a year.

For their special reunion Hupin carried a gift basket of toys, old pictures of her cat and tissues. She couldn't promise not to cry.

She said seeing Lucy again was all she could think about, after pulling up to the hospital with Noah's Wish representative Jennifer McKim.

Wearing a sequined "I Love Lucy" shirt, Hupin cradled her beloved cat for the first time in 11 months.

Hupin was concerned about Lucy's transition since she would be living now with other animals in her household.

"She'll probably warm up to (them). But keep them separate at first. Cats are like families at Thanksgiving, reunions can get a little heated - just give it time," Montana said.

Hupin had been living in a one-bedroom apartment in Austin, Texas. Her three-bedroom home east of downtown New Orleans had been vacant since the storm.

"We've never had this kind of reunion before," McKim said. "It's unreal."

<<http://www.goodnewsblog.com/2006/08/21/one-year-later-katrina-cat-owner-reunited>>

### **Katrina survivor, lost cat reunited at last Animal rescue group tracked owner through Internet search service**

Following Hurricane Katrina and the extensive flooding, many pets were left behind when their owners had to be evacuated. Under the circumstances there was often nothing else the owners could do. Many shelters wouldn't allow pets, nor would buses out of town. Emergency responders weren't trained to handle or accept pets when evacuating people. It was truly a heartbreaking situation for people to have to choose between their own lives and leaving their pets behind. Some people stayed with their pets and died.

Here is one story of a woman who had to leave her pets behind and was able to be reunited with her cat.

Tristan Carter lost everything when Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans -- her home, her grandfather, her two dogs and her rabbit. She thought she had even lost her cat, Cupcake. Until, that is, animal rescue volunteers found the cat, living as a stray, and managed to track down the displaced Carter.

Cupcake had been living as a stray for six months in the hurricane-ravaged neighborhood before the animal rescue volunteers found her. The 7-pound black cat was wearing a collar with rabies tags but the volunteers couldn't find a person who matched the tag's name and address. The phone number on the tag had -- understandably -- been disconnected.

Finally, the volunteers used a professional Internet-based search service and matched Carter with the tag's address. They then provided the volunteers with Carter's new phone number.

Carter said, "I lost a grandfather in the hurricane. To find a little kitty survived six months, that's great."

Carter held Cupcake close and thanked the rescuers who found her.

Carter, who lives in Atlanta now, said that her family had given up any hope of finding their pets. They had even returned to their former home and searched without any success.

"God works in mysterious ways. She is a gift, she is here to let us know there is hope," Carter said. "She's our good luck charm."

Animal rescue groups rescued more than 1,200 former pets living as strays in New Orleans and worked to reunite them with their owners.

<<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/11520333/>>

## **Horses**

You may not realize it but there are quite a few missing horses each year. By far, most missing horses disappear as the result of theft but they can disappear for other reasons. Horses can escape from pastures or they can run off following riding accidents. Horses can also be much harder to locate than many people imagine. If your horse gets loose in a wooded area or in a place with a lot of pasture land he may be able to forage for himself or attach himself to another herd of horses. He could go unnoticed for quite a while or simply be adopted, with no questions asked, by someone else. As long as a horse has grass and water he may be content to stay with whatever companions he finds. Finding a missing horse can be very difficult, even if someone isn't actively trying to hide a stolen horse. If a horse is stolen it may be nearly impossible to find the missing horse. The thieves could take the horse out of state very quickly and sell him.

Here are a few stories of people who were desperate to find their missing horses and whose prayers were answered.

### **Lance**

In April 2002, in Pinckney, Michigan, after nearly two weeks Peggy Beesley was losing hope that she would ever see her horse Lance again. She had been riding the handsome blaze-faced chestnut on a competitive trail ride when he spooked and ran forward into another horse, throwing Beesley to the ground.

After that, no one was sure what had happened to the horse.

Beesley herself thought that after he calmed down he probably found a grassy field in which to graze -- but that he could be anywhere.

Beesley did everything she could to find him, including searching the area by airplane and helicopter.

She and others called every veterinarian in the county, walked every inch of the park and even posted Lance's photos on several Web sites for missing horses. Beesley traveled to horse auctions throughout the area, hoping she might come across Lance. Several times, she grew excited when people mentioned they had a lead on a light-brown horse which might be Lance. But after checking, each lead turned up empty.

"I was really losing hope," Beesley said.

Finally, two 9th graders at the nearby high school spotted a loose horse walking by their house.

The father of one of the students told him to get his mare, Montana, and walk her down to where the horse -- who turned out to be Lance -- was hanging around. Lance was happy to meet Montana and then followed her into a gated pasture.

When she learned that Lance had been found Beesley said, "I couldn't drive fast enough," Beesley said. "I thought I would get pulled over for speeding."

Beesley raced to the home of the 9th grade students where she was reunited with Lance. He was less than a mile away from where he ran off into the woods at Brighton State Recreation Area. Lance was found still wearing his saddle, which had fallen around his belly, and his bridle was still on his head.

Lance had apparently been roaming free in the state park woods for two weeks while Beesley had been searching for him.

Beesley was joined by numerous friends at His Royal Equestrian Center while she stood by Lance and waited for his veterinarian to arrive and perform a health check.

Although he lost over 100 pounds and had numerous cuts, Beesley said Lance appeared to be okay.

"I'm grateful for everything," said Beesley, standing next to Lance in his stall. Her love for the horse was obvious by how she kept patting his neck and placing her head against him.

"I'm just happy to have him back," she said.

<<http://dmetcalfe.homestead.com/Lance.html>>

Some horses seem to get a little wanderlust. Or maybe they have a secret friend?

## **Junior**

Junior, a 25-year-old Morab (Morgan-Arabian cross) was missing for two months in 2008. His owner, 13-year-old Hazen Powell, was heartbroken about her horse's disappearance. But everybody was a little mystified by it. Not by the way the horse got out. The bay horse had apparently gotten out of his paddock by stepping through a trampled place in the fence.

No, what had everybody talking was the horse's apparent companion while he was gone.

Junior's tracks were often spotted alongside those of a moose. Some people speculated that Junior might have a moose girlfriend.

Regardless of his reasons for leaving, his owners, their friends and members of the Vermont Horse Association searched all over for Junior.

"We've been up here a couple times a week, at least once a week," said VHA President Cindy Cross-Greenia. "I had come up last weekend and not found any prints and that was quite discouraging."

However, with winter coming it's possible that his girlfriend ditched him. Or, maybe Junior decided he wanted a nice warm barn when it got cold. Whatever happened, Junior stayed in the area and the moose seems to have departed.

"The last couple weeks when we were out there we weren't seeing the moose anymore so I think the moose went north and left him behind," said Greenia.

Finally, Junior simply wandered into a local driveway.

Junior's owner, 13-year-old Hazen Powell, was in school when her aunt arrived to give her the good news that Junior had been found three miles from his home.

"Oh my god I couldn't believe it I literally flew out of my gym class," said Powell about hearing the news.

If Junior had a broken heart he decided to eat to console himself. The horse was very underweight when he was found.

"I was like oh my god that can't be my horse he's so thin," said Powell when she first saw her returned horse.

"You know he's sore, he's tired, he's 25 and he's been running around in those woods like a teenager having a party," added Cross-Greenia.

Junior was examined by a vet and put on a special diet to help him regain his weight. His family is just glad to have him back home.

As to where he's been all this time or why he finally came back, no one can say for sure.

"I think he's been everywhere and I think he was really ready to come home," Powell said.

<[http://news.hughpages.com/200811\\_VT\\_212046.html](http://news.hughpages.com/200811_VT_212046.html)>

## **Birds**

Unfortunately, there are numerous ads online for missing birds. All too often a cage door may come open and a bird can get out. Some birds may be recaptured fairly quickly if they don't go too far from home but other birds may have wilder adventures. We don't know how many birds ultimately return home but we found a couple of good stories about birds who helped themselves.

### **Lost cockatiel returns home**

In 2008 the Wallenfels family lost both of their albino cockatiels when the feed door on the birds' outdoor cage blew open. The birds, which had unclipped wings, flew away.

Fortunately, the Wallenfels family didn't have to worry about their birds too long. Just two days later 14-year-old Holly Wallenfels was running on the track at her high school, about a mile from her home, when she was distracted by a fluttering in front of her face. It was the male cockatiel flying in front of her. The bird had recognized Holly. Who knows where he had been perched or flying? Other students helped Holly catch the beautiful white bird.

Soon thereafter someone else found an albino cockatiel. Cate Wallenfels thought that it was their missing female bird but it turned out that it wasn't their bird.

"I think this is somebody else's and somebody else has ours -- hopefully," she said. The bird had a crooked toe, which the Wallenfels' cockatiel didn't have.

The Wallenfels contacted the newspaper to let people know they had found an albino cockatiel and that theirs was still missing. They also wanted to encourage people to call the humane society when they found a bird or any lost pet. This isn't the first time the Wallenfels have lost one of their cockatiels. Previously, when one of the Wallenfels' cockatiels went missing for a six-month-long incredible journey, the family recovered the bird after it was reported found to the humane society.

The Wallenfels' household consists of two adults, three children, two dogs, three foster dogs, seven chickens, a frog, two horses, the two cockatiels (missing one now) and the three cats.

The rule that maintains harmony?

"Nobody eats anybody else in this house," she said.

<<http://www.novatoadvance.com/articles/2008/04/30/news/doc4818b8031236b793596146.txt>>

This story may qualify as the best lost pet story of all. Yosuke the parrot was able to tell people his name and where he lived. It didn't take people at a veterinary hospital long to confirm his information and restore him to his family. How's that for a great way to help yourself get back home?

### **Lost Parrot Returns Home After Telling Veterinarian His Address**

In 2008 police in Tokyo rescued an African gray parrot from a neighbor's roof. He spent a night at the police station where he was uncommunicative. He was then transferred to a nearby veterinary hospital while police searched for clues, according to local policeman Shinjiro Uemura.

Apparently the parrot felt much more talkative at the veterinary hospital.

"I'm Mr. Yosuke Nakamura," the bird told the veterinarian, according to Uemura. The parrot also provided his full home address, down to the street number, and even entertained the hospital staff by singing songs.

"We checked the address, and what do you know, a Nakamura family really lived there. So we told them we've found Yosuke," Uemura said.

The Nakamura family told police they had been teaching the bird its name and address for about two years.

Uemura said he didn't know why the parrot hadn't talked to him.

"I tried to be friendly and talked to him, but he completely ignored me," Uemura said.

Yosuke was away from home for two weeks before he was restored to his family. If you're going to teach your parrot to speak then teaching him his name and address is probably one of the most practical things he could learn. Too bad we can't teach dogs and cats and other pets to tell people their names and addresses.

<<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,356850,00.html>>

## **Turtles**

You may be surprised to learn that turtles can lead adventurous lives. They can go missing or be stolen just like other pets. And, since some species can live 150 years or more, they could have a lot of adventures. We found several interesting stories about turtles who found their way back home.

### **Missing 150-Year-Old Turtle Comes Home**

Butch the turtle was missing for nearly two months in 2008. The 150-year-old desert tortoise was believed to be stolen since there was a chain link fence around his California yard and he weighs 40 pounds. He's a little too big to simply slip under a fence.

Butch's owners, the Carle family, were surprised when Chuck Carle went out to get the newspaper in November and found the terrapin in the front yard. The gate to the property was open.

Did Butch come back on his own? It seems unlikely unless the old guy figured out how to open gates.

Butch was ready to go into hibernation so he wasn't willing to talk about it.

The tortoise was a gift to Chuck Carle's mother when she moved into the home in 1943. When she died in the summer of 2008 her son and his wife took over the care of the land turtle. Penny Carle said Butch's return was like an early holiday gift.

<<http://www.wmur.com/pets/17955131/detail.html>>

### **Turtle Comes Home After Hurricane**

In September 2004 Hurricane Ivan swept through the Gulf Coast states. As hurricanes tend to do, this one displaced wildlife, including turtles kept by people in ponds. One woman in Florida reported that she lost several turtles that she had been keeping in a pond near her house because of the hurricane.

“Shortly before hurricane Ivan, I believe it was, I went through the pond to bring my turtles inside. Well, I guess animals can sense natural disasters because all of my turtles were nowhere to be found. Among the missing were my three striped mud turtle, my first turtle, a mississippi map turtle, a yellow bellied, a red bellied, and a painted turtle. They were all gone.”

However, she was overjoyed in February 2005 when her three-striped mud turtle returned to her house after six months.

After the hurricane her pond recovered. Goldfish and minnows bred and multiplied without predators, such as turtles, to eat them. Maybe that was enough to tempt a turtle to come home?

“Tonight, I go to put my dog outside, I glance down, and I see my turtle! He appears to be in good condition: eyes are bright, no sign of injury with any of the limbs, he does, however feel and look a bit

underweight. He used to be the fattest turtle. I wonder where he went for so long and how did he find his way back? Anyways, I'm happy to have him back.”

One turtle-loving friend speculated, “He probably just found a nice spot, dug a nice hole, and rode not only the storm but the whole winter out. Its amazing he found his way home.”

Who knows where Hurricane Ivan tossed this turtle? But somehow he found his way back home.

<<http://www.herpcenter.com/turtles/2805-three-striped-mud-turtle-returns-after-6-mo.html4>>

## **Iguanas**

Iguanas, too, often go missing. Sometimes they are simply released by their owners when they grow larger than anticipated. Free-roaming iguanas have become quite a problem in parts of Florida. They can take up residence in trees and drop down quite unexpectedly on people, cars, and in pools. But there are people who are very upset when their pet iguana disappears. Here's a story about an Ohio family who searched high and low for their iguana named Buddy -- especially high.

### **Missing Iguana Back Home**

In 2005, in East Toledo, Ohio, Buddy the iguana clawed through a screen door to get out of the house. He apparently wanted to go outside into the heat of the garden behind the house.

His family posted flyers and searched for him but they actually weren't too worried about finding him.

"We're figuring that he didn't go too far before he went up high," said Kim Donofrio, Buddy's owner.

"He's good for the summer, but if he stays out until the cool weather he's going to be in bad shape," Donofrio said.

The neighbors didn't seem very concerned either.

"I'm not really worried about it. It's probably more scared of us than we are of it," said Scott Chaney, a Delence Street resident. Marian Chaney agreed, saying, "I went out and looked at my garden and nothing's gone. It's still okay."

Maybe it was because Buddy was a vegetarian.

Be that as it may, Buddy was soon back home. The five-foot-long reptile was sighted just a block away from his home, sitting on a fence. The neighbors tried to take him back to his owners but they weren't home. So they decided to iguana-sit until she came back.

The Donofrios have owned Buddy for six years. For Buddy, at least, East Toledo must seem like a tropical paradise.

<<http://www.wtol.com/Global/story.asp?S=3481621>>

<<http://www.wtol.com/Global/story.asp?S=3494205>>

## **Snakes**

It may seem almost comical, but missing snakes are no joking matter. Some people don't like finding unexpected snakes in their basement. And it's not funny if the missing snake is your pet. Still, just the element of surprise at finding a snake in an unlikely place does have something humorous about it. Here are a couple of stories about naughty snakes who decided to see what was outside their cage.

### **He's not Lassie, but Taz is home**

In January 2009, in Norwalk, Ohio, young Robert Williams, 13, was reunited with his pet snake named Taz. Taz had left his cage and disappeared when the family was moving to Georgia. Although they searched all over the house they couldn't find the two-foot-long snake.

Before the family left Norwalk, they flipped sofa cushions and kept searching for Taz while they packed. Williams said her son didn't want to leave without his pet.

"You can't just call a snake out like a cat or dog," Williams quipped.

"We searched the whole week," the former resident of 117 Woodlawn Ave. said. "We tore the house apart. We even looked in the basement."

Ironically, that's where Taz was found Dec. 29 by the new residents.

When the Harris family moved into the house it only took a short time for them to begin having trouble with their sump pump.

"We have only been living here 3 1/2 weeks," Amanda Harris said at the time. "Our sump pump had stopped and my husband was downstairs talking to the landlord and I heard him say, 'there's a snake down here.'"

"I don't know how he got there," Williams said. "We, to this day, can't figure out how he got into the basement."

"The officers thought maybe it crawled in during the recent warm spell," Harris said after Taz was found. "But there was snake skin in the sump pump, so it must have been here a while unless it just shed its skin."

Taz, estimated to be about 1 1/2 years old, joined the Williams family at Christmas 2007.

"My husband is actually scared to death of (snakes)," the mother said. "His son kept begging him."

After about six months, his father talked with a PetCo employee about recommendations for a "start-up snake."

"We paid about 80 bucks for him," Williams said. "He's also got the iguana, too. We don't like to have the typical pets."

Young Robert Williams was thrilled when he was told that Taz had been found.

According to his mother, after reading the online story, “He said, ‘Oh my God. I get my snake back’ (because) we were going back to Ohio.”

When the Harris family found Taz in the basement they called the police.

About 3:45 p.m. Dec. 29, Norwalk Police Officers David Smith and Chris Kelley responded to Woodlawn Avenue, where Taz was in a small pool of water.

“Due to the cold temperature of the water, the snake’s body temperature had lowered and its movements were very slow. I grabbed the snake behind the head and secured it in a plastic Tupperware container provided by the complainant,” Kelley wrote in his report.

“Officer Kelley said he had kept him in a 10-gallon aquarium,” Williams said about Taz’s interim accommodations. “He said three other people tried to claim him...(but) they lived clear across town.”

Williams arrived at the police station on January 1. Robert and Taz were reunited right away. The teenager took his pet out of the container and allowed the snake to crawl up his arm.

Capt. David Light earlier said the snake appeared to have eaten by the time it was found, guessing there may have been mice in the basement.

Williams agreed. Taz was in no hurry to eat the mouse that was put in the cage for him.

“He must be pretty full,” Williams said.

<<http://www.norwalkreflector.com/articles/2009/01/10/front/doc496777ac084a9352896177.txt>>

### **Missing snake found after 53 days on the run**

In September 2008, in Kent, England, singer Ashley McKenzie was reunited with his missing boa constrictor. The six-foot snake, named Snakey, had been missing for 53 days.

The former X Factor finalist said that he was overwhelmed by Snakey’s return.

“I was really shocked to hear Snakey had been found.

“After 53 days it was getting to the point that if we were going to find her, she wouldn’t be alive so I’m really overwhelmed.

“I’d like to thank the entire Medway police force especially PC Kevin Lincoln and PC Mick O’Meara, who’s now my friend for life.

“I’d also like to say thanks to the Island security and the residents and children that have been assisting in the search.”

Snakey was returned to his St Mary's Island home after being found in a neighbor's garage.

Ashley's manager and personal assistant Jessica Shenton-Phelps were called to a neighbor's house after a homeowner said he had heard rustling noises coming from his garage.

The trio spent two hours cautiously emptying the garage and searching through boxes before they found the missing eight-year-old reptile.

Shenton-Phelps said, "We found her in a box full of heat pads. She was a bit temperamental at first but she's ok now. We took her to the vet's to get her checked over. She's a lot thinner than she was and also a lot paler but she's expected to make a full recovery. We think she must have got out by crawling through the light fitting in her vivarium and out the back doors. We've had sightings of her from both sides of the island but she was found quite close to home. She seems to have had an excellent adventure. She must have definitely had fun over the past 53 days."

PC O'Meara of the Medway neighborhood policing unit said, "We would like to thank all the people who have helped with the search. Special mentions go to PC Kevin Lincoln, Chatham Maritime Security, Chatham Marina Staff and residents of the Island, especially the Dog Walkers and children who never gave up the search."

<<http://www.kentnews.co.uk/kent-news/Missing-snake-found-after-53-days-on-the-run-newsinkent16499.aspx?news=local>>