

Eclipse is Missing!

It was every exhibitor's worst nightmare—losing a cat in or from a show hall! Fortunately for both Melissa and Eclipse they were reunited.

Laurie Coughlan



Eclipse and Melissa - reunited and it feels so good!

What would you do if your best feline friend was lost in a strange place? Melissa Hayden faced this question when Eclipse, her year-and-a-half old Siamese seal point neuter, disappeared into the dark from a show at the Maryland State Fairgrounds. It is unclear whether he got out of his cage on his own or was helped out. What is clear is that he had vanished.

Eclipse is a gentle animal who enjoys participating in CFA shows. This show was running late. When the last ring finished, Melissa placed each cat in a carrier on her cart and started out the show hall door, only to remember she had left a room key in the building. Leaving the cart by the car just outside the door, she raced in for the key. Returning to load the car, she picked up Eclipse's carrier and found it was empty, though the door was still latched. In shock, she mentally reviewed putting him in the carrier, checking the door, and fastening the cover. How could he have escaped and re-fastened the latch? Heart racing, she secured the other cats and began to search.

From the moment she discovered Eclipse was missing, Melissa was flooded with suggestions and assistance from concerned animal lovers. Humane Society personnel at the show advised her to leave his carrier with food and a litter pan outside the building under a table to provide shelter in the rainy weather. Fairgrounds staff allowed after-hours access for a search, and helped Melissa review security footage of the parking lot. Show management made announcements encouraging people to check their belongings in case Eclipse was hiding in the hall, and to watch for him as they left. Exhibitors helped search the hall and the parking lot throughout the show weekend and in the days that followed, many driving slowly through the lot in the dark hoping their headlights would catch the reflection of a cat's eyes.

Melissa quickly filed reports with the Humane Society and Baltimore City and County Animal Control Offices. She brought flyers with Eclipse's picture to veterinarian offices and rescue facilities, explaining that Eclipse was both her special pet and one of the top-ranked Siamese



neuters in the CFA show world. She worked with animal rescuers to place Havahart traps around the fairgrounds, and walked the surrounding neighborhoods handing out flyers. She posted on lost pet social media sites, and her widely shared post on the Baltimore County Lost and Found Pet Facebook page struck a nerve with animal lovers. After a week she had received a flood of advice and moral support, both long distance and locally. But there were no reports of Eclipse.

Heartbroken, Melissa resolved to do everything possible to find her boy. She expanded her efforts to include some nontraditional methods. She hired a finding-dog with

Eclipse and his buddy Bijoux Pavane



How Do You Find a Lost Cat?

There are so many ways the most carefully tended cat can get lost: a car accident on the way to a show, escape from the show hall, storm damage to your home, home break-in, guests inattentive to pets ... and then there are those carefully calculating and determined cats who make a break for it. Below are some steps people have reported taking to identify and find lost pets. Some have been proven over time, while others are a bit more speculative, but each method listed here has been used by someone with some success.

- **Microchip your cat.** Some services like AKC will email all enrolled owners in a zone to report a lost animal
- If you travel with a cat, **carry a picture** just in case you need it for identification
- **Place food in a carrier** with bedding where the cat was last seen. Indoor cats do not normally roam too far if they escape their homes. Food and familiar scents may draw them back home
- **Distribute flyers** door-to-door with the cat's picture in the neighborhood. Put up posters wherever you can
- **Offer a reward** for the cat's return unharmed, no questions asked
- **Deliver flyers** to local animal shelters and emergency veterinarian clinics. Consider leaving pictures and authorization for treatment. Your cat may come in as an anonymous emergency
- **Search the area at different times of day.** Cat eyes show up well in a flashlight beam
- **Contact local animal rescue organizations** for help placing Havahart traps
- **Use lost pet social media sites.** Just open Facebook and type Lost Pet in the search box. Local options will pop up, and you will find access to on-line support
- **Hire a tracker** (an example is Dogs Finding Dogs)
- **Hire a Psychic.** Some specialize in finding lost pets
- **Distribute flyers to TV stations.** If you have video or good photos, on a slow news day you may get coverage
- If an indoor cat has gotten out, confine all the other cats, **leave the door propped open**, and go back to what you were doing when the escape occurred. Your indoor cat may simply wander back in!

handler to try and track Eclipse, using his show cage for scent. She contracted a targeted faxing service to distribute her flyer, and contacted local television stations. A friend made sure Eclipse was included in church prayer circles. Melissa even consulted with psychics specializing in finding lost pets. After 18 days with no results, she resigned herself to never seeing Eclipse again.

Then the phone rang. A Siamese cat matching the flyer and report Melissa filed had been found 13 miles south of the fairgrounds. It was being held at Animal Control.

"Needless to say," relates Melissa, "I dropped everything and literally raced to Animal Control. There was Eclipse in his cage! He immediately recognized me and within seconds he was talking up a storm, making biscuits and giving kisses. I had wondered whether this moment would ever happen—and I am so grateful it did."

Eclipse is very happy to be back with his family. He lost over half of his body weight during his adventure, but with his healthy appetite and a special diet, he has gained it back. As a precaution, he received fluids, antibacterial eye ointment, a de-wormer, a feline leukemia test and a microchip. He was isolated from other cats until his test results were confirmed negative.

There is no way of knowing how Eclipse got away, and how he traversed those 13 miles. Of all the things Melissa did, it was the report and flyer filed with Animal Control that in the end brought him home. To be fair, one of the psychics called Melissa to report a "hit", describing a blond man in some sort of uniform holding the cat. The call came just as the newly found Eclipse was being examined by a blond veterinarian wearing scrubs.

Melissa said that animal lovers both near and far played an important role in Eclipse's recovery, providing much needed moral support when she began to lose hope. "The care, concern and help from friends helped me. The generosity of spirit and goodwill for a positive outcome meant the world to me."

Watch the folks who found Eclipse talk about finding him at
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IgxdiNefPnc>

