

## How to Prevent Escapes and What to Do If Your Bird Gets Out!

By Lucy MacMillan



It is one of a bird-owner's worst nightmares. You leave home for vacation or work and leave your feathered friend in the care of others, expecting she'll be safe, maybe even happy for the change of pace. But something goes terribly wrong and she escapes from the house. Or maybe you're just working at home and someone answers the door and for that brief moment you forget there's a crafty bird in the room and she inadvertently "escapes" into the outdoors. What to do? Is this happening?

The first rule of thumb – try not to panic! The moments after an escape, if you know when it occurred, are the most crucial in your chances of retrieving your bird safely. We will outline what some of the more important steps are in trying to locate her. But before we go down that road,

let's review ways we can minimize the chance for a potential accidental escape of your companion bird. Here are some key things to consider:

### Prevent Accidental Escapes

1. Always check that the cage door is locked when you are leaving the house – and make sure the bird is inside the cage before you open the house door to leave.
2. Keep doors and windows closed anytime a bird is out of its cage. This prevents your bird from flying out the opening and also protects your birds from wily intruders like the neighborhood cat that may sneak in undetected.
3. Screen windows and doors as an extra pre-caution if that is something you can do, so if it's hot outside and you want fresh air, the bird still can't get out.
4. If you or someone in the household is forgetful, leave a post-it note or something more permanent on the inside of the front door reminding you to shut the cage doors and make sure the bird is safely enclosed.
5. Remind caregivers and family, especially young children, of the importance of safely securing your bird when he or she leaves the house.
6. Have digital photographs of your bird ready in case your bird does escape so that you can use these for "Lost" posters you can distribute locally.
7. Let your neighbors know you have a bird and what kind – they may be the most likely ones to find it.
8. If so inclined, clip your bird's wings so escape is less likely and long-distance flight is limited. See Mickaboo's website about [wing-clipping](#) and a prior newsletter article about a volunteer's [experience](#) with an unclipped companion bird.
9. Practice whistling or calling your bird so that if it's out and about she may be more likely to respond with an echo call that may help you locate her.
10. Consider banding or micro-chipping your bird.

Should your bird escape, there are a number of things you can do to help find her.

### What to Do If Your Bird Escapes

1. Try not to panic! Immediately call and whistle for your bird in the vicinity of your home, put out its favorite food and travel cage, and cover as much ground in the immediate area as

- quickly as you can. Time is of the essence for escaped birds, especially the smaller ones who are potentially more susceptible to neighborhood predators like cats and hawks. If your bird has another companion, consider putting them in the travel cage as they may call back and forth if one is missing the other.
2. Go door to door (as you feel comfortable) to people in your neighborhood asking if they found a bird and ask them to keep on the lookout. Give them a copy of a photo of your bird and your phone number if they don't already have it.
  3. Post "Lost" posters in the neighborhood with a photo of your bird and at least one phone number someone can use to contact you.
  4. Bring "Lost" posters to local pet stores.
  5. Call your local vets and Humane Society to let them know a bird has been lost and how to get in contact with you if it is found.
  6. Post your bird as "lost" on Mickaboo's Lost and Found [website](#) and other websites such as Craigslist. Mickaboo volunteers living in your area may also be able to help you look for the bird if you contact us at [lostandfound@mickaboo.org](mailto:lostandfound@mickaboo.org).
  7. Be persistent! In two separate cases, companion birds in the San Francisco Bay Area were rescued after escaping their homes. These birds were each outdoors in the bitter cold over a month. A series of Mickaboo volunteers with the aid of local vets and pet store owners helped the birds be rescued.

