



## CAT STUCK IN A TREE?

### Don't panic.

Cats are excellent climbers and rarely fall out of trees even if they fall asleep. If your cat has to spend the night in a tree it should be fine. Many cats come down on their own after dark - if given time to calm down once they feel safe and nothing is moving around down below.

If not physically stuck in a fork, most cats will figure out how to come down when hungry. Sometimes encouraging the cat down with sweet talk while holding an open can of tuna can work around dusk.

**HOWEVER, if the cat has not come down by 3 days, call a climber with real experience getting cats out of trees. This link has a network of tree rescue people across the US.**

<http://www.catinatreerescue.com/>

If there's not a tree climber listed in your area, try calling a local Tree care company who has professional tree climbers. Your local animal control unit, shelter or vet may know of services available in your area. Tree climbing combined with handling a scared cat (even if your own) is extremely dangerous.

**If no one is available, here are some guidelines & tips.**

- 1. Remove any dogs within 100 feet and clear all objects/obstacles under the entire tree and all branches. This includes ladders, chairs, logs, rocks etc. Objects that can't be moved should be covered with cushions, folded blankets, bags of leaves anything to soften the landing. Cats can survive falls from great heights IF they do not land on concrete or something hard.**
- 2. Do not leave food under tree. The cat is already motivated to come down. Food only attracts other predators.**
- 3. Lean a wooden ladder up against the tree near the cat so she can climb down. Leave her alone with the ladder for at least 2 hours to allow her to climb down on her own.**
- 4. If the cat is too freaked out to use the ladder, put on work gloves and a thick coat to protect yourself and climb up the ladder to retrieve her. Make sure the ladder is stable with no wobbles before you climb.**
- 5. Once you reach the cat and can pet them a few times to calm them, in a slow and steady manner, clutch the cat firmly by the nape of the neck to reduce your chances of getting scratched and to induce calmness in the cat. Put them in a bag or pillowcase before coming down.**

**If cat has been in tree more than 3 days,  
someone needs to go up to help the cat!**

## Is your cat missing and may be hiding in a tree?

If your cat is missing and you suspect he might be stuck in a tree, the easiest way to find him is to get him to talk. Search the area during calm, quiet times to see if he will respond to you.

Use your normal, relaxed voice in a way he recognizes because he may not want to respond to you if you sound distressed.

### Searching Trees for a Missing Cat

1. Listen
  - Search at calm, quiet times
  - Speak with calm, relaxed voice
  - Cat won't respond if asleep or doesn't feel safe
2. Smell
  - Cat will pee after 24 hours
3. Look
  - Use binoculars during day; Use flashlight at night to look for eyeshine
  - Focus on trees close to barriers: fence, creek, building, tree-line of wooded area
  - Search all crotches next to trunk of tree, horizontal forks, nests, cavities



The sound of shaking a bag of treats or food may also work. Listen carefully since his voice might be very faint. Be aware that cats get tired and become silent for periods of time and won't respond, so, if you get no response, try again later. When you do hear the cat respond, be aware that it can be very difficult to pin-point a location based only on the sound. Sometimes they sound high, sometimes low, sometimes to the left or to the right. It usually takes extended listening from various positions to zero-in on a location.

Since you can't always count on a cat to talk to you, you should search with your nose for the scent of cat urine. Cats will hold it as long as they can. They typically can't hold it more than 24 hours, and, at that point, they will empty their bladder. Sometimes, they walk all the way out to the extreme tips of a limb to let it go there, because they want their tell-tale scent as far away as possible, and, sometimes, they let it go wherever they are, so it could be next to the trunk of the tree. When a cat is stuck in a tree, his urine is usually more concentrated and stronger smelling, so it is easier than usual to detect. Pay attention as that scent may be your only clue.

You won't always hear or smell your cat, so it is helpful to know where and how to look in a tree to find him. It is easier in the winter months when many trees are bare of foliage, but, even then, a cat can still be surprisingly difficult to see. To improve your chances, it is important to search from various vantage points on all sides of the tree, ranging from far away to directly beneath the tree. Binoculars are helpful during the day, and a strong flashlight can be used in the darkness to search for the cat's "eye-shine." Cat eyes will

reflect the light from your flashlight back to you making them very easy to see in the darkness. However, keep in mind that you will not see a reflection if the cat's eyes are closed, the cat is not facing you, or there is no direct line of sight to the cat's eyes from the flashlight and your eyes at the same time, so failing to see eye-shine does not prove that the cat is not in the tree.

The thought of searching all trees in your area may be so overwhelming that you may find it difficult to get motivated, so focus your search at first on only those trees that cats are most likely to climb – those close to a barrier such as a fence, creek, or building. When they are exploring and cross a barrier, they are sometimes surprised to find a hostile creature on the other side who chases them up a tree. Also, when they are being chased and run into a barrier, they will naturally be forced to go up. Similarly, when they are chased across a clearing to a wooded area, they will often climb one of the first few trees they find along the tree line. Cats can certainly be found in a tree in the interior of a wooded area or yard, but you are more likely to find them in these border areas. Be aware that they sometimes climb a tree by a house and then jump down onto the roof and get stuck there, so check roofs too.

Cats often perch next to the trunk of the tree, so the first place to look is up and down the trunk at every limb from both sides of the tree. After that, look along the entire length of each limb while paying particular attention to any horizontal forks in the limb, because cats like to perch there where they can spread their body across both legs of the fork for stability. If the limb is at least roughly the same diameter as the cat, he may stretch out on his belly in line with the limb. Sometimes, they will go out toward the end of the limb where much of the foliage is, and that makes it harder to see them. Also, closely examine any nests or other collections of leaves and twigs that may have formed, because they sometimes use that for a perch and can be very difficult to see. Look for an ear poking above or a tail hanging out. Look also for cavities in the tree, especially at the top of a broken stem. A cat can crawl in to that cavity and be impossible to see from the ground, and that is when you really need him to talk to you.

If you still have not found your cat, it is worthwhile to search again the next day, because cats move around in the tree. They often move to higher or lower places and may be more visible or talkative the next time you search.

They also often fall out of the tree, especially during the night, and then return home acting as if nothing happened.

If they come home with a limp or injured claw, that is a sign that they were in a tree. But don't wait for your cat to fall out and return home. They may not fall out of the tree at all, or, if they do, it could be weeks later.

**Your cat is waiting for you to rescue him, so get out there and search!**



### What about the Fire department?

Everyone pictures a friendly fireman saving a stuck cat in a tree. The reality is that most fire departments will not rescue cats out of trees because they need to be ready to respond to any human emergencies. However, some fire departments still do cat rescues occasionally. If you live in a small-town, chances are better that may come help.

HOWEVER: often a cat is so frightened of a ladder coming toward them, they will panic and leap to terrible injury, so ladders and firemen can be a risky and less-than-ideal solution.

### Why do some cats get stuck and refuse to come down while crying for help?

Cats can go into a state of shock and be overcome with the fear of falling so not able to think clearly. A cat can be so filled with fright it doesn't realize it's capable of climbing down - those curved claws of a cat work well for climbing up a tree trunk, but to climb down, the cat has to climb backwards down the trunk. This is not something cats do naturally.



## For emergencies when unreachable by a climber.



1. Get a rope, a round laundry basket, and some sort of weight at least 2lbs you can tie to one end of the rope.

2. Carefully throw it over the branch next to where cat is. Tie the basket to the other end of other rope. Tie rope all the way around the top perimeter of the basket (weave in and out of holes) Join 3 parts of rope to come together at top of

basket in the center (like a tripod to keep it level in the air).

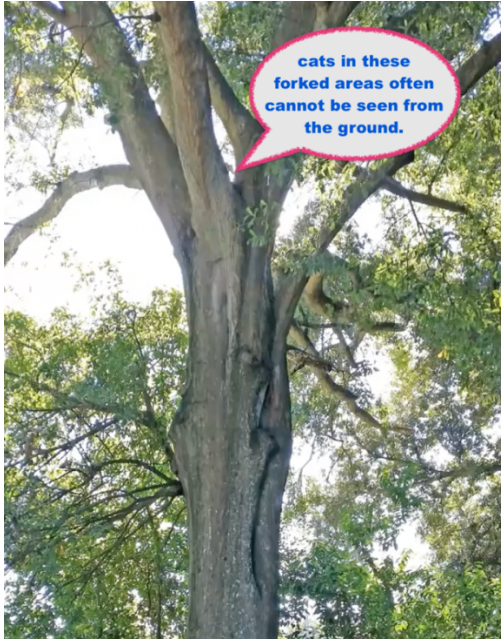
3. Put something with a familiar home smell in it to make sure cat feels safe getting in. Consider the cat's sleeping pad, dry food, or a bit of fresh tuna in a plastic container.

4. Slowly pull on the other end of the rope to pull the basket up to the branch next to cat. It's likely to take at least 5-20 mins for them to get in.

Once they've climbed in and settled down, SLOWLY lower the basket with cat to the ground. Cover the basket with a towel or somehow KEEP THEM CONTAINED to carry the whole contraption inside before letting them out!

**Be patient. Try not to sway or move the basket as this can scare them. Refrain from talking, coaching, or even staring directly at the cat.**

Examples of where cats tend to be in various tree types...





Remember, a cat in a tree is a stressed cat. People who say “You never see a cat skeleton in a tree” do not realize that when a cat starves to death, weak, or exhausted, they fall out of the tree.

Never assume a cat in a tree will come down on their own.

Give them space and peace, but if they are not down within 3 days, get help!

#### NOTE

A cat who returns home limping or with damaged/shredded claws can be a sign that the cat was stuck in a tree or accidentally transported and fell from a vehicle.

Compiled with help from Randall Kolb, the Cat Rescue Guy



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