



**I AM  
SKYE,  
FINDER OF  
THE LOST**

**Catherine Stier**

**illustrated by  
Francesca Rosa**

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The first search and rescue (SAR) dogs helped locate lost travelers in the mountains of Europe during the 1700s. Since then human's best friend has stepped up to help in all kinds of places and situations, from finding hurt soldiers on battlefields to locating people trapped in rubble after natural disasters.

While the goal of every SAR mission is similar, different kinds of searches may call for dogs with different skills and training. In the wilderness, teams need to cover huge areas, and every minute counts. If the searchers have an idea of where the missing person may be, they may use air-scent dogs. These dogs are trained to look for “pools” of scent, or places where a scent is strongest. So if there is a defined area to search, air-scent dogs are great at sniffing out the nearest humans.

But what if no one knows where the missing person may have gone? This is a job for a trailing dog, like Skye. Instead of looking for the strongest scent in an area, a trailing dog searches for a *particular* scent. Starting at the person's last known position, the dog

takes a big whiff of the missing person's scent from things like clothing or personal belongings. Then it's on to the trail.

The trail the dog follows is not a visible path. Instead, it's a scent trail. A SAR dog can detect bits of the scent that may be drifting in the air, caught in branches, settled in the dirt, or even present in footprints. Humans shed about 40,000 skin cells per minute. That's a lot of skin! And while shedding skin may sound gross, it's just what SAR dogs need to be able to trail a missing person.

Still, the job isn't easy. Wind and heat and rain can all affect a dog's ability to stay on a scent trail. Not only that, after hours of sniffing, a dog's nose can become used to a particular scent, making it harder for the dog to follow. When this “nose fatigue” sets in, the dog needs to take a break and reset—and maybe give a good shake to de-stress, like Skye does. Then it's back on the job, following a trail that humans cannot see and bringing help to those in need.

Most SAR groups are made up of volunteers. But that doesn't mean that every team is not expertly trained. Each team—human and dog—spends hundreds of hours to become certified. For humans, this involves learning first aid (on both humans and dogs) as well as CPR. Humans may also be required to take classes in incident management, backcountry survival, and other skills specific to a certain area, such as rock climbing.

For dogs, training begins with the basics. All SAR dogs must have excellent obedience skills, be comfortable around humans, and have a strong hunting drive. To become certified with some SAR organizations, dogs need to complete a test where they follow a scent through the wilderness—for one full mile!

It takes a tough pup to do SAR work. Terrain is often rugged, and in deserts, like the one where Skye works, temperatures can reach 100°F by midmorning. It's important that humans and their dogs take every safety precaution so they can live long and healthy lives, doing the vital work that they do best.

## Border Collie

This breed got its name from its job of herding sheep along the border of Scotland and England. Today the border collie is still the top herder in the world, but its smarts make it a great fit for other jobs too.



**Height:** 18–22 inches

**Weight:** 30–55 pounds

**Life Span:** 12–15 years

**Coat:** White and black or brown

**Known for:** Intelligence, energy

## Bloodhound

Often owned by royalty in medieval times, this breed got its name because it was said to have “royal blood.”

Today it's known for having the best nose of any breed.



**Height:** 23–27 inches

**Weight:** 80–110 pounds

**Life Span:** 10–12 years

**Coat:** Black and tan, red

**Known for:** Independence, curiosity, friendliness