

Pepper the pooch reunited with owners after frantic 19 days roaming countryside

A terrified dog which has been running loose in the West Lothian countryside for NINETEEN days has been reunited with its grateful owner after being tracked down by lost dog tracker Hazel Gowans.

Hazel and her specially trained dog Fox Red Labrador Thor, were joined in a massive community effort to trace nervous Pepper, a Toy Poodle, which was last seen on 31 March at a garage in the Broxburn area.

Pepper's owner Davie MacLennan enlisted the help of Hazel and volunteers from [Search Dogs for Lost Dogs Scotland](#) who have scoured the local countryside and been in close pursuit of Pepper over the last three weeks.

Pepper, who runs away when approached, was eventually apprehended in a humane trap in a farmer's field and is now happily home in South Queensferry.

<https://www.facebook.com/100002987518161/videos/pcb.7202690049840507/6929819027122387>

Pepper takes the bait after 19 days on the run

A drone, thermal imaging and strategically placed cameras in areas where sightings had been reported all played a part in successfully reuniting the wayward canine.

Amazingly, Pepper survived crossing the M9 – one of Scotland's busiest motorways – and was caught on the dash-cam of a

horrified motorist who reported the sighting.

Electrician Davie, 49, admitted: "On Monday I had given up hope, I thought I am never getting my dog back. Hazel is awesome and that woman and her dog deserve medals.

"She has been scrambling about in mud, setting up traps, following up sightings and out at all hours of the day and night. I can't thank Hazel enough, she has been absolutely fantastic, along with many others including gamekeepers, wardens, landowners and members of the public who have been brilliant."

Pepper has lost a few pounds but is in good health added Davie: "She has been hunting to survive and I think instinct has kicked in – toy poodles were originally bred for hunting long before they became fluffy show dogs. She has lots of ticks and doesn't smell great but otherwise is fine, but we will have her checked by a vet just in case.

"She was spooked by a big dog and took off, but I will make sure she is never off the leash again."

Local farmers, gamekeepers, owners of a local fishery and equestrian centre, and concerned members of the public joined in the frantic hunt for Pepper amid concerns she may become a victim of heavy traffic in the area.

Hazel, who runs the [Hazel Muzzles Mutts](#) Facebook page, said: "Pepper is safe after almost three weeks loose. She will be vet checked asap after being stuck on the motorway over a week ago.

"She covered huge distances and was very elusive in showing to anyone – preferring to find holes under rocks to keep herself safe. Winchburgh, Birdsmill, Broxburn, South Queensferry and up the country fields behind Newton were part of her route."

Hazel revealed that Pepper had been tracked to Hopetoun Fisher

at Broxburn and her search dog Thor confirmed she was in the area. This was later supported by reports from two people who had come across anxious Pepper, who quickly fled the scene.

<https://www.facebook.com/100002987518161/videos/pcb.7202690049840507/1164451017898736>

Safe at last – Pepper the Toy Poodle

Hazel added: “Due to the proximity of the motorway only metres away, it was imperative to keep the area clear of dogs and walkers and bait her away from the roads and traffic.”

She thanked local farmers, rural business owners and gamekeepers for allowing access for cameras and traps and said the public played a huge part in reporting sightings.



Another one in the bag for dog hunter Hazel Gowans and her search dog Thor

Hazel added: "Davie and Lyndsey (the owners) you were amazing, doing absolutely everything and anything that was required to get your lass safe .Well done every one – welcome home little Pepper."



Pepper the wayward Toy Poodle will be on a close leash after 19 days on the loose