

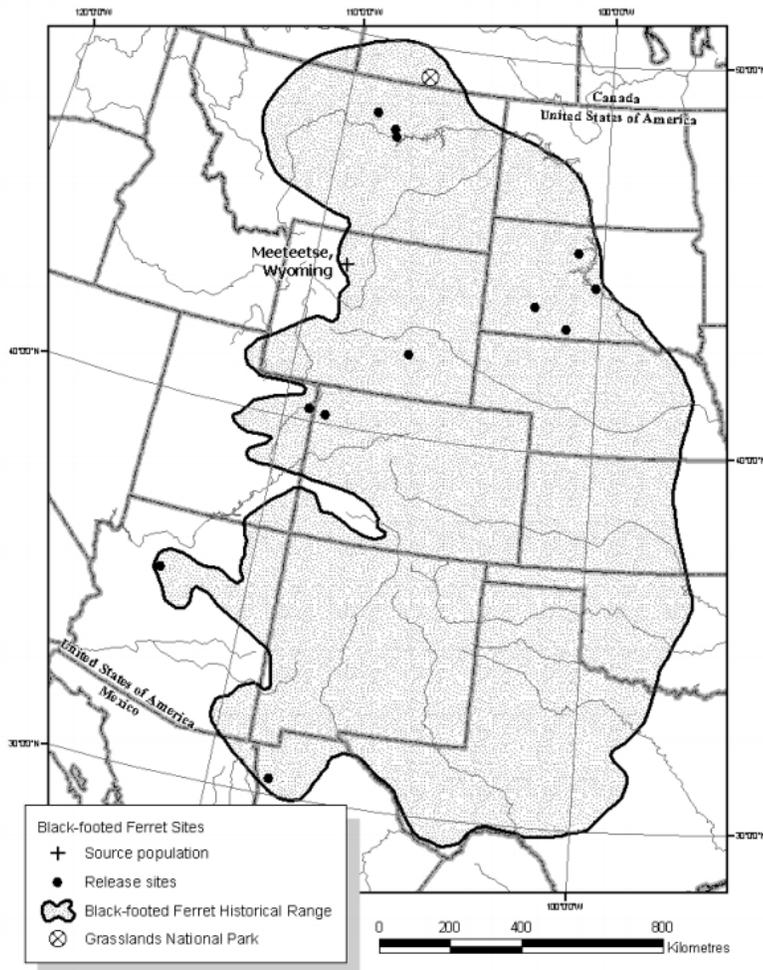


# Species at Risk Profile Series: Black-footed Ferret



- Black-footed ferrets are no longer found in Canada, although a successful reintroduction program is ongoing in Grasslands National Park.
- Grasslands National Park has the last remaining colonies of prairie dogs in Canada.
- Ferrets are often considered to be the rarest animal in North America.
- Ferrets are highly dependent upon prairie dog colonies for their entire life cycle.
- They are completely nocturnal, and 90% of their diet is prairie dogs.
- Ferrets use prairie dog burrows both for shelter and for raising their young.
- They were thought extinct until 1981, when a population in Wyoming was discovered.
- Prior to reintroduction, the last confirmed record in Canada was near Climax, SK, in 1937.
- Certain Great Horned Owl individuals have been known to specialize in targeting ferrets.
- Average lifespan is only three years and ferrets produce 3-5 kits once per year.
- Their feet and claws are well-adapted for digging.
- Although ferrets appear to have keen eyesight and hearing, smell is likely their most used sense when hunting underground.





## Conservation

- Ferret conservation is inseparable from prairie dog conservation.
- Ferrets are susceptible to disease such as sylvatic plague, distemper, and rabies.
- All Ferrets since 1986 are descended from 18 individuals, resulting in low genetic diversity. This means they may have a difficult time adapting to environmental changes.

## Get involved

- Read the assessment and status report for Black-footed Ferrets [here](#).
- Read the recovery strategy for Black-footed Ferrets [here](#).
- Learn more about volunteering for Black-footed Ferret surveys [here](#).

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 Range map credit: Tuckwell, J., and T. Everest. 2009. Recovery Strategy for the Black-footed Ferret (*Mustela nigripes*) in Canada. Species at Risk Act Recovery Strategy Series. Parks Canada Agency. Ottawa. vii + 36 pp.