

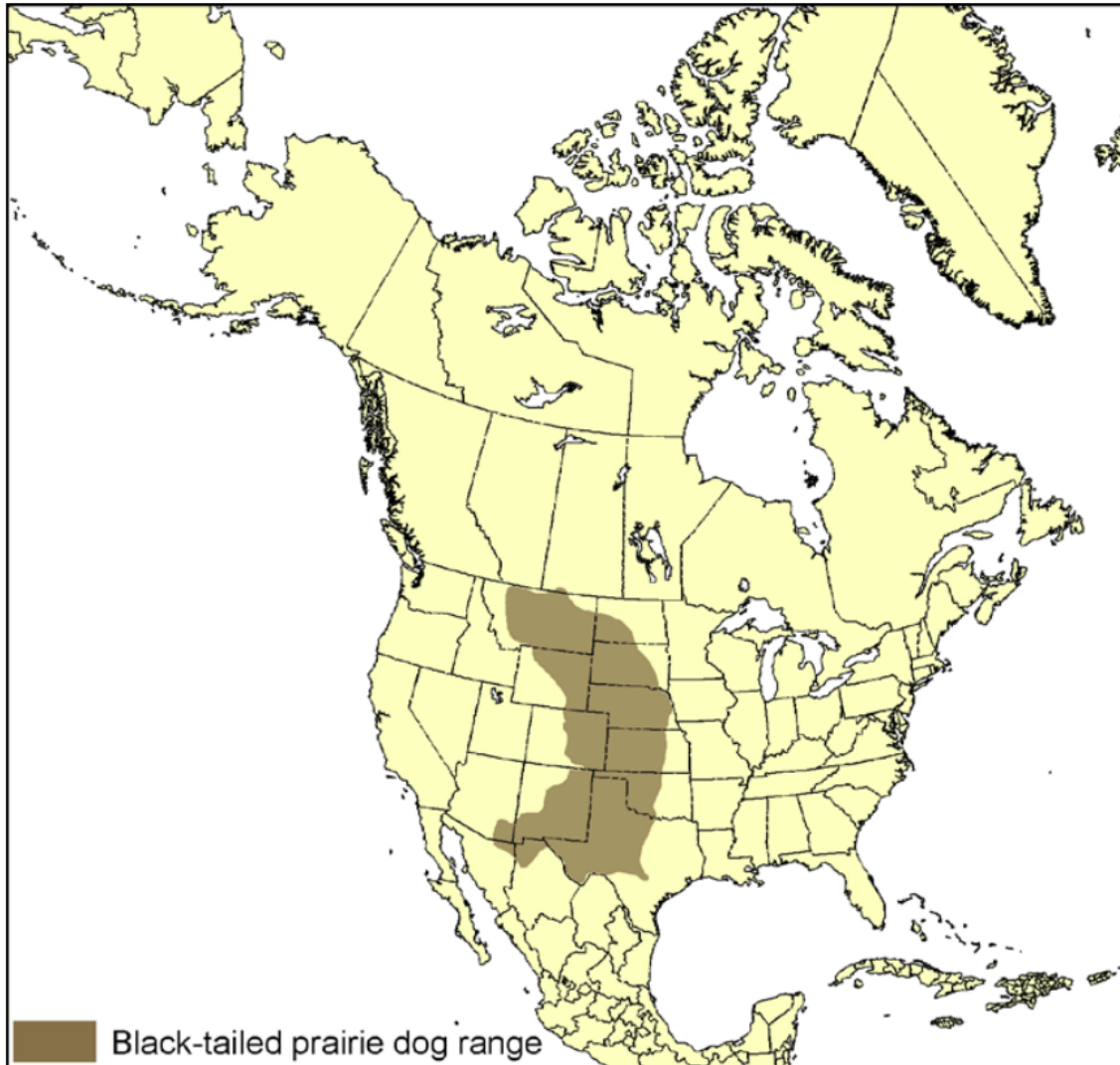


Species at Risk Profile Series: Black-tailed Prairie Dog



- Black-tailed Prairie Dogs are considered threatened in Canada.
- Prairie dogs are closely related to ground squirrels (gophers) but are larger and stockier.
- They are diurnal, but live underground in large colonies with connected burrows.
- They are found in short- and mixed-grass prairies, and grass composes most of their diet.
- They provide breeding habitat for endangered species including Mountain Plover, Burrowing Owl, and the recently reintroduced Black-footed Ferret.
- Colonies are characterized by short vegetation and large dirt mounds at burrow entrances.
- Family groups within a colony consist of a male, 2-4 females, and up to 1-2 yearlings.
- Despite living in a colony, family groups are territorial against other family groups.
- Prairie dogs hibernate for 4 months, and give birth to 2-6 young each year.
- Prairie dogs give a distinctive, territorial “jump-yip”, raising their forefeet in the air while stretching out vertically and barking.
- Young male prairie dogs travel up to 10 km to find a new family group or colony.





Conservation

- It is estimated only 2% of their historical range now contains prairie dog colonies.
- There are only 18 colonies over 12 km² in Canada, located within or near Grasslands National Park.
- Prairie dogs are at risk from disease, particularly sylvatic plague, and drought.
- Drought events are predicted to increase in frequency on the prairies.

Get involved

- Read the assessment and status report for Black-tailed Prairie Dogs [here](#).
- Prairie dogs can be easily observed from a vehicle in Grasslands National Park.

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Range map credit: COSEWIC. 2011. COSEWIC assessment and status report on the Black-tailed Prairie Dog *Cynomys ludovicianus* in Canada. Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada. Ottawa. xiii + 58 pp.