



Ferret Activities



Primary Activity #1

The Story of Noir, the Black-footed Ferret

Description:

Students will learn about the habitat and life of a black-footed ferret as they read the story of Noir, the black-footed ferret. Questions, a maze, and the “What’s for Dinner?” exercises will underscore the facts discussed in the story.

Procedure:

1. As a class, read the story “The Story of Noir, the Black-footed Ferret”.
2. Hand out the story and corresponding questions (found on page 53-54) to each student.
Students will answer the questions to reinforce the key facts about ferret life, their predators, their food and how they use their senses to stay safe.
3. As a supplemental activity, distribute copies of the maze (page 55) and the “What’s for Dinner?” worksheet (page 56) to each student.
4. The teacher will review with the class the responses to all activities, reinforcing the way ferrets use their senses to stay safe from predators and to find their main food source, prairie dogs.



Student Page

The Story of Noir, the Black-footed Ferret

It is early spring and the moon is shining brightly in the Saskatchewan night sky. The wind gently blows the tall grasses. A little head with big ears pops out of a hole in the ground. It's Noir, the black-footed ferret. She has brownish-yellow fur with black around her eyes, black feet and black at the tip of her tail. As her long thin body emerges from the hole, Noir uses her big ears and strong sense of hearing to *listen* for predators. She uses her strong sense of *smell* to test the air for predators and she uses her strong eyesight to *look* for predators. When she knows it is safe, she runs through the grasslands in search of her dinner. Noir and other black-footed ferrets like to eat prairie dogs. Sometimes if Noir can't find a prairie dog, she will eat small animals like birds and squirrels. But tonight Noir is in luck, she has spotted a burrow where a prairie dog family lives. She slinks down the burrow and snatches a sleeping prairie dog. After she finishes her dinner, Noir feels tired and she bounds back to her home. Her home helps keep her safe from predators like hawks, badgers, and coyotes. Noir's home is like that of all black-footed ferrets, it is an underground tunnel called a burrow, which is the perfect shape for her long slinky body. Noir crawls into her burrow and falls fast asleep.

As the sun starts to set in the sky and many other animals are going to sleep, Noir is just waking up. Noir is enjoying the cool evening in the grasslands when she sees another black-footed ferret. He looks friendly so Noir approaches him. They dance around with each other before they mate. Noir doesn't get to see her new friend again, but six weeks later Noir is in her burrow with four baby black-footed ferret kits. Noir now spends all her time caring for her babies.

On a warm summer's evening the kits emerge from the burrow for the first time. They are scared at first but their mom encourages them to leave the burrow and soon they are playing in the grass with Noir watching over them.



The Story of Noir, the Black-footed Ferret

Questions:

1. What does Noir look like?

Noir has _____ coloured fur on her feet, tail and around her eyes.

The rest of her fur is _____ coloured.

She is _____ (**tall** or small) and she has a _____

(l o n g or ~~shot~~) body.



2. What senses does Noir use when checking for predators?

Noir uses her sense of _____ to listen, her sense of _____ to sniff the air and she uses her sense of _____ to look for predators.

3. What do Noir and other black-footed ferrets like to eat?

4. What do you call baby black-footed ferrets?



5. When do the black-footed ferrets like to go out and play?





Help Noir, the Black-footed ferret find her way home!

Draw a line through the maze to get the Black-footed ferret to its home.

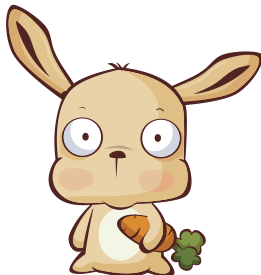
Make sure you go to the right *home!*





What's For Dinner?

Noir, the Black-footed ferret is very hungry. Draw lines from the black-footed ferret to the food items that it would eat in the wild.



An animal that eats meat is called a _____



Primary Activity #2

Art Project: Create a Black-footed Ferret Mask

Description:

Black-footed ferrets have distinctive colouration to help them camouflage in their grassland habitat. They are brownish-yellow with black fur around their eyes, black feet and black fur on the tip of their tail. Students will colour and create a mask so they can pretend to be black-footed ferrets, out in the grasslands.

Materials:

- Scissors
- Coloured pencil crayons, crayons or markers
- String
- Mask template
- White pipe cleaners
- Glue stick

Procedure:

1. Hand out one mask template (page 58) to each student.
2. Have the students colour the template with the brown, yellow, white and black to correspond to the ferret's colouration.
3. Cut out the template along the dashed lines outlining the face and eyes.
4. Punch a hole along the sides and thread string through the holes.
5. Use small pieces of pipe cleaner to make the whiskers. Glue onto the mask.



You too can become a Black-footed ferret!

Use the picture below to trace out the face of a black-footed ferret. Colour the face and remember to use black around the eyes! Cut out the face and eyes by cutting along the outline. Punch the white circles and thread string through the holes to create the mask. Add some whiskers!





Primary Activity #3

Math Project: The Grassland Community

Description:

Black-footed ferrets live in a grassland community with other species of animals such as the prairie dog (their prey) and owls which are the ferret's predator. In the scenario provided, Noir is out with her kits and observes these two animals in the area. Students will graphically represent the number of animals observed on the grasslands during Noir's time out of her burrow.

Materials:

- Coloured pencil crayons, crayons, or markers
- Math activity sheet

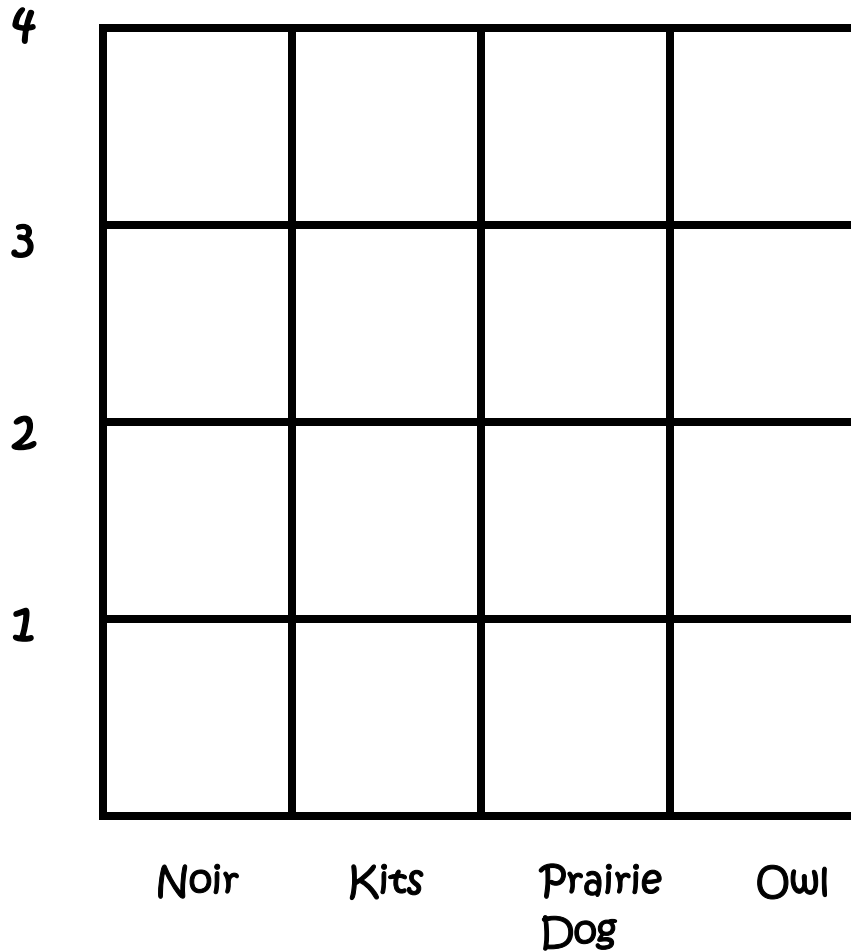
Procedure:

1. Distribute the math activity sheet entitled "The Grassland Community!" (page 60) to each student.
2. Have each student complete the exercise.



The Grassland Community

Noir, the black-footed ferret is out of her burrow with her four kits. She sees that there are two prairie dogs eating grasses and seeds. Flying high in the sky over them is one owl looking for food. Colour in the bar graph below to show how many of each animal can be found on Noir's habitat.





Primary Activity #4

Gym Activity: Dusk

Description:

Black-footed ferrets predate primarily on prairie dogs as their food source. They are nocturnal animals that are most active around dusk. Through this simulation predator-prey game, students will understand the link between the two species.

Procedure:

1. Select two students to be the black-footed ferrets. The remaining students are prairie dogs.
2. Line the prairie dogs up in a straight line, along a wall if played in a gymnasium.
3. The two black-footed ferrets stand in the centre of the room.
4. When the black-footed ferrets yell out “**Dusk**”, the prairie dogs must run across the room towards safety and avoid being tagged by the ferrets.
5. When a prairie dog is tagged, they become a ferret
6. The game ends when there is only one prairie dog left.

Discussion:

After the game, discuss with the students the relationship between predators (ferret) and prey (prairie dog). Discuss if the simulation would be true to what happens in the wild, i.e. eating all the prairie dogs. Discuss how in nature there is a balance and these animals are part of a bigger, more complex web.