



Press Release
For Immediate Release
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A TRULY INCREDIBLE ACHIEVEMENT

A CANADIAN SPECIES FINALLY COMES HOME

Friday, October 2, 2009, Toronto, Ontario: History was made today in Canada's Grasslands National Park, near Val Marie, Saskatchewan, with the release of 34 black-footed ferrets to their native homeland after an absence of almost 70 years. The release is the result of collaboration between the Toronto Zoo and a number of international partners including Parks Canada, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Calgary Zoo and many more in this crucial conservation initiative.

The return of this species to the wild is cause for celebration. It's not just a Canadian success story but an international historic occasion with a heart-warming message: species on the brink of disappearing can be saved and international zoos and conservation organizations, working together, have a crucial role to play. It is also a Toronto Zoo success story: some of the animals that will now repopulate the wild were born at the Toronto Zoo in the spring of 2009.

This reintroduction has far-reaching impacts: the ferrets were once an important part of the prairie ecosystem. Canada's natural prairies are part of our national heritage. Re-establishing the black-footed ferret is an important step in restoring their ecological integrity. "The goal for the Canadian Recovery Plan" notes Toronto Zoo Curator of Mammals Maria Franke, "is to establish a viable wild population of this species in Canada. Everyone is optimistic that these ferrets will make a full recovery and the Toronto Zoo is proud to be part of this moment in Canadian history!"

The Toronto Zoo is the only Canadian facility breeding black-footed ferrets and has been supporting international ferret recovery in the USA and Mexico for the past 17 years. Since joining the Black-footed Ferret Recovery Team, the Toronto Zoo has been undertaking black-footed ferret research in areas that include reproduction, disease surveillance, diets, and other vital research. The Toronto Zoo has also participated in ferret releases and monitoring in the USA and Mexico and has assisted Parks Canada, the Saskatchewan Ministry of the Environment, and the Calgary Zoo in habitat assessment and in studies of the ferrets food species, black-tailed prairie dogs. All partners will now be involved in post-release monitoring of the black-footed ferrets and other species at risk in and around Grasslands National Park.

The black-footed ferret will be back in Canada after nearly 70 years of extinction. Toronto Zoo has added an important Canadian component to international ferret recovery and after over 17 years, it's a truly incredible achievement and a source of pride for all Canadians.

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Zoo Hours to Oct. 12th – 9:00 am to 6:00 pm. Oct. 13th to March 1st – 9:30 am to 4:30 pm. Last admissions one hour before closing. General Admission 13-64 incl. is \$21, Children 3 and under are free, Children 4-12 are \$13 and Seniors 65+ are \$15. Parking is \$8. **Events subject to change without notice.** The Zoo is located at Meadowvale Road and Hwy. 401, Exit 389 east and west bound. For general information, call (416) 392-5929. The Toronto Zoo is open year round (except December 25th).

torontozoo.com