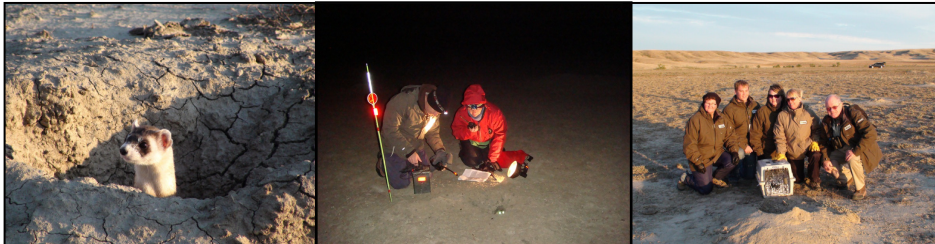


Press Release
Immediate Release
Date: 2009-11-09

For More Information
Contact: Katie Gray
Supervisor, Public Relations
(416) 392-5941



BLACK-FOOTED FERRET CANADIAN CONSERVATION 2009 MOVES INTO CRITICAL PHASE 2

November 9, 2009, Toronto, Ontario: History was made on Friday, October 2nd, 2009 when 34 black-footed ferrets were released in Canada's Grasslands National Park near Val Marie, Saskatchewan, after an absence of nearly 70 years. The release of the ferrets, many of whom were born at the Toronto Zoo, was an international conservation dream come true: species on the brink of extinction *can* be saved. However, the hard work is just beginning as the exacting process of monitoring the released animals gets underway.

In reality, the October 2nd release was only the beginning of a lengthy process. The released ferrets will need to be monitored in the wild for the next three years, once in fall and again in spring. The Toronto Zoo, Parks Canada, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Calgary Zoo, and many other members of the Black-Footed Ferret Recovery Program, planned the original release and will now participate in the monitoring. **On November 2nd, the Toronto Zoo's Curator of Mammals Maria Franke and Dr. Graham Crawshaw, Head of the Zoo's Veterinary Services, headed out to Grasslands National Park to gather information on how the released ferrets are doing.**

While follow-up monitoring is crucial, checking up on the little fellows is no easy task. The gruelling process, called "spotlighting", must be done, because the ferrets are nocturnal, at night. It involves traversing uneven terrain up to 15 – 25 kilometres, in darkness, carrying a 25 to 40 lb backpack for an eight to nine hour period for five consecutive days. In addition, spotlighters must carry a park radio, GPS unit, spotlight, and implant reader. They will look for and record the location of any black-footed ferrets to determine how the Canadian population is doing.

"Working nights in the cold prairies, lack of sleep, carrying heavy backpacks, and covering large areas has it's challenges but all is good. Preliminary results shows a 64% survival rate which is amazing and demonstrates that short term, Grasslands National Park is a very suitable site for ferret recovery in Canada," comments Maria Franke.

Maria Franke and Dr. Graham Crawshaw have returned with crucial information on how this historic process is proceeding. To contact either of the above, please call Katie Gray, Supervisor of Public Relations, at (416) 392-5941.

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Zoo Hours to Feb. 28th – 9:30 am to 4:30pm. 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 FREE until March 1st. **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