

Grasslands National Park Black-footed Ferret Monitoring – Volunteer Program

Location: Grasslands National Park(GNP) - Val Marie, Saskatchewan
Project Title: Citizen Scientist - Black-Footed Ferret Trackers
Volunteer Project Coordinator: Kathy Grant, Project Communications Officer
Volunteer or Group Name: *Black-footed Ferret Trackers*

Project Duration: 15 days **from:** August 17th, 2010 **to:** August 31, 2010

Purpose: To assist with ecological integrity activities in Grasslands National Park by monitoring black-footed ferrets with special permitted night-time spotlight surveys.

Tasks: Providing monitoring assistance to the GNP staff :

- Participate in 3 nights of spotlight surveying for black-footed ferrets. May be asked to help in some or all of the following roles:
 - Spotlighters - systematically searching for black-footed ferrets, using scanners to identify individuals, setting & checking BFF traps.
 - Runners - Searching for black-footed ferrets, and transporting traps & equipment and live-captured ferrets to/from labs and spotlighters.
 - Daytime Support - Backpacking lab equipment and ferret monitoring gear to/from prairie dog colonies.
- Record and report on indicators and specific data requirements as determined by data sheets and/or researchers.
- Participate in orientation and training prior to fieldwork
- Provide communication feedback, suggestions and problems in a respectful and timely manner

- Fill out a Citizen Scientist Report Form electronically/or hard copy upon completion of each shift.

Skill Level: Requirements for volunteers:

- Ability to backpack at night in the dark, in variable summer weather conditions, while carrying 25-40 lbs. in their backpack, traversing flat and/or uneven terrain on the open prairie.
- Must be physically fit to be able to walk 15-23 km/night (depending on location of colony) over an 8 hr. period while carrying a loaded backpack.
- Data recording and observation skills and basic map-reading ability.
- GPS skills or willingness to learn how to use a GPS.
- Interpersonal skills - responsible, reliable, patience and communication.

Training/Orientation: Volunteers will commit to:

- ½ day required orientation/training prior to monitoring
- 3 nights minimum of surveying**
- Citizen Scientist roles, responsibilities, code of conduct and logistics
- Ferret survey protocols and use of equipment

Evaluation:

a) *Results:* The volunteer will adequately manage most aspects of the organizational, support and research activities associated with the Black-footed Ferret monitoring. Volunteers will be formally evaluated after each session and review of work done, interests/opportunities for future will also be discussed.

b) *Measures:* Increase in the amount of quality data collected(recorded), quality of volunteer observations that assist staff in achieving their goals and objectives.

Resources available for the Volunteer:

- Spotlight & 12 volt battery, radio, scanner, head lamp, reflectors, map & data sheets, GPS unit, (for loan if needed: compasses, a few external or internal frame backpacks)
- Packing list for volunteer's general equipment/personal needs
- Transportation to and from the necessary monitoring sites from Grasslands National Park

Benefits for the Volunteer:

- Field research experience, professional involvement, enjoyment and ecological stewardship
- Contribution towards the black-footed ferret conservation

Benefits for the Organization:

- Provides additional resources for GNP making it possible to offer services which could not normally be provided by employees
- Data gathered to monitor success of ferret reintroduction
- Feedback from the volunteer is also of value as it may suggest improvements or changes made to the program