



## **CALGARY ZOO PARTICIPATES IN THIRD BLACK-FOOTED FERRET RELEASE**

- For Immediate Release -

October 19, 2011

Calgary, AB - On Tuesday, October 18 as the sun was setting over the prairie, coyotes howled in the distance and head-lamps pierced the gathering darkness, participants from the Calgary Zoo, Parks Canada, Toronto Zoo, Husky Energy, Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment and over 75 local-area youth released 15 captive-bred black-footed ferrets into Grasslands National Park in Saskatchewan, bolstering Canada's population of the "prairie bandit" for the third year in a row. This year, 2011, marks the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the re-discovery of black-footed ferrets, once thought to be extinct in North America.

Canada's black-footed ferret population continues to grow through these reintroduction efforts, but in addition this year's monitoring of the ferrets that were reintroduced in years one and two also found three new litters of pups at three separate colonies within the Park – exciting and positive news for the recovery team.

"The success of endangered species conservation relies on the dedication, commitment and partnership of both organizations and individuals who understand the importance of this work and know that perseverance can bring about results," states Dr. Clement Lanthier, Calgary Zoo President and CEO. "The Calgary Zoo is proud to participate in a significant way to the overall success of the program by contributing to the annual monitoring of ferrets and black-tailed prairie dogs - a key component in helping them both to survive and thrive well into the future in the Canadian prairie landscape where they belong as part of a healthy ecosystem. "

Since 2006, the Calgary Zoo's Centre for Conservation Research under the Husky Energy Endangered Species Program, has been working in partnership with Parks Canada to study the population dynamics of black-tailed prairie dogs, the primary food source for the black-footed ferret. In addition to prairie dog

research, the Calgary Zoo also participates with other recovery team partners in ferret monitoring sessions several times throughout the year. Together this information is used to not only manage the sustainability of the black-tailed prairie dog population, but also to help guide ferret recovery by identifying preferred ferret release sites and determining the appropriate number of ferrets to release each year.

Grasslands National Park and surrounding areas are located at the very northern tip of the geographic range of both ferrets and prairie dogs and is the only place they are found in Canada. The black-footed ferret is a specialized predator that relies on black-tailed prairie dogs as a primary prey source; they also use the burrows for shelter and raising their young. A healthy prairie dog population ensures a healthy prairie ecosystem and a future for black-footed ferrets.

The black-footed ferret is an endangered species listed as Extirpated\* by the Canadian Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada and are included as Schedule 1 species in the Species at Risk Act (SARA) of Canada.

**MEDIA: Photos and b roll from the October 18<sup>th</sup> ferret release are available; see email that accompanies this release for access.**

**Interviews available upon request.**

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*The Calgary Zoo is part of a professional, accredited association and member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) and the Canadian Association of Zoos and Aquariums (CAZA) comprised of caring, trusted experts committed to ensuring that many endangered and threatened species are part of the world's future. AZA and CAZA advocate on behalf of animals with a unified and consistent voice, and collaborate with others committed to their long-term survival. The Calgary Zoo participates in many Species Survival Plans (SSP), a network among accredited institutions designed to breed endangered species in captivity to ensure the best possible genetic diversity and maintain healthy populations in human care. Through our conservation, education and research programs, many animals in our care play an essential role in the survival of their species in the wild.*

*The Calgary Zoological Society is a charitable organization. Charitable Registration #118824192 RR0001*

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\* Meaning: To remove or completely destroy. In the case of black-footed ferrets, they were extirpated and absent from Canada for more than 70 years.”