

**BLACK-TAILED PRAIRIE DOG**  
(*Cynomys ludovicianus*)

**STATUS:** None (Under Endangered Species Act).

**SPECIES DESCRIPTION:** Black-tailed prairie dogs are small, stout ground squirrels. The total length of an adult black-tailed prairie dog is approximately 15 inches including a distinct 2.5-inch black-tipped tail; weight is from 1 to 3 pounds. Individual appearances within the species vary in colors of brown, black, gray, and white. The colonial nature of prairie dogs, especially the black-tailed prairie dog is noteworthy.

**HABITAT:** Typically found in level or gently sloping short- and mixed-grass rangeland with heavier soils from 2,300-7,200 feet in elevation. In Arizona, historically occurred in plains grasslands and upper limits of desert grasslands, around 5,000 feet in elevation. Black-tailed prairie dogs are burrowing animals and spend most of the day above ground. They are generally non-hibernating, except possibly in the northern and southern extremes of their range.

**RANGE: Historical:** The range of the black-tailed prairie dog included 440 million acres in 11 states including Arizona, Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, and Wyoming, as well as Canada and Mexico. The historical range in Arizona extended from the west side of the Huachuca Mountains eastward, and from Bonita southward through the Sulphur Springs Valley in Cochise, Graham, Greenlee, and Santa Cruz counties of Arizona, but.

**Current:** The species still occurs in all 11 states, Canada and Mexico but in less than one percent of its historical range. The black-tailed prairie dog was extirpated from Arizona around 1960. A reestablishment attempt was made in 1972 but failed. Another reestablishment attempt in Pima and Cochise counties, Arizona has been underway since 2008.

**REASONS FOR DECLINE / VULNERABILITY:** Threats to this species include habitat loss and fragmentation through conversion of grassland to cropland, urbanization, and change in vegetation communities; large-scale poisoning efforts: recreational shooting; and sylvatic plague.

**LAND MANAGEMENT / OWNERSHIP:** In Arizona: Bureau of Land Management and State of Arizona.

**NOTES:** The Service first received petitions to list the black-tailed prairie dog in 1994. The Service completed a status review of the black-tailed prairie dog in February 2000 and determined that the status of the species merits listing as threatened, but that further action was precluded by other listing priorities (65 FR 5476), and the species was included in the list of candidate species. In August 2004, the Service completed a resubmitted petition finding for the black-tailed prairie dog (69 FR 51217) concluding that listing of the species was not warranted, and removed it from the candidate list. Following removal from the candidate list, WildEarth Guardians and others petitioned to list the species throughout its historical range. The Service completed a 12-month status review of the black-tailed prairie dog in December 2009 and determined that listing is not warranted (74 FR 63343).

Representatives from each state wildlife agency within the historical range of the black-tailed prairie dog formed the Black-tailed Prairie Dog Conservation Team. The team wrote the Black-tailed Prairie Dog Conservation Assessment and Strategy which initiated development of a multi-state conservation plan. To date, several of the member state agencies have developed individual state plans that support the objectives of the multi-state plan. The Arizona Game and Fish Department, Service, and Bureau of Land Management are currently working on a conservation agreement for the species in Arizona.