

SPECIES ASSOCIATED WITH BLACK-TAILED PRAIRIE DOGS

Black-footed Ferret

This species is an obligate associate of prairie dogs because black-footed ferrets depend on prairie dogs as a primary food source and use their burrows as shelter from weather and predation. The black-footed ferret is completely dependent upon prairie dogs for survival. Prairie dogs constitute about 90% of the ferret's diet.

Mountain Plover

The mountain plover is considered a prairie dog obligate, and is thus highly dependent on prairie dogs for survival. Mountain plovers select prairie dog colonies for nesting, breeding and feeding. Mountain plovers use prairie dog towns as nest sites and they strongly prefer the short-cropped vegetation on prairie dog towns, which facilitates their insectivorous feeding.



Burrowing Owl

Prairie dog colonies provide the burrowing owl with both shelter and increased prey abundance. Consequently, the decline in prairie dog habitat causes declines in burrowing owl numbers. The status of burrowing owls in Region 2 is closely tied to that of prairie dogs, because of the owls' requirement for mammal-excavated burrows.



McCown's Longspur

McCown's longspurs breed in shortgrass prairie habitat where vegetation cover is sparse. Compared to its historical distribution, the breeding range of McCown's longspur has been drastically reduced. This is due to reduction in shortgrass prairie.



Chestnut-collared Longspur

Chestnut-collared longspurs are native prairie specialists, preferring level to rolling native mixed-grass and short grass uplands. They avoid excessively shrubby areas. Loss of native mixed-grass and shortgrass prairies is the greatest threat to chestnut-collared longspurs.



Swift Fox

The swift fox is also native to the grasslands of the Great Plains region of North America. Prairie dogs comprise a major part of the swift fox diet and swift fox rely on burrows for cover. The most limiting factor for swift foxes are competition with other predators, and the conversion of shortgrass prairie. The key component in the restoration of swift fox is the provision of suitable short grass habitat where they can obtain prey while avoiding predators.

Ferruginous Hawk

Ferruginous hawks occupy a variety of habitat types. Breeding population declines of Ferruginous Hawks may be due to loss of primary species such as prairie dogs, rabbits, and ground squirrels, which can force hawks to look elsewhere for better nesting habitat. Reducing prairie dogs as a food source for Ferruginous Hawks could negatively impact agricultural practices, by reducing predation on other prey and rodent species that can impact agriculture.

