



## Conservation of the Black-Tailed Prairie Dog: Saving North America's Western Grasslands

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The prairie dog is a colonial, keystone species of the grassland ecosystem of western North America. Myriad animals regularly visit colony-sites to feed on the grass there, to use the burrows for shelter or nesting, or to prey on the prairie dogs. Unfortunately, prairie dogs are disappearing, and the current number is only about 2% of the number encountered by Lewis and Clark in the early 1800s.

Part I of Conservation of the Black-Tailed Prairie Dog summarizes ecology and social behavior for pivotal issues such as when prairie dogs breed, how far they disperse, how they affect other organisms, and how much they compete with livestock. Part II documents how loss of habitat, poisoning, plague, and recreational shooting have caused the precipitous decline of prairie dog populations over the last 200 years. Part III proposes practical solutions that can ensure the longterm survival of the prairie dog and its grassland ecosystem, and also are fair to private landowners. We cannot expect farmers and ranchers to bear all the costs of conservation while the rest of us enjoy all the benefits.

With 700 references, 37 tables, 75 figures and photographs, and a glossary, Conservation of the Black-Tailed Prairie Dog is a unique and vital contribution for wildlife managers, politicians, environmentalists, and curious naturalists.

John L. Hoogland is a Professor of Biology at the University of Maryland's Appalachian Laboratory, and has studied prairie dogs for the last 33 years.

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