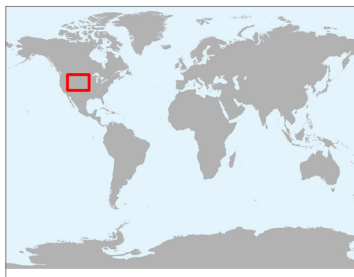




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Geographical range

Amazing Species: Black-footed Ferret

The **Black-footed Ferret**, *Mustela nigripes*, is listed as 'Endangered' on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™. Once common throughout the Great Plains, from southern Canada to northern Mexico, the Black-footed Ferret became extinct in the wild in the 1980s. It is one of the rarest mammals in North America but, due to concerted conservation efforts, reintroduced populations now exist in eight western states and in Chihuahua (Mexico).

During the first half of the 20th century, the Black-footed Ferret population plummeted, primarily as a result of habitat loss. Then in the mid-1900s, the species' main prey, the Prairie Dog, was systematically poisoned to reduce damage to agricultural land. As a result, ferret numbers rapidly declined – a trend that was exacerbated by the spread of canine distemper and plague.

The last remaining 18 wild animals were brought into captivity between 1985 and 1987. A successful captive-breeding and reintroduction programme has been running ever since, and, as of 2008, populations have been reintroduced to 18 sites. Few species have got so close to extinction and recovered; nonetheless, conservation efforts will need to continue if the future of this species is to be secured.

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