

Black-footed ferrets released in Kansas

December 25 2007

Twenty-four rare black-footed ferrets freed on private land in Kansas are believed to be the first of their kind in the area in more than 50 years.

"It was an amazing experience," recalled Brenda Pace, whose parents own the Logan County land on which the ferrets were released. "They are beautiful animals and have incredible markings -- black masks, black feet and a little saddle across their back. They weren't terribly enthusiastic about getting out of their cages. They barked at our encouragement."

At one time, black-footed ferrets were common in Kansas, but as prairie turned to cropland, and prairie dog villages were poisoned, they were driven off. Ferrets live in prairie dog villages and prey on the prairie dogs.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has worked to bring the ferrets back, The Wichita Eagle reported Monday.

"We want them, just like we want the whooping cranes, the peregrine falcons and the bald eagles," said Ron Klataske, executive director of Audubon of Kansas. The organization has been working since 2005 to re-introduce the ferrets to Kansas.

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