



WILD CLASSROOM

Conservation in the Classroom

The Masked Bandits of the Prairie:

Spotlighting Black-Footed Ferrets for Endangered Species Day

May 16, 2023

1:30pm ET / 10:30am PT

Recommended grade levels: 2–6

Watch live on [Conservation in the Classroom](#)

View recording on the [Wild Classroom YouTube channel](#)



Noelle Guernsey

Senior Specialist, Northern Great Plains

2023 marks the 50th anniversary of the Endangered Species Act. To commemorate this event, join Noelle Guernsey of WWF's Northern Great Plains team to learn about one of the most endangered mammals of North America: the black-footed ferret. Noelle will share stories about the work that is happening to protect and restore this important grassland species, and viewers will learn why people should care about saving them—and all endangered species.

BELL RINGER WARM-UP QUESTIONS

Help prepare your learners by introducing the topic with these warm-up questions.

Define

Write a definition for *endangered species*.

Explain

How can we prevent a species from going extinct?

Select

Black-footed ferrets could be described as all of the following EXCEPT...

- a. Nocturnal
- b. Predator
- c. Herbivore
- d. Mammal



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Planning to watch the event live? Write your question(s) for the presenter here:

INFORMATIONAL RESOURCES

Use these resources to provide background information to your learners.

- Video: [What is an endangered species?](#)
- Webpage: [What does 'endangered species' mean?](#)
- Web story: [Relatable facts about endangered species](#)
- Webpage: [Black-Footed Ferret Species page](#)
- Web story: [Black-Footed Ferret Facts: The Masked Bandits of the Northern Great Plains](#)
- Web story: [Returning black-footed ferrets to the wilds of the Northern Great Plains](#)
- Web story: [Newly patented technology helps save endangered black-footed ferrets](#)



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ACTIVITIES

Check out these lesson plans to supplement the content from the event.



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[BFFS: All About Black-Footed Ferrets](#)

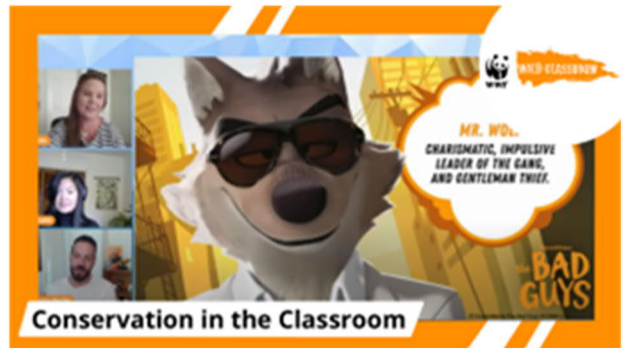
Use the reading section of this worksheet to learn more about black-footed ferrets. Pair the activity with Philippe Cousteau's book *The Endangered* to complete the reading comprehension questions.

Grades 3–5

[The Bad Guys and Their Importance to Biodiversity](#)

In celebration of the 2022 movie *The Bad Guys*, WWF and DreamWorks Animation teamed up to raise awareness about the plight of the real wildlife depicted in the film. View a discussion with the film's director, Pierre Perifel, and WWF's Noelle Guernsey to learn why certain animals, from wolves to black-footed ferrets, are important despite their misguided reputations. Pair with the social and emotional learning activities in the content pack to help students understand the value of diversity.

Grades 3–5



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[Teaching Tools about the Grasslands of the Northern Great Plains](#)

Use the lesson plans, resource guide, virtual field trip video, and more to help young learners analyze and discuss the importance of the grassland habitats and species of the Northern Great Plains.

Grades 3–8

ASSESSMENTS

Conclude your lesson with these resources and fun assessment tools.

Kahoot!

- [All About Black-Footed Ferrets](#)
- [Explore the Northern Great Plains](#)



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Answer key for Quick Quiz (next page)

- 1) Habitat loss can occur as a result of climate change, such as unusual weather patterns in the grasslands, or from human activities, such as converting the natural land to farmland in order to grow crops or removing the habitat to build roads, buildings, or other infrastructure. For black-footed ferrets, habitat loss means the removal of prairie dog colonies. The loss of prairie dogs means that the ferrets lose both their prey and the burrow networks that they call home.
- 2) C – Prairie dogs
- 3) WWF works with Native nations and their wildlife programs, communities, public land and wildlife agencies, private landowners, as well as other conservation organizations to: 1) protect existing black-footed ferret populations and their habitat, 2) identify and establish new sites within the Northern Great Plains to reintroduce ferrets, and 3) support efforts (such as vaccination tools) to protect black-footed ferrets and their prairie dog prey from disease.
- 4) If black-footed ferrets were to go extinct, the stability of the ecosystem would weaken. As a predator, black-footed ferrets help keep the population numbers of other animals, such as prairie dogs, in balance. Healthy ecosystems include the various types of animal life that include herbivores, predators, pollinators, and even microbial and fungal diversity. Everything in the ecosystem is connected, so if one piece or species is removed, it impacts the entire system. Also, black-footed ferrets and their prairie dog prey are important animal species to many people, including Native nations that have long relationships with them and other prairie species.
- 5) Answers will vary and may include conserving food/water/energy, planting and growing native flowers, and spreading awareness about species and habitats by sharing information with others, advocating in your school/community, and writing letters to local representatives.



Answer the following questions after watching Conservation in the Classroom.

Quick Quiz

1. Habitat loss is one of the biggest threats to black-footed ferrets. How does habitat loss happen?

2. Black-footed ferrets primarily eat

_____.

- a. Grass
- b. Bugs
- c. Prairie dogs
- d. Snakes



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3. What is one way that conservationists like Noelle are currently working to help protect black-footed ferrets?

4. If black-footed ferrets were to go extinct, how would this affect the ecosystem?

5. Name three things you can do to help black-footed ferrets and other endangered species:

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

