

PRAIRIE DOGS

BENEFITS OF PRAIRIE DOGS

Prairie dogs have a crucial ecological role to play. Their foraging activities affect the redistribution of minerals and nutrients.

By feeding on grass, they play a vital role in maintaining grassland habitats, preventing the overgrowth of woody shrubs. Prairie dogs also serve as a primary food source for many predators and create empty burrows that serve as shelter for other animals. Overall, the activities of prairie dogs contribute significantly to the balance and health of the ecosystem.

NATURAL HISTORY

- Black-tailed prairie dogs belong to the Sciuridae family and are found in scattered populations from Central Texas to just north of the Canadian border.
- Prairie dogs are strictly diurnal, meaning they are active during the day, particularly during the cooler hours. They engage in social activities such as visiting, grooming, and feeding on grasses.
- These animals live in large social colonies and do not migrate. Upon reaching maturity, males may disperse from their home family groups but typically remain within the same larger group or immigrate to another nearby colony.
- Prairie dogs only have one litter per year, with the breeding season occurring from mid-March to mid-April. The young are born four to five weeks later, with litter sizes ranging from two to eight young.

TIPS FOR REDUCING HUMAN-PRAIRIE DOG CONFLICTS:

- **Avoid feeding wild animals with human food.** Doing so is not only unhealthy for them, but it also increases the likelihood of losing their natural fear of humans.
- **Keep your dog on a leash** while walking to minimize the chances of a negative wildlife encounter.
- **Prevent prairie dogs from entering your yard** by setting up a visual barrier, such as fast-growing tall grasses, other vegetation, or fencing. Prairie dogs need to clear vegetation to see predators from a distance.



City of

Saginaw