



# PRAIRIE DOG TALES



THE "IN DEPTH" PERIODICAL

WE BURROW INTO THE ISSUES TO DIG OUT THE DETAILS ON MATTERS AFFECTING PRAIRIE DOGS... AND THEIR PALS.

Volume 4, Issue 2

Fall 2010

## Prairie Dog Pals Updates

Edgewood

Prairie Dog Pals gets frequent calls from homeowners in surrounding communities about prairie dog encroachments in their yards, paddocks, and farms. We always try to negotiate a truce between them and the wildlife in question, but when this is not possible we will generally try to work with them (*providing...* see story on "Selectivity") to rescue the threatened animals. Most often the encroachers are prairie dogs, but sometimes they can be gophers, rats, squirrels or skunks. We are a non-denominational kind of group and usually try to help, regardless of the species, (although gophers are addressed by referrals to commercially available humane deterrents).

Prairie Dog Pals performs a number of rescues in the East Mountains each year. We are able to help in some cases, but not in others. One situation that comes to mind occurred in Edgewood this past season.

The call came in about a "large number of prairie dogs" and "can you help?". Paul went there and completed a survey, figuring 70-100 prairie dogs on an area of land bordered by several neighbors. A deal was struck about the removal and it

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## Prairie Dog Court Victories

Two court decisions could help prairie dogs in the future

On September 28 and September 29 of this year, two important rulings on behalf of two prairie dog species, Utah prairie dogs and Gunnison's prairie dogs, were made. A federal court decided on September 28 that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service must reconsider its 2007 decision rejecting a higher level of Endangered Species Act protection for Utah prairie dogs. U.S. District Court Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly said the agency needed to address why an 87% reduction in the prairie dog's range and an array of threats were not a sufficient basis to upgrade it to endangered status.

The ruling was in response to a 2003 petition by WildEarth Guardians requesting the Service reclassify the Utah prairie dog as endangered, the highest possible level under the Endangered Species Act. When the agency denied Guardians' petition in 2007, the group sued.

In her decision, Judge Kollar-Kotelly found that Fish and Wildlife Services failed to explain why the reduction in the species' historical range did not indicate that reclassification may be warranted, and therefore remanded the 2007 rejection of Guardians' reclassification petition back to the Service.

Only approximately 12,000 adult Utah prairie dogs are alive today from a population that once numbered close to 100,000. They are besieged by an array of threats, including a Service special rule that allows up to 6,000 Utah prairie dogs to be shot every year; rampant destruction of their habitat by livestock grazing, crop agriculture, and urban sprawl; illegal poisoning and shooting; drought; and other perils.

Prairie Dog Pals was part of this collaborative effort. We helped fund some of the research that contributed to the underlying science supporting the petition to list Gunnison prairie dogs under the ESA, the Endangered Species Act. And we celebrated our hope for the long awaited ruling we felt must surely come during the Santa Fe press conference that took place in 2004. In those intervening years,

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was a matter of scheduling an open weekend to complete the work. By the time Paul arrived there was no longer a bustling colony! What had happened?

Paul worked during the weekend and caught 14 healthy “country” prairie dogs. What occurred next was most troubling. Within a few days four of the prairie dogs had died. Our first thought was disease or poisoning, but the rest of the prairie dogs seemed to be fine. Follow-up necropsies identified the culprit(s)! The prairie dogs all had sustained wounds to various internal organs due to being shot. The wounds themselves had not been discerned during our 2/4/20 health inspection (2 eyes in good shape, 4 canines in alignment, 20 toes all accounted for). But, the buck shot wounds camouflaged by their fur had damaged the internal organs causing the animals to die very painfully over a several day period. Paul also reported seeing other evidence that the neighbors were taking matters into their own hands by poisoning the prairie dogs and harassing them with fireworks. Here was one fellow trying to do right by nature, but who was frustrated by his neighbors who were more than willing to kill most any living thing that happened to cross their path. Their clumsy attempts at circumventing a rescue by killing countless helpless prairie dogs, and maiming the rest, condemned the prairie dogs to a lingering and excruciating death. We won’t be back.

**“The True Stars of the Show:” Tabling at the Bernalillo Wine Tasting Festival September 4<sup>th</sup> 2010**  
Commentary by Annabeth Fieck, Prairie Dog Pal

It was a perfect day. I was lucky enough to have a spot on the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance’s table at the Bernalillo Wine Tasting Festival to perform outreach for my favorite organism; *Cynomys*, the Prairie Dog! While in the planning stages there were issues regarding the legitimacy of taking prairie dogs to the event; some people saw it as detrimental to the animals, some saw it as an excellent outreach opportunity. I had not tabled alone, and certainly not with the full responsibility of the lives of two small animals, members of a family whose very existence I held as precious and an absolute gift. It was decided that I would take two recently rescued “dogs” to the event, much to the joy of my co-tabler at the event, Roger Turner from NMWA. As apprehensive as I may have been initially, I was pleasantly surprised by how well the entire event played out! As I drove away from the staging area with the prairie dogs I remarked to myself how peacefully quiet these animals were. No barking or chirping or chattering, the pups seemed to be content with being a part of the adventure. I, however, felt that I needed to be vigilant and completely prepared to take care of whatever issues arose... there were none. The weather was perfect, the winds were calm, and the crowd was of reasonable density. From the moment the cage was set on the table, the popularity contest was on, and the prairie dogs WON! It is so fulfilling to see the faces of people as they walk up, peering curiously into the cage, wondering what

they might see, and watch their eyes light up and their every feature soften as they form the all familiar sigh that comes with the recognition of the cutest animal on the planet! “Cute” may be the draw, but information dissemination is the goal, and it is easy to talk to people enjoying the company of prairie dogs. I listened intently to the stories of others who have found their own passion for these amazing animals. I heard the pain and the hurt of many who had cried with us over the poisonings at the airport, I heard the happy recounting of encounters and interactions with the colonies along Tramway, and I heard statements like, “I’m a Prairie Dog,” from proud students lucky enough to have these animals represent their school as a mascot. I stayed much longer than expected simply because there was not a good reason to leave, and the experience gave me hope. The prairie dogs were amazingly calm and collected. They seemed to be very interested in the people who were interested in them. At no time did they seem stressed, or anxious, or in pain, a fact that laid to rest my worst fears for the day. During the course of that day I also was fortunate enough to repeatedly hear the words that reverberate with the beating of my own heart, “I love prairie dogs, they’re my favorite animals.”

**Selectivity**

Prairie Dog Pals has been steadfast in refusing to rescue prairie dogs that have been poisoned. “Why?” might you ask? Isn’t it better to save every animal you can without being selective? Well... yes and no... Consider the apocryphal story of the girl observed tossing starfish “high tided” on the beach back into the sea, and when asked, “why bother?” (Countless starfish die on the beach every day), replied, “It mattered to that one!” We don’t have the luxury of unlimited resources. We only have a certain number of volunteers, a certain amount of habitat, and therefore, can only save a limited number of prairie dogs. Case in point... the Menaul Blvd poisoning of 2007: The compromised prairie dogs, those who had ingested the poison, all died during the rescue process. Stress? Poison stored in the fat that overcame natural resistance? We don’t know. We do know that prairie dogs who have been poisoned and survive, lead very compromised lives: long term debilitating illness, weakened immune systems, and progeny that suffer from a variety of the same. Why deny the opportunity of survival to a healthy prairie dog over one who has been compromised? In an ideal world Prairie Dog Pals would rescue ALL prairie dogs at risk and provide hospice for those not suitable for release. Unfortunately, we do not have the funding, or the space to do this, so we make decisions, often-painful ones. Thus, we continue to refuse working with homeowners and property managers who have compromised the health of the prairie dogs in any way. And, we are at great pains to let these people know that we don’t tolerate cruelty in any way. As volunteers for this sometimes-sad undertaking of saving those animals, we actively choose to help only humane-minded folks.

## Runts

After our spring trapping was suspended with the early births of several litters, our thoughts turned to nurturing the infants towards that golden day of release in late June. The pups matured nicely and soon it became imperative that they move to larger cages. All went well: moms and pups were released to the Sevilleta on 21 June: the solstice and first day of summer... hopefully a good omen or portent. Concurrently, two things happened. Those resident prairie dogs not released in April, and on an extended stay in the staging facility, lounged the early spring away, noshing on carrots, apples and sunflower seeds. Originally lean and mean those country dogs soon became quite robust, to the point that there was some concern about their ability to fit down the tubes into the artificial burrows. They were each between 2 to 3 pounds, which is quite a handful when trying to release. But, this is a story about the runts...

This summer season started with a rescue in Bosque Farms and a large field off Paisano in Albuquerque. While we captured a number of very respectable prairie dogs and pups, we also got quite a few who fell well below our minimum for release. Yes... we have a sign of a prairie dog silhouette in the staging facility that reads, "You must be 'this tall' and weigh 350 grams" to be released to native habitat. Unfortunately, some of these guys weren't even close.

Most of the pups, however, quickly gained weight and were released in their family groups, but some just didn't grow quickly enough. In fact, after a month we were down to the last 7 pups, which are usually named "the brat pack" initially, and then, just "the runts". They looked "okay," were "okay," but fell into the catchall category of "failure to thrive." Barbara and Margaret had adopted the two weakest of the runts and were able to bring their charges up to healthy weight using a broad range of nutritious foods (Esbilac puppy formula... and pizza! just kidding). Frances was committed to providing the same intensive feeding protocol with the svelte 7, despite the extra care it involves. Sure enough, they started to respond to the expanded menu and daily maintenance. But, now at the end of the season, we were faced with the choice of releasing these prairie dogs just before hibernation. What to do? As a back-up plan, we had earlier consulted our prairie-dog-sanctuary-guru in Indiana who offered permanent, safe sanctuary haven to a full house of "gunnies," but also supported release versus retirement. So, with just a little trepidation - we weighed them. To a prairie dog, they all came in at over 600 grams, well beyond our minimum limit, AND they were feisty and frisky. The runts were released on 19 September and from Paul's follow-up reports seem to be doing just fine! ... a happy ending to a cliffhanger story.

## Weems Art Fest

Once again, Prairie Dog Pals has been invited to participate in the Weems Art Fest. This is a charitable affair, and we

benefit in the net proceeds, so it is a privilege for Prairie Dog Pals to be included. This is our second annual invite, following a chance connection in 2009 with a wonderful animal advocate, which has turned into a golden opportunity for us. We will run our tabling event from Friday at noon until Sunday at 600 PM, 12-14 November. People are needed to cover each of the 4-hour shifts so if you are interested in helping, please contact Naomi or Judy through [prairiedogpals@comcast.net](mailto:prairiedogpals@comcast.net) and let them know!

## Wendy Sunport

By Yvonne Boudreaux

Throughout the prairie dog season Prairie Dog Pals fields countless calls for information, rescue and relocation. Many requests are predictable, but now and again some calls are flatly astonishing. Such was one of the calls received on September 8, 2010. Wendy has been a stalwart volunteer for Prairie Dog Pals for many years. From advocacy to rescue and relocation, she has done it all. But one can only imagine our amazement when she called to say that she had rescued a prairie dog... in the intersection of Dartmouth and Lead... (We pause now to let the improbability of that information to sink in...) Because there are no known prairie dog colonies any where in the vicinity of that location, an atlas had to be consulted. The only likely scenario is that this frightened but determined prairie dog had fled - all the way from the northern edge of the Sunport, nearly 20 blocks away! The irony of the day was not lost on anyone... September 8<sup>th</sup> also marked the day Wildlife Services began its systematic poisoning of 7,900 burrows throughout the Sunport... although "practice poisoning" (a new low in our lexicon) had taken place weeks before. Ordinarily, we name singleton rescues after the street or location where they were found to distinguish them from rescue efforts at specific colonies. But this girl was different, so we named her Wendy, Wendy Sunport.

Wendy's tale easily conveyed the panic we each have felt observing certain disaster as it unfolds. As she was driving in busy traffic she glimpsed the most unlikely sight - a prairie dog running for its life down the middle of Lead - in the middle of a lane - in the middle of the day. Wendy could only watch in horror as the prairie dog swerved and dodged, then crouched down as a car drove over her. Wendy managed to cross the street, pull over, and dash out to the then empty intersection. In the brief moments of a red light a few blocks away on the one-way Lead, Wendy managed to herd the poor creature to a spot under her car where it huddled in surrender against the wheel well. Residents, also startled to see the rescue unfold, quickly joined to give a hand. Once convinced that the hapless prairie dog would not stray from its marginal point of safety, neighbors stood guard to shield the prairie dog from further danger. Wendy raced the two blocks to her home to grab a kennel and towels.

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Despite the low clearance and the awkward reach, Wendy managed to surround the prairie dog with towels then gently and expertly fold her into the waiting kennel. The effects of shock and panic had reduced the prairie dog to little more than a motionless lump. Once safely captured in a kennel with hay, apples, carrots, and sunflower seeds, the adult female was studied and considered by all. She, for her part, kept a quiet demeanor: the silent solemnity of all animals who've had a brush with certain death.

Had she really come from so far? How had she become separated from her family, her colony, her "tribe"? Were pups that she had borne in spring still alive? ... and HOW had this little creature managed to cross so many blocks, dodging cars and evading dogs and danger to arrive in the middle of town? We marveled at her seemingly unmarred body and coat. There were no external injuries, no wounds. She was underweight but not emaciated... We tucked her into a singleton cage at the staging facility with the last rescues of the season and planned for the last release of the year scheduled for September 19<sup>th</sup>. Each day her provisioning of apples, carrots, and sunflower seeds disappeared and she remained quietly and deeply burrowed under mounds of fresh hay in silent recovery of her ordeal. News of her dramatic rescue had many advocates reflecting upon her improbable story.

The morning of the last day for intake arrived on September 17<sup>th</sup> and the day was busy with last minute trapping of family members to be reunited with their already captured siblings and extended families. The runts had been weighed the day before, and at over 600 grams, we celebrated that they were finally more than "relocation ready". In fact, their parallel success with hers hatched a plan. We would put Wendy Sunport with the runts for the last several days of staging; she would have a family and they would have adult supervision. But, sadly, this was not to be... As we readied her transfer to the "runt" cage, we found her dead. Yet, her death seemed not to be the death of animals wracked with pain or marred by fear. She appeared to have slipped into a peaceful sleep, and was nestled in a hollow of hay with her paws crossed under her tilted chin. The news of her passing ricocheted through the volunteers and each of us reacted with the same shocked disbelief. We were reminded of another species, the cetaceans, those beleaguered whales and dolphins who face equally dreadful assaults at the hands of man. Cetaceans have the ability (or the burden) to breathe... or not. Every breath is a conscious choice. We can only imagine that Wendy Sunport made a conscious choice. Behind her, not a single member of her family remained alive... and ahead, an uncertain future. Surely, though, this silent little female has achieved nirvana... if her death has the power to make so many people mourn her passing. ❖

## Prairie Dog Season Ends... the year in retrospect

The smell of burning leaves, the nip of Jack Frost in the air, the roar of the football crowd, and this being New Mexico, the roasting chili everywhere! These are a few of our favorite things (apologies to Julie)! These are also the harbingers of fall... and, as we have a herald for spring (Prairie Dog Day on February 2), we also have the Last Release, which marks the end of our season.

On September 19<sup>th</sup>, Prairie Dog Pals released the last 25 prairie dogs for 2010. Ordinarily, Prairie Dog Pals commemorates the end the season with a group gathering at a luncheon following the last release. This year, however, tight schedules and out-of town obligations coupled with the recent launch of poisoning 8,700 burrows at the Sunport left us too somber to rally for a celebration of any kind. Paul and Annabeth took the last prairie dogs out to the West Mesa and tucked them into their temporary homes with expert handling, tender good wishes, and little fanfare.



*Above: Paul and Annabeth load the prairie dogs; Below: Annabeth prepares food dishes.*



Paul's work continues, however! He monitored the prairie dogs for several days and after deciding that there was too much "activity" in the area set out some traps. After a few attempts he snagged the intruder (left), a young badger. Paul reports that the prairie dogs are mostly hibernating and there is no further disturbance.



Paul will continue to monitor the area over the winter to protect the prairie dogs as they slumber.

### Numbers

It was a busy season! 1085 prairie dogs were captured; 400 prairie dogs were released at the West Mesa and the remainder went to the Sevilleta. We relocated over 25 squirrels and 5 or so cottontails. Oh yes... and 4 mice!

### Hayes Prairie Dogs

Much progress has been made at the parks and joint use facilities about town to eliminate human/wildlife conflict (read, Prairie Dog Pals eliminated the wildlife conflict by "removing" the prairie dogs). Some sites, such as Bullhead and Sandia Vista parks have been free from prairie dogs for several years. It is an ongoing effort; a little bit of maintenance in the spring can control a population boom in June. But Hayes Middle School continues to mystify us. Despite ongoing efforts to remove the prairie dogs, by springtime, the populations have doubled, tripled and quadrupled. "Prairie dog math" and early hibernation may be contributing factors, but to end the season with 4-8 prairie dogs remaining in the fall to emerge in the spring with 40 to 60 (before pup season) are mystifying. We continue to toil away at it and in time hope that these prairie dogs will ALL be moved to greener pastures, or at least native habitat.

### Prairie Dog Pals gets greener

The staging facility has an evaporative cooler, lighting, and a refrigerator, all consuming power. In 2009 we upgraded the facility's antique "cooler" to an energy star appliance, reducing the annual consumption from 1800 KWH/year to 367 KWH per year. The lights are fluorescent and the cooler is about as "state of the art" as possible.

So, what else could we do? As part of an overall effort to reduce our own consumption we elected to offset our energy needs with a photovoltaic system. The system was designed and installed by CST who did an excellent job. It is an encouraging day when we can watch our power meter run in reverse! While our own personal energy demands are combined with those of the staging facility we can safely say that the energy load required by the prairie dogs is covered by our PV system! Woo Hoo!

### Kennedy Middle School Squirrels

An interesting development arose following our ongoing efforts to remove the prairie dogs from the joint use facilities at Hayes and Kennedy. As the season closed in 2009 Paul noted that some squirrels had occupied the now vacant burrows at Kennedy Middle School. They had moved in from somewhere nearby, but we felt certain they'd return to their regular digs as winter approached, and so we let them be. ... big mistake! This spring there was a full colony of squirrels: big ones... little ones, all scampering about. Holes are holes and the city wanted the culprits removed whether they were *Cynomys* or *Spermophilus*! The squirrels are technically easier to catch, in as much as their natural burrows tend to be a single tunnel about 5 feet long to a chamber. But, these squirrels had occupied existing prairie dog burrows. With the run of more complex burrows available to them, they were quite a challenge to capture. Paul got the last one on September 7<sup>th</sup>, number 20 for the season! Staging and releasing the squirrels was quite another matter. The closest comparison we can describe for getting squirrels out of a cage is like that it is to trying to capture popping popcorn in a skillet. These critters jump, lunge, and are just about impossible to corner. While they don't bite as hard as prairie dogs, one is more likely to be bit by a squirrel than a prairie dog.

Luckily for Prairie Dog Pals we have more than one squirrel expert! Margaret is in charge of Singleton Rescue, which means that when an Albuquerque resident calls concerning a new visitor to their yard, Margaret is charged with capturing what had always been the lone prairie dog who just happened to turn up in unfamiliar territory. It has been a standing joke that more and more of these calls, are, ahem... squirrel specific. Margaret labors all season long trying to catch prairie dogs, her target of choice and all she gets... are squirrels. Margaret has captured and released a number of squirrels from locations covering the geographic extremities of the city (and beyond). Every single capture has been under extremely unique circumstances. How does she do it? Persistence and intuitiveness: To catch the squirrel, you must "be" the squirrel (apologies to Bill Murray in *Caddy Shack*). We are not sure what Margaret uses but she has been VERY successful in saving this cousin of the prairie dog from harm.

## 2010 Overview, a Serendipitous Year

It has been an interesting year. We started with a promise that grew into a plan. We knew we had a contract with the Sevilleta to prepare habitat and relocate 1300 prairie dogs. The contract was a challenge cost share and would match funds that we **expended**, and create habitat. So the Service would match every dollar we spent to establishing the habitat. Basically we were funding our own operation! This did not deter the board and it was agreed that we would do what we could until we couldn't do it any more. We contacted the City, APS and DOT with inquiries but nothing developed. DOT eventually contacted us about removing the prairie dogs along the Tramway exercise trail but it would be at our own expense. Well in for a penny in for a dollar, we countered offered to remove not only the Tramway prairie dogs but also those along the freeway between Tramway and Wyoming. Several other sites were identified by the stewards as having a few prairie dogs and wouldn't it be great to clear them so we had an agenda albeit one we would be funding ourselves.

Our new outreach coordinators got organized quickly and set up several events. We procured long needed AV equipment and can now do presentations almost anywhere. Our electronic data was overhauled making presentations focused at several levels of comprehension.

Thanks to the success on the challenge cost share contract a second one was created which reimbursed us for labor and expenses, however, once again to gain \$1 of reimbursement we, in essence, had to spend \$2. But better than nothing!

The spring was not particularly wet and summer started with a fury with several weeks of 100 degree plus weather. Our caregivers were working overtime to make sure that there was sufficient food to sustain the colonies and more specifically the newly emerged pups.

We started the summer season with only the challenge cost share contract. Releases to the Sevilleta began late in June and by the end of July we'd reached our target for 2010, of 650 prairie dogs. As things were looking their bleakest we received inquiries from APS and the City to remove prairie dogs from schools, parks, and joint facilities. These contracts provided access to the West Mesa and the chase was on.

At about the same time plans by Mr. Randolph Babbitt were solidifying for killing the prairie dogs at the Sunport. While we'd had some earlier discussions with the City and Sunport officials, the FAA was demanding the extermination. Despite last-ditch efforts to find an alternative, the FAA was unstoppable and began poisoning in on 8 September. We estimate that they will poison nearly 8000 burrows!

Many people offered to help and even now there may be hope... maybe not for the Sunport prairie dogs but perhaps others. If you have any interest in preserving these prairie dogs write your city councilor, the mayor, the Sunport or more importantly your congressman. Only these people can put pressure on the FAA to find a more humane way to deal with the indigenous wildlife.

We did get a few queries about how to contact your congressman (or woman), which is addressed below.

<https://writerep.house.gov/writerep/welcome.shtml>  
[www.senate.gov/general/contact.../senators\\_cfm.cfm](http://www.senate.gov/general/contact.../senators_cfm.cfm)

[http://www.ehow.com/how\\_5137002\\_write-letter-congressman.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_5137002_write-letter-congressman.html)

There was both good and bad news from afar. Prairie dogs rescued by the Prairie Dog Coalition in Nebraska and prairie dogs extirpated in Colorado (and Albuquerque). There were some new ideas about how plague is propagated. There were continued assaults on wildlife in general. While it is easy to despair with our continued assault on our planet, we should take heart in the words of Eckhart Tolle: Everything natural – every flower, tree, and animal – has important lessons to teach us if we would only stop, look, and listen.

At year closes and the paperwork begins I think we did well considering. We rescued over 1000 prairie dogs, provided educational outreach to hundreds of people, and maintained compromised sites throughout the city. My thanks go out to all involved. ❖

### Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge

Prairie Dog Pals continued work under a Challenge Cost Share contract with US Fish and Wildlife for the introduction of prairie dogs into the Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge.

Before continuing I think it would be appropriate to comment on the relocation site, as many people have raised concerns. Imagine yourself in a short grass prairie. You can see no signs of human presence in any direction. Raptors fly overhead. You can see the Sandias and Manzanos in the distance to the north, and the Magdalenas to the south. Except for the chirping of birds and the trill of the crickets, it is blessedly silent. From a distance you can hear the distinctive warning bark of a prairie dog but are too far (or he/she is too cunning to stand out in silhouette) to see them. The air is clean, no hint of industry or human habitation. Is that the howl of a coyote, the bark of a fox? The grass is growing and the desert wildflowers are in bloom, the sky is pristinely blue. Most likely a scene that prairie dogs might remember had they lived 200 years ago.

*Continued on page 14*

# Prairie Dog Shopping!

C'mon, the holiday season is upon us...spread some prairie dog joy to your friends and loved ones! Consider gifting one of the following, or a donation in someone's name.

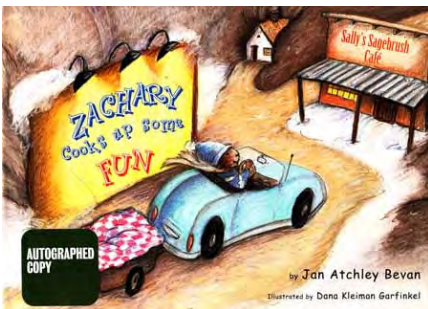
## Prairie Dog Ornaments



Thanks to the marketing acumen of Margaret, Prairie Dog Pals has acquired a collection of glass prairie dog ornaments. The ornaments are for sale @ \$10.00 each. Contact Margaret on [fyrestrk@ix.netcom.com](mailto:fyrestrk@ix.netcom.com) if you'd like to "adopt" one of these keepsake heirlooms. Do keep in mind, however, that prairie dogs are communal animals; therefore "adopters" should consider bringing more than one home.

## Zachary Cooks Up Some Fun

Prairie Dog Pals has acquired a great children's picture book, featuring a heroic prairie dog that must save his prairie dog town from two natural enemies. How he does this is a powerful story for young readers and parents about intelligence, courage and the importance of winning friends by being a friend. We will be selling the book for \$10, which is a savings of \$5 over the internet price. Buy yours today!



## Prairie Dog Tiles

Prairie dog art on tiles: At the moment we have Blue Boy and American Gothic (pictured below). The tiles are 8"x10" and have a hanger mounted to the back. The tiles are \$25 each.

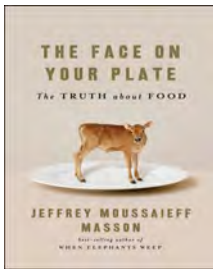


## Prairie Dog Jewelry

Hand made ceramic prairie dogs as earrings or mounted on a leather chain, \$15 for the earrings or the chain.



## Books



*The Face on Your Plate:  
The Truth About Food,*  
by Jeffrey Moussaieff  
Masson

Review by Susan Salter Reynolds | March 16, 2009

Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson wants to help all meat eaters wake up from the dream of denial they are experiencing. He wants to prepare us for what he describes as a "transformative moment," when we look at the meat or animal product on our plate (fish, fowl, mammal, egg, milk, cheese) and acknowledge that it came from a living being, capable, he has no doubt, of suffering and happiness. Like children when they are first told that the drumstick is actually a leg, the tongue is really a tongue, the bacon was once a pig like Wilbur in "Charlotte's Web," Masson hopes, with all his heart, that we will say, "Eeeuwww, yuck."

It's a challenge to create transformative moments with books, but he does it. Pages lack the physical threat, the shock of the Buddhist master's stick on the back to wake up the wayward meditator. They lack the drumbeat. Words travel, so often, through the head on their long journey to the heart. Masson is a wise, clear writer, but it doesn't hurt, while reading this important book, to look at the image of the young cow on the cover or the 67-year-old author's vivid, healthy photo on the back flap.

Here's how Masson builds his argument: First, we've been fed a myth of man as hunter; structurally, we lack the teeth, the jaw and the digesting enzymes of carnivores. A false sense of our uniqueness as humans, as opposed to true understanding of our animal nature and the fact that we share more than 95% of our DNA with some animals (depending, of course, on the animal), has allowed us to deny their suffering or to rationalize killing them for food as their subservient role on the planet.

Second, supporting agribusiness, which is responsible for three-fourths of the nitrous oxide emissions and two-thirds of the methane in our atmosphere, and particularly supporting killing animals, contributes more to global warming and toxicity in our environment than any other human activity. Third, meat is not good for us. We can get our protein elsewhere and our B vitamins from supplements. Read the rest of this review here:

[http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/books/2008929411\\_br27face.html](http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/books/2008929411_br27face.html)

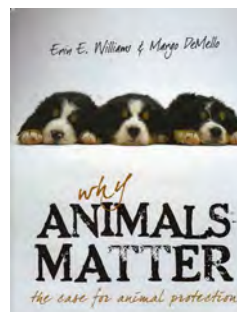
## Books

*Why We Love Dogs, Eat Pigs and Wear Cows*, by Melanie Joy  
Review by Patti Breitman | November 18, 2009

The vast majority of Americans view eating meat as natural, normal and necessary while recognizing that vegetarianism is an ideology, or belief system. Thanks to *Why We Love Dogs, Eat Pigs and Wear Cows* by Melanie Joy, Ph.D. (published November, 2009 by Conari Press), the way we eat animals now has a name and is exposed to be every bit as much an ideology as vegetarianism. "Carnism" is the belief system that says it's okay to eat certain animals and not others. Like feminism, racism, ageism and speciesism, carnism has been inflicting harm for centuries. And because it was invisible and unnamed, it was challenging, if not impossible, to confront it and to argue against it. Now that carnism has been identified, explored, and brilliantly analyzed, it will become a powerful tool in changing the ubiquitous and dangerous misconceptions about eating meat.

The opening chapter of *Why We Love Dogs, Eat Pigs and Wear Cows* is startling and effective. We are asked to imagine a dinner party at which the guests are enjoying a delicious stew. But when one guest asks for the recipe, the host explains that it starts with a golden retriever. The disgust and revulsion that follows this announcement is examined in detail later in the book, and Dr. Joy is both succinct and smart in showing us the overlapping circles of identification, empathy and disgust that color our relationships with animals. Read the rest of the review here:

<http://www.vegsource.com/news/2009/11/why-we-love-dogs-eat-pigs-and-wear-cows-book-review.html>



*Why Animals Matter:  
The Case for Animal  
Protection* by Erin  
E. Williams and  
Margo DeMello

A tough but fair-minded revelation of how mass production of animals for food and other purposes results in cruelty that usually remains hidden from sight. - *Publishers Weekly*  
Will make your jaw drop about how vicious humans can be to other animals...jam-packed with literal crimes against nature....Together they have painstakingly assembled statistics, news reports, anecdotes, and observations exposing the sufferings of so many creatures in so many industries -- food, fashion, entertainment, medicine -- as well as hobbies ranging from hunting to ostensibly positive pet-ownership that you recoil from revelation after revelation about Chinese cat-fur coats, say, or 'spent' racehorses that are slaughtered for dogfood. - *AlterNet*



# Prairie Dogs in the News

## Conservation and compassion: First do no harm

August 25 2010 by Marc Bekoff

In putting conservation into practice, we often cause great suffering to animals. Marc Bekoff argues that we need a new ethical perspective. Black-footed ferrets were once widespread across the Great Plains and the inter-mountain west of North America. Then decades of habitat loss and disease pushed them to the brink of extinction. In the mid-1980s, with only 18 individuals left in the wild, the entire population was taken into captivity to establish a captive breeding program. Reintroductions into the wild began in 1991, and the population is now around 750. Read more at: <http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg20727750.100-conservation-and-compassion-first-do-no-harm.html>

## Santa Fe's Prairie Dog Problem

August 16, 2010 by Byard Duncan. If you've ever seen Santa Fe, you know it hosts a lot of amazing scenery: Smooth adobe angles, poking and folding out of the red mountains. A sky so huge and blue it's like an existential conundrum. Those sunsets. What you might not know is that the city also has a prairie dog problem, an infestation bad enough that local authorities have started using poisonous gas to kill the creatures en masse. Read more at: <http://blogs.alternet.org/speakeasy/2010/08/16/cross-country-dispatch-santa-fes-prairie-dog-problem/>

## Councilor backs off proposal to ban feeding prairie dogs, hopes for urban wildlife plan

August 05, 2010 by Julie Ann Grimm. City Councilor Ron Trujillo has backed off an idea to make it illegal to feed wildlife such as prairie dogs on Santa Fe city property. Read more at: <http://www.istockanalyst.com/article/viewiStockNews/articleid/4379601>

Ed's Note: *Mr. Trujillo is not the first nor will he be the last to attempt isolate wildlife through legislation. We, the public must remain vigilant to these attempts to cordon off the enchanting part of this land of enchantment. It has been discussed in Albuquerque and I am sure it will be discussed again. The general public must remain an active player in the political process to ensure that the will of the public is met. I know there are many residents in the foothills that would prefer that the indigenous wildlife not eat their roses...my question to you is why did you move to the boundary with open space and national forest? If you are a lover of wildlife please ensure that your local, state, and national representatives share your concerns.*

## Prairie Dogs and Plague

Ed's Note: *Now there is journalism and there is journalism and talking to sources close to the "action" in Santa Fe leads me to believe that there is a bit of sensationalism in these reports of grave digging prairie dogs.*

From NPR: If you look for information about prairie dogs, a surprising term starts popping up: bubonic plague. That's because prairie dogs are especially vulnerable to the same plague that killed millions of people in Europe in the 14th century. But this isn't just a 14th century disease â€” the prairie dog version has led to massive prairie dog deaths and has scared nearby human communities for the past 60 years. Scientists have known for a while that fleas were infecting the prairie dogs, but how the fleas were jumping between prairie dog communities has been a mystery. Stanford University anthropologist James Holland Jones thinks he may finally have the answer. Read more at: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=129198893>

## Meat Eating Mice

August 3, 2010 by Ellen Huet. Meat-Eating Mice are responsible for the spread of plague in prairie dog populations, Stanford researchers say. Once a prairie dog population is wiped out from a plague, the mice are responsible for carrying over the disease to the new population once it settles. Of the mice, says Woods Institute fellow James Holland Jones, when they eat the carcass of a prairie dog that's died of plague, the fleas climb aboard the mice. The mice then schlep the fleas around to different territories, connecting family groups that otherwise wouldn't be in contact. Read more: <http://www.stanforddaily.com/2010/08/03/the-daily-brief-aug-3-2010/>

August 4, 2010 by Lewis Page. Top boffins in the States believe they have unmasked the mystery attacker responsible for repeatedly wiping out towns in the Rocky Mountains and Great Plains, slaughtering thousands of inhabitants. The massacres are apparently being carried out by a type of carnivorous mouse, described by scientists as "nasty little beasties". Read more at: [http://www.theregister.co.uk/2010/08/04/carnivorous\\_mice\\_aice/](http://www.theregister.co.uk/2010/08/04/carnivorous_mice_aice/)

## Study: Urban prairie dogs at higher risk

August 12 2010 by Argen Duncan. After studying black-tailed prairie dogs within the city of Clovis and around rural Roosevelt and Curry counties, Eastern New Mexico University researchers concluded that those in the city spend less time foraging for food, which could hurt their chances of survival. Read more at: <http://www.cnjonline.com/news/dogs-39538-urban-city.html> ❖

## YIPS! AND NIPS!

**YIPS & NIPS:** Here are some of the year's YIPS (gains) and NIPS (losses):

**NIPS:** Nips to J. Randolph Babbitt, Head of the Federal Aviation Administration, for enforcing the extermination of prairie dogs at the Sunport. It is so easy to say, "we have no choice," but he is the responsible authority and the reason stakeholders are looking no further than the same slaughter employed for decades. Despite the efforts of Naomi and Judy, within the City and the Sunport, the prairie dogs at the Sunport were exterminated beginning September 8, 2010. The FAA had deemed them a nuisance and deemed they be murdered by the most aggressive means possible. The Sunport had previously employed a number of measures to discourage the prairie dogs, (including lethal control using carbon monoxide) but this was not enough. Prairie Dog Pals contends that none of the humane methods employed were used as extensively as could have been. Because of an airliner ditched in the Hudson, the FAA adopted a no tolerance policy for the prey of raptors, condemning thousands of prairie dogs to a painful and lingering death. Our federal tax dollars at work!

**YIPS:** Yips to APS and COA: Well beyond the beginning of the season Prairie Dog Pals received commissions from both Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) and the City of Albuquerque (COA) for the relocation of prairie dogs from schools, parks and joint use facilities. Although the late start of the contract caused many logistical problems, we are grateful for the opportunity to save those marginalized, fragmented colonies right under our noses. This was serendipitous timing as we were completing the DOT work we agreed to do gratis; rescuing Tramway prairie dogs in advance of the Tramway Trail work, and had reached our quota for 2010 at the Sevilleta. In many ways, it reminded us just how tenuous and fragile our connection, support and infrastructure is for helping the prairie dogs here in Albuquerque from the perspective of the city's administration. Despite huge budget shortfalls undermining the funding of crucial programs in every municipal department, the city determined that a commitment to humane treatment of our prairie dogs is who we are as a city. This deserves the appreciation of every advocate in Albuquerque. Please take time to call the mayor's office, #768-3000, Parks & Recreation, #768-5300, or your city councilor to thank them for their humane treatment of some of Albuquerque's oldest and smallest residents. ❖

Forest Guardians (now WildEarth Guardians) directed their best legal resources to challenge the special interests that trumped well-deserved protections for Gunnison prairie dogs. Unfortunately, in the dark ages of a federal administration where politics always trumped science, we were disappointed year after year by delays and stonewalling. That a "go-away" sop to our petition has been set aside for a genuine reconsideration of the Gunnison species in its entirety is huge. While there is no guarantee that we will finally prevail, this is the most promising development we've had in years! Keep your fingers crossed.

Just a day after the ruling on behalf of the Utah prairie dogs, another judge, U.S. District Court Judge Frederick J. Martone, ruled that the Fish and Wildlife Service must reconsider its 2008 decision to list the Gunnison's prairie dog under the Endangered Species Act. The ruling said the agency violated the Endangered Species Act when it only recognized the Gunnison's prairie dog as endangered in the mountainous and not prairie portions of its range.

This ruling was in response to a 2004 petition by WildEarth Guardians and 73 co-petitioners requesting the Service federally protect the Gunnison's prairie dog. The species occurs in Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah. After several rounds of litigation, the Service decided in February 2008 that this prairie dog only deserved protection in 40% of its range (mountainous parts of Colorado and New Mexico). Today's decision strikes down the Service's finding.

Judge Martone's decision notes a 98% decline in the area occupied by Gunnison's prairie dogs, from 24 million acres in 1916 to 500,000 or fewer acres in 2008. Guardians' petition chronicled an onslaught of threats explaining this decline, including mass extermination efforts orchestrated on behalf of the livestock industry; sylvatic plague, an exotic disease to which prairie dogs have little or no immunity; rampant oil and gas drilling; shooting; poisoning; urban sprawl; and other perils.

Scientists consider prairie dogs to be "keystone" species: they serve as prey for a large variety of carnivores including golden eagles, kit foxes, ferruginous hawks, and badgers. Prairie dog burrows provide homes to animals such as burrowing owls, lizards, rabbits, and other wildlife. More than 150 wildlife species benefit from the rich habitat prairie dog colonies create. ❖

Advocates at the statue of St. Francis and the prairie dog in Santa Fe.



# Albuquerque Sunport and the 100<sup>th</sup> Monkey

From the very beginning of the 2010 prairie dog rescue season, there has been a somber and anxious pall that blanketed our efforts, even greater than the normal level of anxiety that pervades every organization devoted to animal rescue, whether wild or domestic. This anxiety stemmed from the overwhelming dread following Prairie Dog Pals being informed on April 20<sup>th</sup> that the Albuquerque Sunport had exhausted all humane avenues, and that they would begin exterminating every prairie dog within the confines of the airport as soon as possible.

That this date coincided with the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Earth Day, AND the largest oil spill ever recorded in human history, continues to haunt us. This draconian decision enforced by the FAA was not only directed at the Albuquerque Sunport but stipulated to potentially hundreds of other airports throughout the US facing wildlife conflicts. The genesis of this “scorched earth” policy was a famous, terrifying, but successful landing of a plane onto the Hudson River after a bird strike, in January 2009.

Recognizing that the FAA is one of the most powerful government agencies, monolithic and answerable to no one, did not deter some of our advocates from trying to insert a level of reason and restraint into the discussion among the various stakeholders. They arranged meetings with various parties: elected officials and subject matter experts, to no avail. As with the many people over the years who had hoped to provide a liaison between Kirtland AFB and Prairie Dog Pals, for the sake of their resident prairie dog populations over the past decade, all efforts had proved fruitless. The FAA even dismissed the inquiries of supportive congressmen as “without jurisdiction” over their mission.

The ordeal tested resolve, tested friendships, and tested sanity. In fact, “insanity” was one of the many repeated refrains heard when horrified advocates called to express their rage, their disbelief, their helplessness, their sympathy, their pleas for heroic intervention, humane solutions, help from “the powers that be,” anything... anything at all. We were often reduced to impotent sound bites such as, “The FAA is practicing ‘voodoo’ instead of insuring actual public safety. Killing everything on the ground at the airport will not prevent a bird from flying into an engine 8 miles after takeoff.”

In our angrier moments, we suggested paving everything from I-25 to KAFB. It would be too hot to actually take off, your shoes would melt on the tarmac, and your hair would catch on fire, but that would be one way of keeping every single mammal and bird from ever coming near the airport...

When callers had exhausted their tears and their rage, we would often find ourselves sharing with them, consoling them with the lessons of “The Hundredth Monkey”... Many of you may know this story about a colony of macaques studied on a Japanese island. Many, many stories have been written about this phenomenon, but our favorite is this version by Ken Keyes, Jr. in his book by the same name.

*The Japanese monkey, Macaca fuscata, had been observed in the wild for a period of over 30 years. In 1952, on the island of Koshima, scientists were providing monkeys with sweet potatoes dropped in the sand. The monkeys liked the taste of the raw sweet potatoes, but they found the dirt unpleasant. An 18-month-old female named Imo found she could solve the problem by washing the potatoes in a nearby stream. She taught this trick to her mother. Her playmates also learned this new way and they taught their mothers too. This cultural innovation was gradually picked up by various monkeys before the eyes of the scientists (sic). Between 1952 and 1958 all the young monkeys learned to wash the sandy sweet potatoes to make them more palatable. Only the adults who imitated their children learned this social improvement. Other adults kept eating the dirty sweet potatoes. Then something startling took place. In the autumn of 1958, a certain number of Koshima monkeys were washing sweet potatoes -- the exact number is not known. Let us suppose that when the sun rose one morning there were 99 monkeys on Koshima Island who had learned to wash their sweet potatoes. Let's further suppose that later that morning, the hundredth monkey learned to wash potatoes.*

## THEN IT HAPPENED!

*By that evening almost everyone in the tribe was washing sweet potatoes before eating them. The added energy of this hundredth monkey somehow created an ideological breakthrough! But notice. A most surprising thing observed by these scientists was that the habit of washing sweet potatoes then jumped over the sea -- Colonies of monkeys on other islands and the mainland troop of monkeys at Takasakijama began washing their sweet potatoes. Thus, when a certain critical number achieves an awareness, this new awareness may be communicated from mind to mind. Although the exact number may vary, this Hundredth Monkey Phenomenon means that when only a limited number of people know of a new way, it may remain the conscious property of these people. But there is a point at which if only one more person tunes-in to a new awareness, a field is strengthened so that this awareness is picked up by almost everyone!"*  
"The Hundredth Monkey" by Ken Keyes, Jr.

The “hundredth monkey effect” has taken on the weight of a parable, a “teachable moment.” It helps us understand how social change can occur so suddenly among us. When it happens so quickly and pervasively, it is a cultural meme - a cultural idea whose time has come – and there’s no stopping it.

*Continued on page 9*

## Future Plans:

**Winter Maintenance:** By the nature of our work, our equipment takes a beating and this winter will be a time for maintenance. Last winter Ed helped (and I mean “assisted”) Paul repair the Suburban. There were a number of issues but essentially the electrical system was fried. Lights would mysteriously light, dim or go out, things would flash when they weren’t supposed to, and fuses would blow without end. Paul basically rewired the ‘burb. This winter it will be the trailer that gets some work done. Somewhere along the line the front axel was bent causing the tires to wear quickly and unevenly. The brakes need upgrading as well. The repairs will cost money; a new axel is \$350.00. We try to do the work ourselves to keep the costs to a minimum but any donations for equipment upkeep would be much appreciated.

**Winter Activities:** The prairie dogs have started to hibernate, though on a warm day you can see a few holdouts. Insomnia? Who knows! Supplemental feeding can continue as long as the prairie dogs are active and interested. Periodic warm spells may bring some topside during the winter months, but their active season is over. For us it is a time to clean and repair the equipment, prepare the taxes, publish the annual letter, and think about the coming season. The stewards will welcome the respite as our outreach coordinators move into high gear! Whew, does it ever end?

**Spring Feeding:** If we have a mild winter, the prairie dogs could start surfacing as early as January (let it snow, let it snow, let it snow). If there is a brief warm spell, do not feed the prairie dogs. The lack of food will encourage them to go back down into their burrows. Once the weather begins to warm consistently and the numbers of prairie dogs topside increase, some regular feeding will help them regain the weight they lost during hibernation and strengthen the females for pup season. Graziella will be able to advise caregivers about what and when.

**Spring Trapping:** We have carry over contracts from both US Fish and Wildlife and the City so we’ll be doing some spring trapping and flushing. We may be thinking too far ahead, but it doesn’t hurt to be prepared. Most likely we’ll be working along the freeway and at compromised sites in town. We’ll also be working at parks and joint use facilities. If you have any suggestions please send them to [prairiedogpals@comcast.net](mailto:prairiedogpals@comcast.net). We only have about 3 weeks to capture and release so it will be an intense period. More details will be provided at the annual meeting.

**Garage Sale:** Our 2010 garage sale was a great success, netting over \$700.00! The next garage sale will be held in May 2011, Ray and Graziella willing... We’ll be sending out notices about a month before the event, but request that you archive any items you might consider donating to the cause until spring.

**2011 Plans:** We had suggestions about site removals from a number of our prairie dog pals during the 2010 season. These rescues take time, labor, and money. Unless someone is willing to act as the sponsor to organize a site removal, then the rescue will likely not happen. We will continue to partner with the city for parks and joint use facilities. Our work with DOT, APS, and developers will depend on contracts. We will also continue to remove singletons from neighborhoods as a public service for city residents and to save the lost, bewildered prairie dogs finding themselves alone and confused. And, of course, we will rescue small, isolated populations whenever resources are available.

**2011 Annual Meeting announcement:** Ground Hog, (whoops) Prairie Dog Day falls on Wednesday, February 2, 2011. The annual meeting will be held on Saturday, January 29, 2011 at 1:00 PM. We are seeking a suitable venue for about 25-30 people. If you have any suggestions, let PDP know. The annual board meeting will precede the general meeting. A formal announcement will be sent out in early January. However, if you have any agenda items, please forward them to [prairiedogpals@comcast.net](mailto:prairiedogpals@comcast.net) no later than January 15, 2011. ❖

### **The Hundredth Monkey, *Continued from page 8***

In commiserating with these grieving people, we often talked about other species under assault as well: from dolphins to dogs, pelicans and polar bears, cougars and chimpanzees... mustangs, bears, bison and wolves... all the suffering species caught our hearts. Everyone agreed that more champions are needed.

If we continue to validate the champions who lead the way, and become champions ourselves we may witness the tipping point we seek. We all can benefit from the fruits of that effect on behalf of “inconvenient wildlife” everywhere... We are looking forward to that one day that the “the hundredth monkey” within the human race acknowledges the “insanity” of a scorched earth policy that benefits no species at all, and says, “Enough! We choose a better, humane, loving way to coexist with other species.”

When *enough* of us become aware of something, particularly something repulsive, all of us become aware of it and have the same revulsion. We can use this understanding we have about the unnecessary cruelty of this blanketed poisoning, the futility of such actions and employ them as a “force multiplier.” By sharing this “awareness” with others whenever we can, we move imperceptibly towards the tipping point, “the hundredth monkey.” ❖

**Sevilleta** *Continued from page 6*

Prairie Dog Pals was privileged to work with personnel from US Fish and Wildlife, UNM and the Reserve. Everybody worked hard to make the relocation a success. Volunteers from each group provided their sweat equity to capture, stage, relocate, and introduce the prairie dogs. Quoting the song, never was heard a discouraging word, even when folks got nipped.

During June and July we released 650 prairie dogs, which, was our target for 2010. We plan to release another 650 in 2011.

We have worked with the Sevilleta Long Term Ecological Research Team from UNM for a number of years, but this is the first time we've partnered with US F&W and the Reserve. The overall project will provide habitat for 1,300 prairie dogs. Due to a number of considerations, however, the project will span several years. For 2010 our goal was to relocate 650 prairie dogs. There will be volunteer opportunities to help with the capture and staging, as well as with the site preparation and release. If you are interested in volunteering, please let us know ([prairiedogpals@comcast.net](mailto:prairiedogpals@comcast.net)). Most likely, we will target the next release for spring 2011. ❖



Annabeth and Naomi prep the artificial burrows in advance of the release. Just look at that grass!



Left to right: Ray (Photographer) and Autumn prepare to release a prairie dog.



Paul and Ellie at work



Jon reviews the day's game plan with the volunteers.



Autumn and Jon (top), Wendy (left) and Naomi (right) release their respective prairie dogs.



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Email: [prairiedogpals@comcast.net](mailto:prairiedogpals@comcast.net)

## Are you a supporter of Prairie Dog Pals?

Here's how you can help:

- Volunteer** to be a steward, outreach spokesperson, relocater, or other prairie dog pal!
- Use your** administrative skills to help us with our web site, PR, outreach, and more!
- Make a donation** to support our work!

We also accept additional donations of food and other needed supplies.

I would like to support Prairie Dog Pals. Enclosed is my check for \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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