Editor’s Note: My apology to all who have been missing Prairie Dog Tales. I have returned from a long sojourn. This issue tells the tales of 2018 with a bit of important news from 2019.

Yips & Nips

Yips! to the staff and volunteers of the Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). We’d like to give a special shout out to biological technicians Jess D. and Lyle T. and interns Christy N. and Cesar O., who helped with trapping and flushing in 2018. Many hands make the workload light.

Yips! to Joan S. from New York City, who has contributed to our efforts over the years. In 2018 she donated an entire collection of Hallmark Keepsake Ornaments for our garage sales. Just goes to show you that there are prairie dog advocates everywhere!

Yips! to New Mexico’s 54th Legislature. These are just three of the bills that they passed in their 2019 session:

• Prohibit Coyote Killing Contests: makes it unlawful for a person to organize, cause, sponsor, arrange, hold, or participate in a coyote killing contest. (We look forward to a day when all wildlife killing contests are banned.)
• The Wildlife Corridors Act: requires the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMG&F), in coordination with the state Department of Transportation (NMDOT), to develop a wildlife corridors action plan that will provide guidance to state agencies for identifying, prioritizing, and maintaining areas for wildlife movement.
• The Energy Transition Act: mandates that the state’s electricity generation be 100 percent carbon-free by 2050.

Yips! to Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham for:

• Signing these important acts into law
• Joining the U.S. Climate Alliance, a bipartisan coalition of governors committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions consistent with the goals of the Paris Agreement, which President Trump withdrew from in June 2017. There are now 23 states in the alliance, representing over half of the U.S. population and 60 percent of national GDP.

Yips! to the Albuquerque City Council for passing a proposal to ban the distribution of non-biodegradable single-use plastic bags at local grocery stores and retail establishments, and…Yips! to Mayor Tim Keller for signing it into law.

Please never throw away a hard copy of Prairie Dog Tales. Recycle it (even if out of date) by passing it on to someone else who might enjoy reading it, and ask them to do the same. This will help PDP spread the news about our mission to save prairie dogs and their habitat. Thanks!

Nips! to the Legislature for failing to pass the Wildlife Protection and Public Safety Act. It would, with few exceptions, have banned the use of traps, snares, and poisons on New Mexico’s public lands. It was dubbed “Roxy’s Law” after a beloved family pet who lost her life in a snare on Thanksgiving weekend in 2018.

Nips! Nips! Nips! to the Trump Administration. The people he has appointed to head every agency involved in protecting our environment are systematically dismantling long-standing policies that protected our air, water, soil, climate, wildlife, and food supply! 😡

Annual Meeting

PDP held its annual board and general membership meetings on February 3, 2019. Our usual venue, the community room at the police substation on Montgomery Blvd., was closed for renovation, so Ed U. had reserved a meeting room at the McLeod Mountainside Family YMCA on Comanche Rd NE. Most of the “usual suspects” were in attendance. The new venue suited our needs just fine, but a few attendees requested that Ed cease and desist from scheduling the meetings on Super Bowl Sunday. He promised to be more attentive to national holidays in the future. The meeting maintained a lively pace, with updates from the board members and suggestions from attendees. Highlights of the meeting follow:

Finance: Treasurer Ray W. reported that we had a net loss of $6112.00 during 2018. Major contributing factors were labor costs associated with pro bono work and higher than budgeted stewardship costs. We also had maintenance expenses for our operations equipment, including tires and a new radiator for the Suburban and a new flush pump for the tanker.

Our three largest sources of revenue are donations, work contracts, and garage sales. There was discussion about other fundraising opportunities, and members were encouraged to support the passive fundraising programs in which we participate: Smith’s Food and Drug Inspiring Donations,
Amazon Smile, and iGive. We announced plans to conduct several garage sales in 2019 and asked for member support.

**Stewardship:** The board voted to continue funding the stewardship stipend through 2019. This program provides sustenance for prairie dogs at sites where the natural vegetation does not support the indigenous populations. Because of last year’s cost overrun, Ray and C. Rex will perform an assessment of the populations at various colonies to determine how much food will be allocated to each site.

**Outreach:** PDP continued to promote prairie dogs and preservation of their habitat at a number of venues, including Valles Caldera National Preserve, Sevilleta and Las Vegas NWRs, Bosque Del Apache’s Festival of the Cranes, Animal Humane New Mexico’s summer camp, and a couple of Albuquerque elementary schools. While we plan to continue this effort in 2019, Jim T., who runs the program, could use help with logistics (transportation and presentation set-up).

**Media and Art:** Sharyn D. has continued creating charming artwork that combines her photography of our native Gunnison’s with photo-shopped holiday and seasonal themes. You can enjoy her artwork on our Facebook page, where some posts have received as many as 15,000 likes. This was the third year for which she also created greeting cards and a calendar featuring her artwork. The cards are available for sale year round, but the calendars are only offered during January.

**Editor:** There was no newsletter published in 2018 due to Frances G.’s absence. She reported that the newsletter to be published in the spring of 2019 would cover the 2018 season. It was agreed that hard copies of the newsletters would continue to be distributed to active members.

**Update on Proposed Legislation:** Intergroup Liaison Phil C. gave a synopsis of some of the animal related legislation being considered by the New Mexico Legislature this year, including the Wildlife Corridors Act. Guy and Liz D., who through their non-profit organization, Wildlife Conservation Advocacy Southwest, have spearheaded the effort to stop coyote killing contests, spoke about the bill that would ban the practice. Legal Advisor Carolyn (C.J.) M. briefed the group on “Roxy’s Law,” which would prohibit poisoning and trapping on public lands, and another bill that would prohibit the trafficking of wild animal parts. Attendees were encouraged to contact their representatives to express their support for the bills.

**Operations:** Ed reported that we completed work under a city contract in 2018, clearing prairie dogs from several schools and parks. PDP worked for NMDOT (at no cost) to remove prairie dogs from along Tramway Blvd. and Interstate 40 in Albuquerque and along NM 314 in Los Lunas. We also completed rescues in Bosque Farms, Bernardo, and Belen. Yvonne B. coordinated a rescue of 15 prairie dogs from a captive enclosure at the Jackalope store in Santa Fe. Margaret D., who is in charge of singleton rescues, reported capturing three prairie dogs and two juvenile squirrels from various private residences. All told, we captured and released 603 prairie dogs during 2018. Seventeen prairie dogs were deemed non-releasable and placed with foster caregivers.

Guy and Liz provided an overview of an effort being coordinated by a number of animal advocates to relocate burrowing owls and prairie dogs from a tract of commercial land in Los Lunas. PDP has agreed to work with the group to relocate the prairie dogs. The land broker is working with Guy and Liz to secure the necessary permits to relocate the owls.

**Indian School Update**

If you drive along Tramway Blvd., you will see natural vegetation all along the right-of-ways except for the areas on the east side next to the CVS and Walgreens drug stores, north and south respectively, of Indian School Rd. Especially next to CVS, there is a very pronounced difference, with the first 635 feet north of the road being pretty much barren. Some would say that this near total lack of vegetation was caused by the prairie dogs, but such is not the case. There are prairie dogs all up along Tramway Blvd., and only this area suffers from lack of foliage. Here’s the real story:

Years ago a homeowner in the neighborhood planted some Chinese sumacs (often called trees of heaven) in their yard. This invasive species soon spread and all but took over the right-of-way area on the east side of Tramway. After receiving complaints from the homeowner’s association, NMDOT attempted to kill the trees of heaven. Unfortunately, the herbicide they used wiped out pretty much all foliage on the site. The homeowner’s association again complained, prompting the city to decide that the area needed to be landscaped. We do not doubt, however, that the decision was influenced by a few grinches in the area who begrudge wildlife any space in their immediate environs. One local man who lives near Rover Ave. used to rake up any food left for the prairie dogs by our stewards or local animal lovers.

To their credit, NMDOT planned to have the resident prairie dogs humanely removed prior to construction. They contacted PDP in late 2016 to see if we wanted to bid on the project. Feeling that we were best equipped to ensure that the prairie dogs were relocated safely, the board voted to submit a bid. We made that decision with heavy hearts, knowing that the Walgreens and CVS colonies had long been the most popular sites in Albuquerque for animal lovers to enjoy watching our native Gunnison’s prairie dogs. We worked...
diligently through 2017 and removed 125 prairie dogs. At the end of the season, we estimated that there were six to eight prairie dogs left on the Walgreens side.

Our 2018 spring capture season began on March 9, when Debbie S., Jim T., and C. Rex set out to trap the last holdouts of the once thriving colonies. The weather was pleasant, if not a bit cool, as our three rescuers laid out their traps next to Walgreens on the south side of Indian School Rd. The last prairie dogs of a colony are always the hardest to catch, probably because they are the smartest and, having seen their brethren get captured, are even more cautious. These guys were definitely skittish. The crew only saw one prairie dog appear above ground, and fortunately, it decided to go for the bait in one of the traps. Debbie and Jim thought they saw movement at a burrow on the north side of the road. C. Rex later flushed that burrow and captured a mouse.

When C. Rex visited the site later in the spring, he spotted six prairie dogs on the south side, but none to the north. On his first trip he trapped two prairie dogs and covered all the burrows. He made a second trip to flush the burrows that had been re-opened, but came up empty handed. Come summer, we made four more attempts to catch those last wily prairie dogs. C. Rex was able to flush three of them out, and Mike T. trapped two more plus three squirrels.

At the end of the 2018 season, we believed that we had relocated all of the prairie dogs, but in spring of this year, it became apparent that there were a few holdouts on the Walgreens side. Alas, prairie dog math means that there are always more than you think there are. We will try again this year to clear the site.

**Flushing**

In many of our stories we talk about “flushing.” You should know that we are not drowning prairie dogs. We add biodegradable, hypo-allergenic, liquid soap to the water in our tanker. The soapy water is pumped through a garden hose with a special attachment on the end that produces sudsy foam. The prairie dog runs through the foam to exit the burrow. We use a towel to dry off the soapy prairie dog and saline drops to clear any soap or grit that got in their eyes. This flushing process is humane and has been vetted by the Prairie Dog Coalition.

Flushing is certainly not 100 percent effective. In fact, in areas where the ground is sloped, flushing is generally ineffective because the burrows tend to “travel” uphill, but the foam does not. On level ground it is man versus prairie dog. The smarter prairie dogs thwart our attempts to capture them by closing their burrows as we begin to flush. You see, prairie dogs are able to close their burrows by backfilling the tunnel with dirt. In fact, they close their burrows each night and open them in the morning. When a member of our crew flushes a burrow and no prairie dog emerges, it either means the prairie dog wasn’t home at the time or that it outsmarted the flusher by closing the burrow!

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**Bernardo**

As we kicked off the 2018 spring season, the schedule was looking a bit thin, so C. Rex contacted NMG&F and asked if they wanted us to relocate prairie dogs from the Ladd S. Gordon Waterfowl Complex in Bernardo, as we had in years past. The complex consists of a wetland area and several fields where crops are grown, some to attract migrating birds and others to offset operating expenses. Unfortunately, prairie dogs in the area also take the opportunity to forage on the plants. NMG&F officials decided to issue a contract for follow-up work, so C. Rex and Mike T. headed south to Bernardo during the last week of March. It was a cool day, but at 50 degrees, it met our minimum temperature standard for flushing. They found a lot of burrows that did not appear to be active, but since they were trying to clear the field, they flushed those as well.

Q: How do you tell an active burrow from an inactive burrow?

A: Look for debris in the burrow. Prairie dogs keep the entrances to their burrows clean and clear of debris, so if a burrow is full of last year’s leaves or windblown trash, it is likely not occupied by a prairie dog. So, you might ask, ‘what’s the point of flushing an inactive burrow?’ Well, there are a few reasons why a seemingly inactive burrow might be occupied. First, if you startled a prairie dog that was out foraging, it would have run down the closest burrow, debris strewn or not. Also, we have noticed that a lot of the yearling pups are not quite as fastidious as the adults. And then there are squirrels—they are not particular about where they take up residence and are not nearly as tidy as prairie dogs. So if you are trying to clear a site, you need to flush all the burrows.

After two days of flushing, the pair had captured 18 prairie dogs. Then C. Rex was called to duty elsewhere, leaving Mike to finish out the week on his own. Mike was so engrossed in his work that he was still flushing one evening as dark was approaching. The staff was ready to lock the gate when they realized that Mike was still out in the field! Mike caught 13 more prairie dogs, bringing the total for the week to 31. We applaud NMG&F for dealing with the prairie dogs in a humane manner and hope to continue our work with them.
Singleton Rescues

In 2018 Margaret D., our board member in charge of singleton rescue, was able to save three male prairie dogs that had somehow been separated from their colonies and wandered into people’s yards. Fortunately for these three prairie dogs, the residents of those particular patches of land were humane as well as human. They didn’t call an exterminator—they called PDP for help. Thanks to these kind-hearted homeowners each of the lost creatures was able to rejoin prairie dog society, albeit not in their original colonies.

Two of the rescues involved your routine backyard trapping, but the third required a bit more direct interaction. The prairie dog had made its way through an open garage door and subsequently into the house. When Margaret arrived, the animal was crouched behind a washing machine, no doubt confused and terrified. Unfortunately, Margaret’s attempts to capture him would not improve his state of mind. Hanging over the top of the washing machine, she used a mop to “encourage” him in the direction she needed him to go, and it took 20 minutes before she was able to snag the fellow with her net and drag him from behind the appliance. He surely saw Margaret as a predator and feared for his life; instead he was whisked away to our staging facility, where he was given food and a bed of hay. After a few weeks’ stay at the “Inn of the Prairie Dogs,” we transported him to the refuge, where he could find a new colony to join and live out his life.

As challenging as her laundry room encounter was, it was not Margaret’s most memorable rescue of the season. In early spring she was called to a house in the Willow Wood subdivision. A man who was in the process of landscaping his backyard and adding a pond was surprised to find that a family of squirrels had taken up residence there. Margaret surveyed the yard. The pond was ½-feet deep and not yet filled with water. The only burrow she could find was on the north edge of the pond. She saw an adult squirrel, likely the mother, running along the top of the fence at the back of the yard. Margaret set out two traps and retreated to the patio near the house, where she could keep a close eye on the traps.

Margaret sat and watched for an hour, but did not see the mama squirrel again or any sign of the young ones. She decided to pick up her traps and try again the next day. As she was about to leave, she noticed some clods of dirt in the empty pond. There between the clods were two tiny squirrels. She reached down with her gloved hand and gently picked them up. They both fit in the palm of her hand, and they were so lethargic that they were practically lifeless.

Margaret took the two little squirrels to a wildlife rehabber named Marian H. They were extremely dehydrated and near death. Under Marian’s expert care over the next few weeks, the young squirrels made a full recovery. When it was time to release them, Marian brought them to a friend’s house in the East Mountains. Lots of squirrels visited her friend’s yard, so it seemed like a perfect place to release the young ones.

A Stealth Rescue

In late March of 2018, PDP conducted a rescue that was cloaked in secrecy. To understand why, you have to know the history of the unique colony. The prairie dogs lived in an enclosure at Jackalope, one of Santa Fe’s most iconic retail destinations, a one-of-a-kind home and garden store founded in 1976. It’s comprised of multiple buildings spread across a five-acre lot interspersed with mature trees. There’s a furniture store, a nursery green house, and a Mexican-style mercado featuring independent vendors from around the world.

During the 1980s and 1990s, a local woman named Donna M. made it her mission to relocate prairie dogs threatened by development in Santa Fe. In 1990 she approached Jackalope’s owner, Darby M., with the idea to build an enclosed space within Jackalope where people could come to experience and appreciate the native species. She worked with Darby’s brother, Michael, to design and build a cinder-block-lined pit, 25 feet in diameter and 16 feet deep, smack in the middle of Jackalope. Once filled with dirt, it became the perfect habitat for a small colony. The prairie dogs thrived and charmed many Jackalope customers through the years. Sadly, the woman so dedicated to the prairie dogs passed away in 2001, and seven years later the colony was dedicated in her honor.

Over time the business began to struggle and eventually went into foreclosure in 2015. The vendors who rented space in the establishment were delighted when a Santa Fe corporation, whose director, Harpal S., was also president of Jackalope’s largest vendor, stepped in to save the local treasure from demise. It wasn’t long before Jackalope was thriving again.
Throughout the years the little prairie dog colony in the heart of Jackalope had been lovingly cared for by groundskeeper, Santiago G. Each day he provided the prairie dogs with fresh water, alfalfa, sunflower seeds, and sometimes carrots for a treat. Though most of Jackalope’s clientele who came to visit the colony treated the prairie dogs with the respect that they deserved, there were sometimes incidents of people climbing into the enclosure or throwing unhealthy food to the prairie dogs, such as energy bars or the unwanted remains from their refrigerators. By 2018 these unfortunate incidents had became more common, and Jackalope’s store manager, Nadine M., became concerned for the prairie dogs’ well being.

As Nadine searched for solutions to the problem, she heard about a non-profit organization in Albuquerque that humanely relocated prairie dogs to wild habitat. She reached out to PDP for help at the beginning of March last year. Yvonne B. explained that since the prairie dogs had lived for years in a sheltered environment and were naive to the ways of the wild relocation to natural habitat was not advisable. They could, however, still be relocated if some sheltered habitat or sanctuary could be found. Nadine conferred with her regional manager, Sue W., and Harpal, the owner, and they decided to proceed with the relocation and started developing plans for a second greenhouse in place of the prairie dog enclosure.

PDP does not work in Santa Fe, so Yvonne placed several calls to confer with the prairie dog advocacy groups there. They were stunned and tried to convince Harpal to change course and keep the prairie dog enclosure. When that failed, they reached out to the Albuquerque Bio Park, but the zoo was not interested in taking on Gunnison’s prairie dogs. The group bandied about proposals that were largely infeasible or unreasonable. In desperation, they tried to delay the inevitable and asked to postpone construction and push the relocation into summer. There was no doubt of the Santa Fe advocates’ love for the Jackalope colony, but over the course of weeks, it seemed as though they were progressing through the stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression…

Knowing that Jackalope’s leadership was determined to move the prairie dogs, Yvonne’s only concern was that the relocation be done safely and humanely. As the group in Santa Fe dithered over what to do, the need for action became more critical. The end of March was approaching, and the prairie dogs might soon be mating—perhaps they already had! Yvonne considered any release of females in late-term pregnancy to be cruel and dangerous, and once the pups were born, the mothers could not be removed without condemning the pups to die of starvation in the burrows. She couldn’t wait any longer! She sent out feelers to the community-at-large of wildlife rescuers, and by Tuesday, March 27, she’d found three who would be willing to provide sanctuary to the Jackalope prairie dogs. When she asked how soon they could get there, they replied that they could be in town by the weekend.

Recognizing the strong emotions that this little colony elicited, Yvonne planned the rescue in secrecy to prevent any further discussion or possible interference. She phoned Nadine to let her know that she and C. Rex would be there on Wednesday to begin trapping. Unfortunately, Mother Nature was not a co-conspirator. That night a polar vortex hit New Mexico, plummeting temperatures into the teens across the state. The next morning C. Rex and Yvonne set out for Santa Fe in the cold and snow, but it was the dense fog blanketing the Rio Grande Valley that made the drive treacherous. Despite the weather, the trapping went well—C. Rex and Yvonne captured 12 of the prairie dogs in the first outing. Each one looked healthy and plump—not a single broken tooth, missing patch of fur, or health issue that would require a vet visit or hospice.

Meanwhile, the folks who would provide asylum for the little rodent refugees were en route to Santa Fe. C. Rex returned to trap on Thursday, but the prairie dogs were wary of the traps, so he only caught one that day. The plan was to flush the next day since that was when the last out-of-town rescuer was due to arrive. It was a bit chilly on Friday morning, so C. Rex waited until 11:00 A.M. to flush. There was no way to drive the tanker in next to the colony, but he was able to catch two remaining prairie dogs using a hand flusher. After flushing, C. Rex covered the burrows and asked the Jackalope staff to let him know if they saw any re-opened burrows. They reported back that no burrows had been re-opened, and by Monday the last of the prairie dogs were on the road to their new homes.

PDP extends our gratitude to Harpal for ensuring that the prairie dogs were removed humanely, for the generous donation that he made to our cause, and for rescuing Jackalope from demise. We also wish to thank Nadine, Sue, and assistant regional manager Scott T. for coordinating the relocation with us and running interference when necessary. Thanks to Santiago for taking such good care of the prairie dogs for all those years. Last, but not least, we thank the wonderful caregivers who opened their hearts and provided forever homes for the Jackalope prairie dogs. ✿
**Love For All Creatures Big and Small**

Throughout the prairie dog rescue season, all manner of calls come to our dedicated landline day and night. Many times they are simple requests for information or education, but the ones that put us on high alert are the urgent calls to help an animal in distress. On Wednesday, April 25, last year, we received a frantic call from Lana L., saying that she had found a prairie dog floating in her horses’ water trough and that he was cold and unresponsive. Yvonne B. asked Lana to place her fingers on the prairie dog’s chest and feel for a heartbeat. Yes, he was still alive! Next, as Yvonne instructed, Lana lifted the animal with its head hanging down. She saw no water drip out of his nose or mouth. Though this simple test could not positively rule out water in the lungs, it was a hopeful sign—perhaps the prairie dog was only suffering from hypothermia.

Yvonne advised Lana that the best course of action would be to keep the prairie dog warm. Then she added that we would be willing to care for him in our staging facility if Lana could bring him to us. Having already learned that Lana lived more than an hour away, Yvonne anticipated that she would decline to come; but without a moment’s hesitation, Lana responded, “I’m on my way!” She swaddled the little guy in a small blanket, placed the precious bundle in a basket on the passenger seat of her truck, turned the heater on high, and set off for Albuquerque.

While waiting for them to arrive, Yvonne prepared a treatment cage with some soft flannels and warmed up a Snuggle-Safe. Her anxiety grew as she considered the possibility that the poor creature might not even survive the long drive. Finally, a dark green truck pulled into the driveway. Out stepped a woman with a long mane of white hair. She had a gentle expression on her face as she looked down at the bundle she clutched in her arms. She told Yvonne that she’d only heard him stir in the basket once during the whole trip.

Yvonne opened the blanket to find the little water-streaked body still limp, his eyes closed. She was doubly anxious to save the creature, in no small part not to disappoint the wonderful Good Samaritan who had rescued him. Yvonne massaged the prairie dog, and he began to tremble slightly and move his paws. She placed him in the treatment cage on the bed of flannels with the Snuggle Safe underneath. Not wanting to raise Lana’s hopes too high for the little one’s recovery, Yvonne cautiously asked her to choose a name for him. Lana thought for the briefest moment, and then proclaimed that his name should be Nemo!

Yvonne checked on Nemo first thing the next morning. His eyes were closed; hopefully, he was only sleeping. There was no way to determine if he had sustained brain damage from his near drowning, but as that day progressed, all the signs were positive. By late morning Yvonne could hear Nemo moving around in the treatment cage. When she looked in on him, she was relieved to see that he had eaten some food and groomed his fur. His eyes appeared clear and comprehending. Since he was doing so much better, Yvonne decided to move Nemo to a standard singleton cage. From the start, Lana had referred to the animal as “he,” and Yvonne had taken the gender for granted. The move between cages gave her a chance to examine “him” more closely. Yikes—not only was Nemo NOT male—SHE was also exhibiting signs of pregnancy!

Lana and Yvonne spoke each day about Nemo’s progress. Her continued recovery meant that she could be returned to the wild. Unfortunately, it would be over a month and a half before the start of our summer relocation season. If we kept Nemo in the staging facility, she would give birth in captivity, which would be highly stressful. Even bringing her to a release site alone would be traumatic, and possibly cause her to lose the pups. Because prairie dogs are highly social animals, we try to relocate members of a given colony to the same area at the release site. Females in family groups share pup-raising duties. Releasing a single pregnant female in an area where she has no kin for support would not be optimal. When Yvonne explained the predicament, again without hesitation, Lana offered shelter to this animal in need and agreed to return the pregnant prairie dog to her horse paddock!

Lana returned to our staging facility that Saturday with a kennel to carry Nemo securely back to her home. After all, the soon-to-be-mom would be wide awake for the journey this time. C. Rex provided Lana with some wide strips of hardware cloth to use as ramps in her horses’ water tank. If another animal were to fall into the tank, the ramps would provide a way out and hopefully save the animal from drowning. The trip home was uneventful. Lana reported that Nemo was a great traveling buddy. She sat quietly, watching Lana and listening to her stories.

Lana reported on Nemo’s release with great satisfaction. From the vantage point of her travel kennel, little Miss Nemo seemed to recognize the sights and sounds of her home environment, not the least of which was the pungent scent of horse manure! When Lana opened the kennel, Nemo skedaddled to a burrow, not the closest burrow, mind you, but rather a specific one—HER burrow. Lana continues to be entertained by the antics of the little rodents that share her land. Throughout the following weeks, she made a point to notice if any of them showed any signs of impairment, but they all seemed healthy and happy!

Lana and Yvonne saw in each other a kindred spirit. Throughout the summer rescue season, they found frequent opportunities to chat. Lana would report on the health and activity of her resident prairie dog colony, and there was always plenty to discuss about the finer points of prairie dog nutrition, as well as prairie dog issues in her area. On August 6 Lana called with some heartbreaking news—one of her beloved horses, Fairway, her companion of 23 years, had died. As all horse people know, the stress of losing a dear friend is compounded by the challenging logistics of providing an appropriate burial for such a large animal. In the midst of her engulfing grief though, Lana was concerned for the prairie dogs. She wanted to be absolutely certain that the necessary excavation on her property would not harm their extensive burrow system. Again, we at PDP were awed by Lana’s kindly consideration for creatures big and small. We continue to connect with Lana on occasion and take comfort in knowing that there are such caring animal advocates in this world! 
Stewardship

Our hard-working stewards provide supplemental food to colonies where the natural vegetation is not sufficient to sustain Albuquerque’s indigenous prairie dogs. In addition to providing nourishment, supplemental feeding keeps the prairie dogs from migrating from their home territories. Without this added source of nutrition, the prairie dogs would be forced to forage farther away from their burrows, exposing them to an array of risks, including getting run over by vehicles or assaulted by man’s best friend, the dog.

You might think a steward’s job is easy—chuck some food items out of a car window as you drive by—but no, it is not that simple! Some people do just that, tossing out everything from fast food to unwanted fruit from their backyard trees. Not only is the food often unhealthy for prairie dogs, but it often lands in the gutter, or worse, in a lane of traffic. Prairie dogs tempted by the food end up being road kill.

Our stewards traverse these sites, distributing suitable food to the colonies. They perform this mission from the time the prairie dogs emerge from their winter sleep in March until they return to their burrows for torpor in October. The stewards double up on their activities during pup season to ensure that the moms have plenty of food to sustain them while nursing. They also increase their ministrations during periods of drought. These stalwart individuals have to deal with the weather, panhandlers, traffic, and discarded trash.

Perhaps the biggest challenge is inhospitable terrain. Most of the sites along Tramway Blvd. are relatively flat; however, the sites along the I-40 freeway have inclines of up to 45 degrees. Walking up and downhill is tiring and can even be hazardous. The ground is uneven due to erosion, and sometimes gives way under foot, so a misplaced step can send one tumbling down the hill. Imagine navigating that terrain in the summer heat, all while lugging food stocks up and downhill with you!

Fortunately, many of our donors augment our budget with cash donations so that we can purchase carrots, grains, and hay. Our stewards are resourceful and extend those provisions by hitting up the local markets for donations of culled veggies. This task is time-consuming, as someone must pick up the goods, discard what is unhealthy for prairie dogs to eat, and then distribute the rest among the stewards and out to the sites before it goes bad. Debbie S. has taken on this onerous task.

The bottom line is that these volunteers work hard to keep the prairie dogs healthy and fed. Kudos to Bobbie C., Becky D., Loretta G., Debbie S., Mike T., and Veronica W.! Thanks also to the compassionate green grocers that support their efforts by donating culled produce and, of course, our donors, who supply funds to buy grains and hay.

Free Work on the Freeway

Every year PDP gets numerous calls about the prairie dogs along the I-40 freeway. There are colonies beside the on- and off-ramps at Eubank, Juan Tabo, and Tramway Blvds. Between the freeway and the ramps, vegetation tends to be sparse, but in some areas there is green grass on the far side of the ramp. This entices prairie dogs to cross the road, especially the male yearlings that have been forced out of the burrow by their fathers and need to find a new home. With the speed that many drivers take the ramps, a prairie dog crossing one doesn’t stand much of a chance, so we try to keep the populations thinned at these freeway interchanges. PDP is not reimbursed for labor or materials—we do the work pro bono for the sake of the prairie dogs.

Trappers and flushers face the same challenges as our freeway stewards, and a few more as well. The very presence of panhandlers discourages prairie dogs from going into traps. Besides the difficulty of walking up and downhill on uneven ground, the sloping terrain can impede our crews’ efforts to capture prairie dogs. Inclined ground generally renders flushing ineffective and can affect trapping as well. A savvy prairie dog will roll a trap downhill in the hope that the bait will fall within its reach.

C. Rex was seriously considering avoiding the interstate altogether last year and focusing his efforts elsewhere, but his conscience (C. Regina) told him otherwise; so he filed the requisite permit application (working on the interstate right-of-way requires a permit from NMDOT) and got to work. He and Mike T. made five flushing trips in the spring covering 10 different areas and reduced the interstate population by 54 prairie dogs.

On C. Rex’s first foray of the summer season, he flushed 22 prairie dogs at the westbound off-ramp at Juan Tabo Blvd. Four of them were tiny female pups. Despite receiving care and extra nutrition in the staging facility, two of the pups died. At the end of the season, the remaining two pups were still underweight. It was decided to place them in the care of Jim T. See his story, “Scaredy and Tiny,” about caring for these two small pups.

Steward Becky D. on the hill at the I-40 eastbound Tramway Blvd. off-ramp

Prairie Dog Tales 7
Drama and Comedy in Bosque Farms

For years now we have collaborated with Bosque Farms’ own “prairie dog pals,” led by Karen D. and David C. They watch over and sustain a large colony of prairie dogs located next to the McDonald’s on highway NM 47. The Bosque Farms volunteers have helped with trapping and flushing and have donated funds to offset our expenses.

We have trapped and flushed there many times over the years, but there was a substantial population spread out across a large field. The prairie dogs were fruitful and multiplied, and always seemed to keep pace with our relocation efforts. When we returned in 2018, it finally seemed as though we might be making headway—there were quite a few unused burrows.

In late March C. Rex flushed out eight prairie dogs. Mike T. followed up a week later but only caught one—it must have been the prairie dogs’ day off. Mike and C. Rex flushed at the site three times during the summer, and C. Rex followed up twice on his own. They did pretty well at the north end and center of the field, but were stymied at the south end. Despite seeing prairie dogs out foraging, they were just not as successful as they had hoped to be. Perhaps it was because the ground is sandier there; perhaps the burrows are deeper.

While we’re not actually sure how sandy ground affects flushing—one thing is certain—it can stop a vehicle in its tracks! During one particularly hot afternoon of flushing, Mike went to refill the tanker while C. Rex maintained watch over the equipment left behind. As Mike drove back onto the field, he was headed right for the sandy area. C. Rex watched thinking, ‘surely he’ll turn before he hits the sand’… but NO… onward Mike drove! C. Rex jumped up waving his arms wildly, but to no avail. The truck barreled into the sandy patch and quickly got mired down. Had the tanker been empty, Mike might have made it across, but with a full load of water the tanker weighs 5000 pounds.

C. Rex and Mike made a couple of crude attempts to free the mechanical beast. Neither one wanted the embarrassment of having to call a tow truck and answer the obvious question: ‘why did you drive through the sand?’ Argh! C. Rex was laughing, and he thought that maybe the prairie dogs were too. But Mike had the last laugh—he ended up catching both prairie dogs!

Despite all the challenges, Mike and C. Rex were able to reduce the population at the Bosque Farms field by 50 last year. Because our records have not always distinguished between the field next to McDonalds and other areas of Bosque Farms, we don’t have a firm count; but we believe we have relocated over 700 prairie dogs from that field since 2008. Though the field is private property, it still has the potential to be developed, so we will keep at it. Thank you Karen D., David C., and the rest of the volunteers in Bosque Farms for your commitment to save these prairie dogs!

Trials and Tribulations of a Trapper

On the second day of summer operations, Mike T. was trapping on the lot at the northwest corner of Central Ave. and Tramway Blvd. There’s a hotel on its west side and the east-bound Tramway Blvd. off-ramp to the north. There were lots of prairie dogs there, and sometimes a fair amount of pedestrian traffic due to the walking path that winds through the lot. Mike had parked his truck just off Central Ave. on a slightly elevated spot that gave him a good vantage point from which to monitor the entire lot. He set the kennels out under a small tree beside the truck; the shade would protect the captured prairie dogs from succumbing to heat stroke. He spent the next hour baiting and setting 30 traps spread across the lot. Then he retreated back to his truck to watch and wait.

Trapping is usually an exercise in patience that involves sitting for long stretches while waiting for prairie dogs to trip the traps; Mike, however, needed a different kind of patience that day. In addition to other food, his bait consisted of corn, which was unfortunate because there is a large contingency of pigeons that resides under the nearby freeway overpass. Mike spent the next hour freeing a dozen or so pigeons from his traps! Because it required him to walk back and forth across the lot, the prairie dogs decided it best to remain underground.

Once the pigeons had had their fill of the corn, or perhaps got tired of being trapped, the prairie dogs came out in force. It being the beginning of the season, they were not nearly as averse to entering the traps as they would be later in the summer. Each time Mike spied a prairie dog trip a trap door, he hurried over, covered the trap with a towel, and returned to his truck to transfer it to a kennel. He then had to take the trap back out, re-bait, and set it. Often times, there was already another tripped trap to pick up. Mike was so busy.
he'd captured set free, he still brought 28 prairie dogs back to the staging facility. Mike doesn’t remember the officer’s name, but he is grateful to him for the tact and humor with which he handled a difficult situation.

Las Colinas

On Paisano St. NE, just south of I-40, there is an assisted living facility called Las Colinas Village. Between the old folk’s home and the freeway is a 5-acre field that is home to numerous prairie dogs. We have worked for years to thin the Las Colinas colony and have whittled down the population considerably, but it would take many seasons to clear all the prairie dogs from such a large area.

There have always been more prairie dogs on the north side of the field and considerably less vegetation. On the south side near the retirement home, there are fewer prairie dogs and more foliage. A few years ago, we frequently noticed a black and white cat coming over from the apartment complex east of the field. While it’s possible that the cat’s owner let her out to roam, it’s more likely that she was put out to fend for herself. Over the next couple of seasons, she and her offspring availed themselves of the cover of tall grass to hunt prairie dogs on the south side; consequently, there aren’t many active burrows left on that end of the field. As for the rest of the field, there are still a substantial number of resident prairie dogs.

We accept that prairie dogs are a prey species, and we don’t begrudge the cats for following their instinct to fill their bellies, but we hate to lose prairie dogs to a bulldozer. The lot on which the Las Colinas colony resides is commercial property, and we have always been concerned that it could be sold and developed. In both 2016 and 2017, there were colonies that we had to rescue just in the nick of time prior to construction. In August 2018 Bernalillo County, in collaboration with the city of Albuquerque, announced six potential sites for a tiny homes village to house the homeless, as an alternative to tent cities that have sprung up in the past. The lot at Las Colinas was one of those proposed sites. Community meetings were held to elicit feedback, and there was considerable pushback from local residents. The common refrain was ‘NIMBY’—not in my backyard. Fortunately, the Albuquerque Indian Center offered up a suitable spot for the project in the International District, literally, in their backyard.

Since the Las Colinas site had nearly missed being developed, C. Rex made a point to flush there in 2018. With such a large area to cover, he was happy to accept help from the Sevilleta NWR. Biological technician Jess D. and intern Cesar O. joined him at the site on an exceptionally hot day in late July. He showed them how to tell the difference between active and inactive burrows and demonstrated the fine art of flushing prairie dogs. They kept two hoses going throughout the day. Jess and Cesar manned one, and C. Rex, master flusher that he is, worked alone. Between them they were able to cover the north half of the field and captured 34 prairie dogs.

On the following day the crew consisted of C. Rex, Cesar, and intern Christy N. There was less flushing to do on the second
day because the south half of the field is less populated, but
the crew had to spend time searching for burrows in the tall
grass. Still, they were able to finish in less time overall, and
they brought in an additional 17 prairie dogs.

A few days later when Mike T. was trapping at Walgreens, C.
Rex asked him to take a look behind the fire station to see if
the area was still clear. Mike was having no luck at Walgreens,
so he decided to move his trapping operation to the fire
station area. He checked the two burrows in the exercise area;
they were still covered and thus unoccupied. Still, if the
population density on the vacant lot remained high, the prairie
dogs would continue to migrate to the fire station; so Mike
spread his traps across the lot and hoped that he would have
better luck than he’d had at Walgreens. He did! He trapped
15 prairie dogs that day and another 13 the following day.

Prairie Dog Road Work

In June NMDOT had called PDP about removing prairie dogs
in Los Lunas along highway NM 314 near the courthouse.
They wanted to re-grade about 600 feet of shoulder along the
road. C. Rex and Jim T. performed a site survey. The area is
industrial, but several prairie dogs had migrated in from nearby
farmland. Still, it was an odd spot for prairie dogs to take up
residence. One would think they would have been deterred by
the noise and vibration from the heavy traffic on the road; plus
the ground there was not exactly conducive to burrowing.
Nevertheless, there were a number of burrows that had been
dug right THROUGH the asphalt. C. Rex has encountered
burrows in asphalt before, but it always amazes him. He’s no
road engineer, but he’s seen enough roads going in to know
that the fill and compaction renders a concrete-like base that
should be a challenge to any burrowing animal. Prairie dogs
are indeed industrious, determined little critters!

NMDOT had planned for the shoulder work in their budget
but not the additional cost of relocating the prairie dogs. Since
the site was so far away from our home base, and we’d be
doing the work pro bono, they offered to supply us with the
water for flushing. C. Rex secured the required permits and set
a date for the rescue in August. When C. Rex and Mike T.
arrived at the site on the appointed day and time, the promised
tanker was not there. After a half hour wait and two phone
calls with Tom K., the NMDOT contact, they learned that the
tanker would be coming from Albuquerque and had not yet
left. C. Rex decided that it wasn’t worth the wait. He told
Tom that he would return to flush the following day and that
he would secure another source of water.

So the first trip to Los Lunas was for naught. The following
day C. Rex flushed out four prairie dogs and then covered the
burrows. On his third trip, he found no re-opened burrows.
While an optimistic fellow might at that point declare the site
cleared, C. Rex knows that the close proximity of a substantial
source population makes re-occupation likely. At least
NMDOT was able to perform their shoulder re-grade without
harming any prairie dogs.

Lending a Hand to Our Firefighters

Just east of the Walgreens at Indian School Rd. and Tramway
Blvd. is the Albuquerque Fire Department’s Station 8, and just
north of the fire station is a vacant lot with a resident prairie
dog colony. We had spoken with the owner of the lot in the
past. He had a laissez faire attitude toward the prairie dogs as
long as they caused no problems, but agreed to let us relocate
them if he ever decided to develop the lot.

During early July we got a call from the fire station asking for
help. Some of the prairie dogs had migrated into the area
behind (east of) the station that the firefighters use for
recreation and exercise. C. Rex went to survey the situation
and spoke with the station’s commander. She explained that
they didn’t want the prairie dogs harmed, but they also didn’t
want to risk a firefighter twisting an ankle from stepping in a
prairie dog burrow. C. Rex found three burrows, in the
exercise area, two near the edge and one smack in the middle.
Fortunately, the one in the middle had evidently just been
started, as it was only a foot deep and obviously unoccupied.

C. Rex came out to flush that weekend and captured one
prairie dog from each of the two open burrows in the exercise
area. He had enough water left in the tank to flush about 20
burrows on the vacant lot and caught three prairie dogs there,

after which he covered all the burrows. After flushing at
Walgreens the following weekend, C. Rex again had water left
in the tank, so he proceeded to the fire station. He was glad to
see that the two burrows in the exercise area had not been re-
opened. He flushed some re-opened burrows on the adjacent
lot and caught one more prairie dog.

The Las Colinas site is large, and there are a fair amount of
prairie dogs left. For two days work, 51 is a respectable catch,
but it barely keeps us ahead of the breeding rate. We will have
to revisit Las Colinas for years to come. Hopefully, we will be
able to clear the lot before it gets developed.

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Prairie Dog Tales 10
Prairie Dogs Have Pals in Belen

Late in our 2017 season, we received a call from Darleen A., who was concerned about a small colony of prairie dogs residing on some commercial property in downtown Belen. C. Rex arranged to meet with Darleen and perform a quick survey. He found 24 burrows and estimated that there were about 12-15 prairie dogs, though Darleen was sure that there were at least 24. Impressed by her concern for the prairie dogs, C. Rex offered to work pro bono, but Darleen and her friends pitched in donations and insisted on helping with the flushing. C. Rex made a couple of trips down to Belen that year, and the group caught 21 prairie dogs—though not all.

Darleen called PDP for help again in 2018. C. Rex had a very busy schedule last year, and he and Darleen ended up playing phone tag through the summer. Because Darleen is so committed to saving the prairie dogs, C. Rex agreed to squeeze in a trip to Belen at the very end of the season. Again, Darleen and her friends Reggie C. and Anthony G. came out to help with the flushing. Together with C. Rex, they flushed eight prairie dogs. There are a few residents left in the little colony, so C. Rex offered to return this year to catch them. How could he not when these prairie dogs have such determined, hands-on animal advocates as their champions?

Albuquerque Site Updates for 2018

ABQ Ranch Estates: Ray W. flushed seven prairie dogs.

James Joseph Dwyer Memorial Police Substation: C. Rex flushed twice. He caught five prairie dogs.

SE corner of Montgomery Blvd./Tramway Blvd.: There are a couple of prairie dogs near the corner. We flushed three times without luck. It would be difficult to trap there due to heavy pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

SW corner of Comanche Rd./Tramway Blvd.: We flushed twice without success. Several prairie dogs live under the pedestrian bridge, but they seem to be staying off the road.

East of Tramway Blvd. from Candelaria Rd. to Comanche Rd: C. Rex and Mike T. flushed several times. They caught 18 prairie dogs in the spring and 43 over the summer. We will continue to thin the population there.

NW corner of Lomas Blvd./Tramway Blvd.: C. Rex and Mike flushed 34 prairie dogs over three days in late June. Grazilla S. trapped four prairie dogs in early August. Since the yield from flushing has decreased, we plan to trap there in 2019. (We occasionally have to switch things up, as prairie dogs become accustomed to our tactics.) There are also prairie dogs across the frontage road on the grounds of a charter school. Though the school has not requested our help to remove the prairie dogs, we plan to ask permission to thin the population.

We plan to revisit all these sites in 2019, time permitting.

Scaredy and Tiny
By Jim Trever

Some relocation seasons we end up with compromised prairie dogs that cannot be released to the wild. Last year was one of those times. At the start of summer, we took in two female pups that failed to grow, and at five months old weighed considerably less than the 350 grams required for release. Both had difficulty walking, perhaps due to some neurological issue. I took these two in last September for critical care in an attempt to save their lives. We had doubts about their survival potential, but I was going to give it my best shot. I named one Tiny and the other Scaredy, as she was always scared.

I put the two pups in a 4-story cage with Toothy II, a mature Gunnison’s female that I had taken in the year before, in hopes that she might have some motherly instincts toward them. Toothy was tolerant of the pups, but not really interested in them. Initially, she kept mostly to herself in the third-story bedding. Unfortunately, two months after I took the pups in, Scaredy isolated herself from Tiny in a far corner of the cage. She went into respiratory distress and died quite suddenly.

I am happy to say that Tiny, on the other hand, is doing well and has even managed to climb to the third and fourth deck of the cage. She has also has play time outside of the cage and returns to it on her own. She seems to have overcome some of her neurological issues and is getting around reasonably well! Toothy did eventually take to staying with Tiny on the bottom deck. Prior to that Tiny would climb to the third deck to be with Toothy. Tiny prefers the first deck and perhaps had convinced Toothy to be their instead.
activities, such as guided hikes, demonstrations of outdoor recreation. On September 8 the Valles Caldera National Preserve, its wide circular depression known as the Valles Caldera, and abundance of wildlife make it a premiere destination for visitors new and old to enjoy this wonderful natural habitat. Since Gunnison’s prairie dogs are native to the preserve, the rangers invited PDP to share our knowledge of our favorite little rodents. Jim and C.J. M. were happy to oblige. Jim brought along two of his foster Gunnison’s, Toothy II and Tiny, to act as spokesrodents.

The Sevilleta NWR and the Amigos de la Sevilleta hosted the Sevilleta Fall Family Fair on November 3. The event featured various activities, including guided hikes, presentations, and arts and crafts. Jim, Yvonne B., and C. Rex manned a table at the event. According to Jeannine K., the Sev’s visitor services manager, there were 200 people in attendance, and they left with smiles on their faces.

Bosque Del Apache NWR, south of Socorro, provides vital winter habitat for thousands of waterfowl, especially sandhill cranes. To celebrate the return of the cranes each year, the refuge hosts a multi-day event that is rated among the top wildlife, birding, and photography events in North America. The 31st Annual Festival of the Cranes was held on November 14-17 and featured over 100 classes and tours. Saturday, November 17, was set aside as a family fun day called Wildlife Zone. Jim, C.J. M., and spokesrodent Prairie had tabled there in 2017, and they were such a hit that the Friends of Bosque del Apache invited PDP back for the 2018 festival. This time Jim took along Debbie S. and Gunnison’s prairie dogs Toothy II and Tiny. Besides sharing with visitors the wonders of prairie dogs, Jim and Debbie sold lots of PDP merchandise and received donations, bringing home over $150.

Outreach

Jim T. kicked off his 2018 outreach program on February 16 last year when he returned to the Las Vegas NWR. He had spoken there in November 2017, and his presentation was so well-received that ranger Debbie P. asked him to speak again just three months later, this time at an evening event. Jim drove the 125 miles to the refuge with his foster prairie dogs, black-tailed Prairie, and Gunnison’s Macy and Toothy II, only to find the visitor center locked. (He later learned that there had been a medical emergency.) Though his presentation started a little late, it went off without a hitch. The 11 people in attendance thoroughly enjoyed Jim’s presentation and the chance to meet his sidekicks, Prairie, Macy, and Toothy.

On April 13, 2018, Jim gave his presentation to three classes (47 students and three teachers) at Mission Avenue Elementary School in Albuquerque. Two and a half weeks later, he shared the prairie dog story with two kindergarten and two first grade classes (50 students and 4 teachers) at St. Mary’s Catholic School. Prairie served as spokesrodent at both events and charmed students and teachers alike.

Each summer Animal Humane New Mexico hosts Camp Humane, a summer camp for ages 5-13. The children enjoy hands-on activities, animal interactions, field trips, and talks by special guests, with the goal of learning how to care for and advocate for animals. Last July Jim and Prairie made visits to two of the camp sessions for children ages 11-13, educating a total of 28 children. There were also 13 teenagers and adults in attendance, including counselors, Animal Humane staff, and a photographer there to document the event.

About 50 miles (as the crow flies) north of Albuquerque lies a 13-mile-wide circular depression known as the Valles Caldera. It was created by the eruption of a volcano approximately 1.25 million years ago. Today it is the nation’s newest national preserve. Its wide-open mountain meadows, winding streams, and abundance of wildlife make it a premiere destination for outdoor recreation. On September 8 the Valles Caldera National Preserve held Fiesta en el Valle, offering numerous activities, such as guided hikes, demonstrations of outdoor skills, and talks on basic safety, with the goal of empowering visitors new and old to enjoy this wonderful natural habitat. Since Gunnison’s prairie dogs are native to the preserve, the rangers invited PDP to share our knowledge of our favorite little rodents. Jim and C.J. M. were happy to oblige. Jim brought along two of his foster Gunnison’s, Toothy II and Comfy, to act as spokesrodents.

Garage Sales

During 2018 PDP conducted three garage sales: one in the spring, one in late summer, and another in the fall. Here Cynomys Rex reflects on this universal tradition:

“Cleaning out one’s house often prompts a person to hold a sale in hopes of recouping value from items they no longer want. The sales have different names, depending on where you live. In England they are called jumble, rummage sales, or yard sales. Some of the more quaint nomenclature includes rummage sales, tag sales, or white elephant sales. I personally think a great name would be “jumble-tyab” — kind of a take on the famous...”
Cajun dish, but with a bit of continental flair. Regardless of the name, the goal is the same: to pass on accumulated possessions for financial gain.

The French do things a bit differently. They hold a vide grenier (literally translated as “empty the attic”) in the center of town. Locals can put their unwanted, pre-loved goodies on display where shoppers can compare prices of popular items between the different stands. I think a communal sale is a great idea because it provides mutual exchange, and it allows people to call their belongings. I remember my parents always saying, “We should have a garage sale soon to get rid of all these things we don’t need.” But we only had one garage sale when we moved from that house after ten years of living there.

Apart from its benefits, a vide grenier runs in much the same way as our humble garage sales: buyers turn up early; they haggle for ridiculously low prices; sellers have items with missing price tags and run low on change for completing transactions; buyers leave with what they think is a bargain after all that haggling, only to find that the item isn’t quite right for their needs, but will do; and sellers dump the unsold stuff in an unused cupboard at home or at a second-hand shop in defeat.

PDP held its spring garage sale on March 16-17. Debbie S. and her adopted mom, Frances G. (not to be confused with our board member and editor, Frances G.), hosted the event at their home near the intersection of Morris St. and Lomas Blvd. It was a great location! The proximity to the busy intersection and a local school guaranteed considerable vehicle and foot traffic. We had plenty of shoppers on both days. Normally we would have packed up mid-afternoon on the second day, but sales were so brisk that we kept selling until late in the day. The sale was a complete success, bringing in over $600!

There were a number of items left over after the sale. In the past we would have donated these to another animal charity, but Debbie volunteered to store the items until a follow-up sale could be scheduled. Thanks to Debbie’s efforts collecting additional donated items through spring and summer, we were able to hold a second sale on August 24-25. Debbie and Frances were gracious enough to host again at their home, and Frances’ daughter and son-in-law volunteered to help as well.

The summer garage sale turned out to be quite the event! Despite an early forecast for sporadic storms, the weather was spectacular, and we had a good turn-out of shoppers on each day. Jim T., our Outreach Director, set up an information table, and he brought his foster prairie dog Prairie along to act as spokesrodent. As always, Prairie was a big hit, and it was nice to be able to show shoppers that their purchases were supporting a great cause. In addition to the donated items, Jim sold some of our plush prairie dogs and the marvelous greeting cards created by board member Sharyn D. The garage sale was a lot of work, but well worth it—we reaped over $1200.00!

Ray W. and Tania S.W. hosted the final garage sale of the year on October 27. With a steady flow of shoppers until about 2:00 P.M., it was another successful sale—we made over $500. A number of items which had survived numerous previous garages sales were given to animal charities; the rest were retained for our 2019 sale(s).

THANK YOU to all who donated items, manned the tables, shopped, or helped in any way. We especially want to thank Debbie and Frances for hosting the spring and summer sales and Ray and Tania for hosting the fall sale. These sales generated over $2300.00 and represent a major source of income for PDP and the prairie dogs that ultimately benefit.

We could not have conducted these sales without the generous donations of our supporters. There will be at least one garage sale during 2019 and perhaps more, so please keep PDP in mind when you do your spring cleaning. We’ve found that household items and electronics seem to sell the best. Maybe yours will be that mystery item that makes us all scratch our heads. In 2018 the curious item, what many thought to be a condiment tree, turned out to be a wine saver. C. Rex was intrigued, as any time he’s been involved in such things, there was never any leftover wine to be saved!

### Passive Fundraising

PDP participates in three passive fundraising programs. Each of these programs generates donations for our cause based on the purchases of members. Though each donation is very small, they can add up to a fair sum if we have enough people signed up for these programs.

Do you shop at Smith’s Food and Drug? If so, you are probably already a member of their rewards program. If you enroll in the Inspiring Donations program as well and choose PDP as your charity, they will donate to us 0.5 percent of your eligible purchases each time you shop with your rewards card. There is no cost to enroll, and enrollment does not affect your fuel points or coupon discounts. To sign up:

1) Go to [https://www.smithfoodanddrug.com](https://www.smithfoodanddrug.com).
2) If you do not already have one, create an account.
3) Sign in to your account.
4) Click on “Your Account” in the drop down menu under your name.
5) Click on “Inspiring Donations” on left side of page.
6) On the Inspiring Donations page, click on “Enroll.”
7) Under “Find an Organization,” enter “Prairie Dog Pals” in the search field. PDP will come up in search results.
8) Click on “Enroll.”

Please note: You can sign up for Inspiring Donations at any time during the year, but Smith’s now requires members to re-enroll every year during the month of June.

Do you shop at amazon.com? Use smile.amazon.com instead, and the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5 percent of the purchase price of each eligible item to PDP at no cost to you. On smile.amazon.com, you’ll find the exact same prices, vast selection, and shopping experience as on amazon.com. Tens of millions of products on smile.amazon.com are eligible for donations. (They are marked “eligible for AmazonSmile donation” on the product detail pages). Even folks who have Amazon Prime can use smile.amazon.com; it does not affect your Prime membership benefits.

Here’s how to join AmazonSmile: on your first visit to smile.amazon.com, select “Prairie Dog Pals” as your charitable
organization before you begin shopping. Your Amazon account will be linked to both websites (amazon.com and smile.amazon.com). Your shopping cart, wish list, wedding or baby registry, and other account settings will be the same on each site. It is important that you remember to go to smile.amazon.com each time you shop because purchases made on amazon.com will not generate donations. To make it easier to remember, it’s a good idea to add a bookmark to smile.amazon.com on your web browser.

After signing up for Inspiring Donations or AmazonSmile, your shopping experience with Smith’s or Amazon really doesn’t change, with the exception of having to remember to go to smile.amazon.com. iGive, the third passive fundraising program in which we participate, is a bit more involved.

iGive is a program that allows you to generate donations to a cause by shopping at any one of over 2000 online vendors. Register at iGive.com and choose “Prairie Dog Pals” as your cause. Then whenever you want to shop at an iGive store, link to it from one of iGive’s special links, and a percentage based on what you spend will be donated to PDP. (The percentage amount varies by store.) Note: iGive does not generate a donation if you link to smile.amazon.com even though Amazon is an iGive store. When shopping at Amazon, always go directly to smile.amazon.com.

iGive works through the use of internet cookies. When you link to a store from iGive, it assigns a cookie to your browser to let the store know that you are an iGive member. Then you shop as you normally would, and at checkout the store reports back the purchase amount. (iGive never has access to any payment information.) Each month iGive calculates the funds due to PDP based on all members’ purchases and sends us a check. Since iGive uses cookies to communicate with stores and track donations, it will not work if you are running ad-blocking software or have set your browser to not accept cookies. These programs generally have settings that allow you to make exceptions, so if you want to use iGive, you can set your browser or software to “allow” cookies from iGive.com.

PDP only receives a donation from your purchase if you use an iGive link to access a store’s website and if you are an active iGive member. To be an active member you have to a) receive the weekly email newsletter, b) visit the iGive.com home page at least twice a month (in two different weeks), or c) have made a purchase from an iGive merchant in the last 60 days.

You must only use iGive deals and coupons because using a non-iGive coupon will void the cause donation. iGive maintains direct feeds from the stores to provide you with all the latest offers and savings.

You can choose to use iGive in any of the following ways *:

1) Start your shopping by logging in at iGive.com and link to stores from there.
2) Sign up for the weekly newsletter email and use its links to connect to stores.
3) Shop on a mobile device using the iGiveApp. (There are free downloadable versions for iPhone, iPad, and Android devices.)

4) Install the iGive Button on your web browser so that you are linked automatically when you visit an iGive store.

*When you sign up with iGive, they now require that you try the Button for at least 90 days.

The most convenient way to use iGive is to install the optional iGive Button, a simple web browser app that’s easy to install and uninstall. Here’s how the iGive Button works:

After downloading the iGive Button, you’ll see it on your browser (the icon looks like a dandelion seed).

This addition to your browser automatically tells participating stores that you are an iGive member. If you use Google, Bing, or Yahoo to find stores and bargains, the dandelion seed icon will appear next to iGive stores in your search results.

Whenever you visit the website of an iGive store, you’ll automatically be linked through iGive. You’ll know this because you’ll see the “iGive On” button in the lower right corner of the window. Click on this button for available live feed of coupons and to review any exceptions.

In Memoriam:
Macy
By Jim Trever

I am very sad to report that Macy, the Gunnison’s prairie dog that I worked so hard to save in August, 2017, passed away peacefully in his sleep on April 20, 2018. This was sudden and unexpected. In my experience fostering prairie dogs, they will isolate themselves from their cage mates if they are seriously ill, so I was surprised when I found Macy snuggled behind Toothy II, still slightly warm.

When I took Macy in to foster, he was totally emaciated, hence his name. He had appeared perfectly healthy when he was checked into the staging facility just a week before. I thought that Macy was dying twice during his first 10 days with me, and I got really depressed about it, as I felt that I was failing him. He was not eating or pooping. But then one morning when I was trying to feed him some Critical Care formula, he finally had a bowel movement. To my surprise, out popped a 5/8-inch piece of clear tubing about 1/8 inch in diameter. Then I understood what had caused Macy to become emaciated so quickly. The tubing must have blocked his digestive tract, yet thankfully managed to work its way through his system over time. The process of trying to save him resulted in our developing a very strong bond. I’ve typically not had as close a relationship with other Gunnison’s I’ve fostered.

Macy continued to recover and was gaining weight daily. He was so compromised when I took him in that I was astounded by how seemingly healthy he became. I put him in with Toothy II and they bonded. After that, Macy would still snuggle with me, but not for extended periods like he used to. He was more interested in getting back with Toothy II.

He was more interested in getting back with Toothy II.
Before Macy passed, he showed no signs of being ill and seemed to be an ideal weight based on his appearance. He did lose some weight over the winter, but so did all of my foster prairie dogs, including my black-tail, Prairie. Despite having become so horribly compromised, Macy lived another year. Despite his short tenure with me, Macy was very special to me and I will greatly miss him! RIP Macy!

Prairie
By Jim Trever

Prairie, a black-tailed prairie dog, came to live with me about three years ago after three previous caregivers had relinquished her. She was a hard-headed alpha female with a lot of spunk. She proved to be an excellent species ambassador (what folks in PDP like to call a “spokesrodent”), as she was very responsive to her audiences.

Best as I could tell from her history, Prairie was six years old when I took her in. She was fiercely independent and a continuous worker. She devastated a large portion of my bedroom high-pile rug and preferred nesting under my bed where I could not reach her. She insisted on freedom from the cage, and I had to make sure that she was caged well in advance of any outreach events, or I risked not being able to take her with me. One Christmas when I travelled to California to visit one of my sons, I left Prairie in her cage and had a friend come over to feed her. Upon my return, she promptly bit me, perhaps in retaliation for leaving her caged for a week. After all, she was the boss!

It was only in the last few months of her life that Prairie started wanting to snuggle with me, and she made a point to do so a few times a day. I truly enjoyed those moments, as I rarely experience that with the local Gunnison’s prairie dogs that I’ve fostered. Unfortunately, age caught up with Prairie and she started losing weight. She was not sick, just old. At eight and a half years old, she’d outlived most prairie dogs. Prairie died peacefully in her sleep. She was a wonderful species ambassador for PDP for two and a half years*, and she will be sorely missed! RIP Prairie...you were very much loved!

Editor’s Note: Prairie represented PDP as a spokesrodent at 13 outreach events. She was at Jim’s side for seven lecture presentations, reaching a total of 283 people. She was also a spokesrodent at five tabling events, where there were a total of well over 1000 visitors, perhaps even 2000.

T-Shirts for Sale

What better way to celebrate spring than with a new prairie dog T-shirt that supports PDP’s efforts! Jim T. donated the funds to order an initial inventory of these sharp-looking T-shirts. They are black, 100% cotton, and available in sizes large or extra large. The cost is $15 each, plus $5 for shipping via the U.S. Postal Service ($20 total).

There are several ways to place an order. Since we now have a Square account, you can contact us by phone (505-296-1937) or email (prairiedogpals@prairiedogpals.org) to provide credit card information. If you do not wish to pay by credit card, you can place your order through PayPal or Network for Good. Both our website and Facebook page have links to these two payment options. We normally accept donations through them; so if you are ordering a T-shirt, you must also call or email us to let us know that the payment is for a T-shirt rather than a donation.

Final Thoughts

We’ve already had a successful spring capture season for 2019. On April 17 we released 92 prairie dogs with help from a special group of volunteers. We plan to start relocating prairie dogs again on July 1. We’ll regale you with all of our exploits in our end of year newsletter. Thank you for your support!

*Editor's Note: Prairie represented PDP as a spokesrodent at 13 outreach events. She was at Jim’s side for seven lecture presentations, reaching a total of 283 people. She was also a spokesrodent at five tabling events, where there were a total of well over 1000 visitors, perhaps even 2000.
Mailing Address
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Are you a supporter of Prairie Dog Pals?
Here's how you can help:

Volunteer to be a steward, outreach spokesperson, relocator, 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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