

Content Strategy



Executive Summary

A redesign of the Toronto Zoo's website was initiated in hopes of making the site a more engaging and useful resource for potential donors, volunteers, and visitors, emphasizing the zoo's value to the community. As a non-profit organization, the zoo distinguishes itself from its competitors by not only providing an engaging and entertaining experience to visitors, but also educating them and generating support for wildlife conservation initiatives.

We believe the zoo's website has the potential to be a valuable resource for educators, scientists, students, parents, and anyone with a passion for conservation. As it currently stands, however, the content suffers from various issues which seriously impede its usefulness to these audiences. We've identified the following core issues:

- **Out-of-date content.** The website hosts a great deal of content; not all of it is necessarily current. This is of particular concern for programs that invite participation or donor support - these audiences should be able to clearly tell whether or not a program is still running. Broken links are also a concern in many places, making the zoo's website look unprofessional and poorly maintained.
- **Un-engaging or unprofessional content.** Currently there is a significant amount of content - especially about the zoo's conservation and research initiatives - that is written in a dry, un-engaging style. This represents a lost opportunity to further the zoo's educational goals. In addition, some content is poorly written and contains spelling and grammar errors.
- **Ambiguous or misleading headings.** Some pages include headings that do not necessarily reflect their content, while others are too ambiguous to be useful to visitors.
- **Repeated content.** Some content is repeated in different ways in different parts of the site. This can be especially problematic when different pieces of information on the same topic can only be found on separate, unrelated pages: no one page gives complete information.

Methodology

We began by asking key questions about the website's content. From there, we used a variety of tools to answer them:

- **Who are the site's visitors? What are they trying to do?** Looking at the different kinds of audiences for the zoo's website, we found it useful to create fictitious characters, or "personas," to represent each one. From there we created use cases for our personas, which illustrate ways in which they might use the zoo's website according to their interests and needs. This helped us to think about the kinds of content needed.
- **What content currently exists on the website? Is this content addressing user's needs?** To explore the content that already exists, we compiled a complete list of individual web pages, including descriptions of each one's content, and notes on their usability and usefulness.
- **What can we learn from similar organizations and their online presences? What opportunities exist for differentiating the zoo from its competitors by means of its online content?** Here we conducted a competitive analysis to see how the zoo's website compared with Ripley's Aquarium and African Lion Safari.

Users

Website users include:

- prospective visitors to the zoo
- patrons with zoo membership
- independent donors
- educators
- students
- scientists and researchers
- veterinarians and staff at similar institutions
- prospective volunteers

Each of these user groups play a role in supporting the zoo's mission, and should have web content that answers their various needs.

A website visitor's path: Mark tries to "Get Involved"

Before we begin a discussion of the website's issues, let us consider a representative path a user might take through the website, and how well the content performs. Let us imagine a website visitor who - inspired by a visit to the zoo - has decided he wants to contribute some of his time and resources to wildlife conservation efforts. This visitor - we'll call him Mark - is also a high school student, and has volunteer hours he needs to complete anyways.

Mark begins, naturally, by clicking on "Conservation" in the main navigation.

The screenshot shows the Toronto Zoo website's "Conservation" page. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the Toronto Zoo logo, a search bar, and links for Home, Membership, Host Your Event, Press, Mobile, and Donate Now. Below the navigation bar are five main categories: Explore the Zoo, Support the Zoo, Conservation (highlighted in red), Education & Camps, and Events. A Facebook icon is also present. The main content area features a large banner image with a green frog, a butterfly, and a raccoon. Below the banner is a "Get Involved" section with a vertical sidebar on the left containing links: Get Involved, Conservation & Initiatives, Research & Veterinary, AAZK, Partnerships & Affiliates, and Contact Conservation. The main content area lists several resources: "Bats: a Conservation Guide PDF", "Conservation and Education Activities Booklet 2012-2013 PDF", "Wildlife Conservation and Sustainable Living 2011 PDF", "OurArctic.ca Our Arctic, Our Life" (with a description of the Arctic ecosystem), "Adopt-A-Pond" (with a description of the wetland conservation program), "Great Lakes /Aqua Links" (with a description of the coalition of zoos and aquariums), and "PhoneApes" (with a description of the cell phone recycling service).

He is then presented with an index of links under the heading "Get Involved." This seems promising, as Mark does indeed want to get involved. Some are usefully annotated, though the first three - all

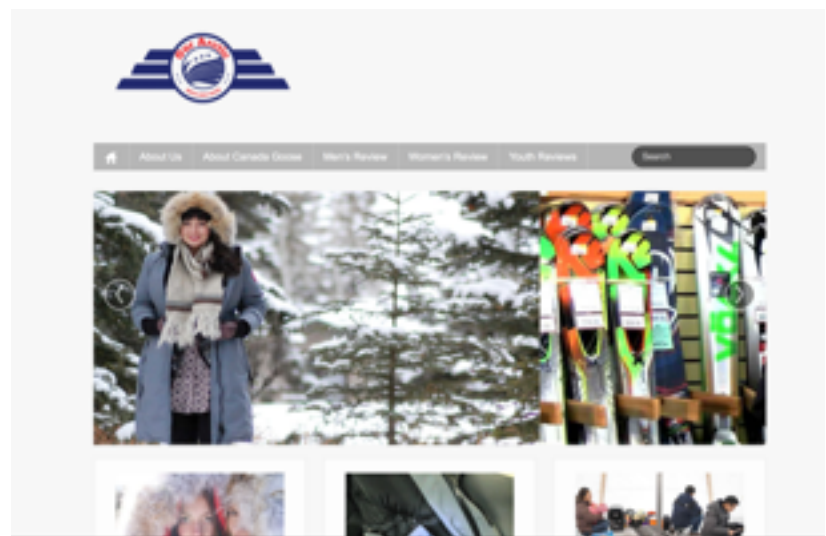


PDFs - are not. Since it's not clear what the content of these PDFs are exactly, he ignores them. Though in passing he wonders why the one about bats sits outside of the table - is it particularly important?

The link entitled "Our Arctic, Our Life" catches Mark's eye, since he had been particularly struck by the polar bears at the zoo, and knows the species is threatened by global warming. He reads the link's descriptive paragraph, and learns that it links to the website of an

organization called "CAZA" - he has no idea what the acronym means. It's also not clear how, specifically, he can "get involved" here ("learn about what he can do to preserve the arctic" apparently?). Even so, he's interested in the arctic, so he clicks the link...

...and is confused by the website he finds. It appears to be about Canada Goose jackets. Does CAZA have something to do with winter jacket manufacturing? Does the zoo partner with this organization? Is this some kind of sneaky advertising tactic, and is the zoo complicit? Mark searches in vain for any information about arctic ecosystems.



Finally, he returns to the zoo's "Get Involved" page - he remembers seeing another link about the arctic, and hopes that it will be more useful. Reading the descriptive paragraph, Mark is happy to see that the project involves sending zoo staff and volunteers to a leadership camp in Churchill, Manitoba. This is the kind of opportunity he'd be interested in! His enthusiasm is tempered by a growing doubt about the zoo's professionalism, however. Besides the previous misleading link, Mark has noticed the poor writing in the description of the next link; the sentence "Attendees arrive as receptive, eager and creative and they leave educated, inspired and empowered..." clearly hasn't been proofread. He decides to click on the link anyways, hoping that it doesn't lead to more winter garments.

The next page is another index of links - three in total - under the heading "Arctic Ambassador." Hoping to find information about how he might *become* an arctic ambassador for the zoo, Mark

clicks on each one in turn. The first - "Acres for the Atmosphere" - appears to have nothing whatsoever to do with either the arctic or the arctic ambassador program. Wading through more poor writing, Mark eventually concludes that it's a tree planting initiative. The second link - "Project Polar Bear - a Team Challenge" - features similarly sloppy writing, and again, has nothing to do with the arctic ambassador program. Instead, it's a first-hand account by a zoo staff member, who briefly describes her work with two participants in the zoo ambassador program for student volunteers. This program also happens to be of interest to Mark, but nowhere does he see any information about how to become a zoo ambassador, nor does he see any links that might lead to this information. Finally, he goes back and tries the final link: "Polar Bear International Leadership Camp Stories." It leads to a page featuring the "stories" promised in the original link description, told by three zoo staff participants. On the one hand...at least this page is actually about the arctic ambassadors program. On the other hand, there is still no information about how to become an arctic ambassador (Mark is finally reaching the conclusion that this program is not available to him). The stories are not especially engaging, the photos are very small, and nowhere is he presented with any clear and concrete way in which he can "get involved." Disheartened, Mark leaves the website.

Issues

This section takes a closer look at some of the issues Mark encountered, and presents recommendations for improving the experience of website visitors.

Out of date content and broken links



With the volume of information on the Toronto Zoo's website, it's important to have a process in place for ensuring that the content on every part of the website is current and accurate. Links that are broken and/or inaccurate can be a particularly embarrassing problem. For example, in our initial audit of the website, we noticed that the "Say it With Penguins" link on the homepage carousel was broken. The link has since been removed, but not before the URL "sayitwithpenguins.com" had already been assigned to a new website in Japanese (left).

Another link, which at the time of writing still appears on the zoo's "Get Involved" page, promises to be a link to Canada's Accredited Zoos and Aquariums (CAZA) website (right). However, the URL "ourarctic.ca" *actually* goes to a website about Canada Goose jackets (bottom right).



Broken links look unprofessional. Links that no longer lead to their original destinations can confuse visitors. Is the zoo affiliated with Canada Goose jackets? Does it endorse this product? At best, a visitor will feel annoyed and misled by this link. At worst, they may assume a relationship that does not exist, with potential consequences to the zoo's image.



Outdated content is also a problem in certain sections of the website. This can also create ambiguity and confusion for website visitors. For example, on the page describing the Great Lakes Conservation and Aqua-Links initiatives (<http://www.torontozoo.com/conservation/GreatLakesConservation.asp>), the most recent activities described took place in 2011. This raises questions: are these programs ongoing? Is the contact information provided for them still valid? In the absence of more recent information, educators might easily conclude that the program was no longer running.

Recommendations:

Institute governance practices that ensure content and links are regularly reviewed, and out-of-date content is either updated, or removed and archived. We would recommend that all content be meta-tagged with an expiry date, at which point it must automatically come up for review. Links must be checked, and broken links removed. Information about ongoing projects should be updated to reflect its most recent activities. If they project has ended or the content is otherwise no longer applicable, it should be archived.

Writing that is unprofessional or un-engaging

The website includes content from a variety of sources; some from marketers, some from researchers, and some from zoo staff members. While it's fine to have a variety of voices speaking through the zoo's website, each piece of content needs to both meet the needs of its readers/viewers, and reflect well on the zoo itself. Dry, academic writing fails to connect with a majority of visitors, and thus fails to advance the zoo's goals of engaging and inspiring the public in the service of wildlife conservation. Writing with spelling and grammar mistakes makes the zoo look unprofessional and sloppy.

Currently, there are issues with basic proof-reading on some pages. A few examples (we have added the boldface for emphasis):

- "We are happy to perform presentations at local schools and organizations and help others join in **theto** movement of making our community the best it can be!" (<http://www.torontozoo.com/conservation/ArcticAmbassador.asp?pg=acres>)
- "...It was decided that we as a group needed to **ban** together..." (<http://www.torontozoo.com/conservation/ArcticAmbassador.asp?pg=stories>)
- "Attendees **arrive as receptive, eager and creative** and they leave educated, inspired and empowered..." (<http://www.torontozoo.com/conservation/ArcticAmbassador.asp>)

Mistakes like these reflect poorly on the zoo's professionalism.

In other places, content is sound in terms of spelling and grammar, but very dry and dull for a lay reader. This is particularly the case for descriptions of zoo-sponsored research and conservation projects:

AXOLOTL - Axolotl and Lake Xochimilco, Mexico, Creating Sanctuaries and Habitat Restoration

(B. Johnson, L. Zambrano, E. Valente)

The goal of this project is provide lake remediation and to save a species from extinction. The axolotl is a Critically Endangered Species only found in Lake Xochimilco, in Mexico City. The Toronto Zoo participated in a stakeholder meeting to develop conservation actions with Mexican partners. These include long term biological monitoring and research on metapopulation structuring within the lake and captive assurance populations; ecotoxicology of lake sediments; impacts and control of introduced species; zoo based disease screening and pathology studies of captive and wild axolotl populations; zoo and community outreach programs; community based social studies to evaluate stakeholder attitudes and participation; collaborations with local food producers, farmers (chanamperos) and fishers to restore traditional agricultural practices; and training for Lake Xochimilco boat operators (remeros) to provide ecotourism income and axolotl conservation awareness.

Perhaps the most important aspect of support for these projects is the re-enforcement of fledgling conservation partnerships among different and diverse stakeholders. Conservation of the Lake Xochimilco ecosystem in the face of overwhelming ecological challenges will require sustaining such partnerships and integrating results to benefit residents of the Lake Xochimilco community, those earning a living from ecotourism, the health of communities around the lake, removal of invasive species, and remediation of the stressed lake ecosystem itself. Indeed, the axolotl and whole Lake Xochimilco ecosystem will benefit from non-traditional sustainable collaborations.

The completion of an "Axolotl Species Habitat Action Plan" provides an opportunity to contribute to existing in-country led and executed conservation priorities. These in situ projects will support a stakeholder driven Conservation Action Plan and foster newly developed partnerships and collaborations under the umbrella of GIA-X, a multi partner alliance of stakeholders for axolotl and Lake Xochimilco conservation. Partners include Government agencies; two universities; researchers and graduate students; educators, biologists and sociologists; farmers, fishers, remero boat operators; two Mexico City zoos; with participation of the AZA ATAG.

With over 9 million visitors a year Chapultepec Zoo has axolotl education programs developed by zoo educators. Additional support is required for printing of resources to be distributed to zoo visitors and education programs. Chapultepec Zoo will provide disease screening and pathology for all captive axolotl colonies and as a resource in case of sudden mortalities of axolotl within Lake Xochimilco. Toronto Zoo supports zoo based collaborations.

BLANCHARD'S CRICKET FROG - Genetic Assessment of Historic and Extant Blanchard's Cricket Frog (*Acris crepitans blanchardi*)

(P. Wilson, K. Beuclero, B. Johnson)

This study will examine DNA profiles of Blanchard's cricket frogs across the present and historic range of live and museum specimens. Museum specimens will represent the original Canadian range and frogs from the United States will determine potential source animals for release on Pelee Island, Ontario (Recovery Plan Objective). The Recovery Plan for the cricket frog has been submitted; its focus is on renewed field surveys for extant populations and to map habitats.



These project descriptions are riddled with scientific jargon ("lake remediation," "metapopulation structuring") and inaccessible to most readers. If this is the only way in which the zoo describes its conservation efforts - and in many sections of the website this appears to largely be the case - we believe it is missing out on an opportunity to engage and educate visitors.

Recommendations

The zoo needs to provide writing tools and editing to support its content contributors. We would suggest creating specific guidelines for each type of content; these guidelines would specify the

intended audience, structure, and tone for each content type. There also needs to be a process that ensures that each contribution is edited before it goes up. There should be no typos or grammatical error on the website.

We would also suggest the zoo use other media to supplement its written content and make the whole more engaging. Photos could be much better integrated into the articles and descriptions they illustrate, and videos could be invaluable tools for conveying the value of a zoo initiative.

Ambiguous or misleading headings

As we saw in Mark's unfortunate case study, ambiguous or misleading headings can confuse and frustrate a website visitor. It may be that the logic behind the relationship between heading and content may be clearer to the content creators than to site visitors; for example, the section "Arctic Ambassadors" (<http://www.torontozoo.com/conservation/ArcticAmbassador.asp>) includes content that has nothing to do with the Arctic Ambassadors program. A careful reading suggests that all the content relates to projects that were initiated by zoo staff who participated in the arctic ambassadors program. This is not useful to visitors, however, who are expecting content to closely match its assigned headings. In this case, confusion might be avoided by featuring stories and information about the Arctic Ambassadors program on the Arctic Ambassadors page, with the other links included under the subheading "Projects Initiated by our Arctic Ambassadors."

The "Get Involved" section was also misleading to Mark. The ambiguous title seemed to hint at volunteer or donor opportunities, but the content was in fact a grab-bag of general information, educational resources and programs, and stories. A few links gave visitors concrete steps they could take to "get involved," but many did not. For would-be volunteers, this page could be very frustrating.

The use of unexplained acronyms - especially in titles - is another practice that can easily confuse visitors. It might be obvious to the zoo community that AAZK stands for American Association of Zoo Keepers, but for most site visitors, this link is entirely unintelligible.

Recommendations:

We would suggest that web editors be specifically tasked with ensuring that headings match content. On index pages, no content should be added unless it clearly relates to the heading.



Descriptions of initiatives with no clear information about how to participate

The website includes many descriptions of zoo-sponsored conservation and outreach initiatives, but relatively few of these descriptions include a clear call to action; visitors who are looking for ways to get involved are often left confused about how to proceed. For example, the following article about the Arctic Ambassadors program actually includes very little information about the program itself, and no information about *becoming* an arctic ambassador.



Get Involved
Conservation & Initiatives
Research & Veterinary
AAZK
Partnerships & Affiliates
Contact Conservation

Polar Bears International Leadership Camp Stories

By Heather House, Manager of Education – Toronto Zoo
PBI LEADERSHIP CAMP – Tundra Travel Adventures

The week of October 9 -15, 2011 I had the amazing opportunity of being part of Polar Bear International's Leadership Camp designed for communicators/educators. This was the first year that the teens Leadership Camp was combined with the communicators/educators and what a fantastic and unique experience it would prove to be. I had the pleasure of meeting some great colleagues and in particular some very enthusiastic and intelligent young students who have initiated some amazing projects in their communities, all designed to help reduce CO2 and protect the polar ice, ...an inspiration to us all!

Exploring the tundra landscape in the buggy and living on the lodge in this remote location was truly amazing, and I must say, quite unique... with my feet not touching the ground for a week! We saw a variety of wildlife including: ptarmigan, Tundra swans, Arctic and red fox, Arctic hare and of course polar bears, ...sometimes wandering the shoreline and sniffing the air, other times quietly munching on piece of kelp or laying still to conserve whatever energy they have left. The highlight of my experience happened on Day 2, it was our first morning on the lodge and we were participating in a Skype session with one of the scientists who studies polar bears when out of the window and within 10 feet of our buggy was a bear. To be there in that moment, that close to a polar bear in the wild, staring them in the eye, is something I'll remember forever. For me this was a very defining moment, catching a glimpse into the life of these amazing creatures, how they are able to live in this Tundra habitat, and witnessing first hand them waiting, ever so patiently, for the ice to form. Ten years ago the wind and rain we were experiencing on this day would have been snow...and a sign that the ice would be coming. Today however, these warmer temperatures and rain means a longer wait for the bears and an increasing challenge to their survival.

The adventure continued when on Friday night we returned to Churchill to catch our flight back to Winnipeg, only to find out it was cancelled due to fog, and rescheduled to the next morning. After partaking in the 'no shower challenge' for the week, this came as a big disappointment to us all as we were so looking forward to finally having a shower, not to mention that each of us had to make alternate travel plans since this delay caused us to miss our flights home out of Winnipeg. It was this little misadventure that made my experience come full circle when I woke up to gun shots at 5:00 am directly outside my hotel window, attempting to steer away a hungry bear who had entered town looking for food—Churchill's Polar Bear Alert Program in action!



Recommendations:


Each initiative description should be very clear about the kinds of participation it invites: is it looking for volunteers? Donations? Does it provide educational resources or services? Does it involve events that are open to the public? Projects might even be listed in an index according to participation type, rather than simply using a project name that may hold limited meaning for most visitors. For example:

- Need to get rid of old cell phones? Bring them or mail them to the zoo! The Phone Apes program will recycle them and help preserve gorilla habitats.
- Want to improve your business's sustainability practices? Consider arranging a workshop for your employees through our Eco-Executives program!

It should be very clear to readers what their next step is if they want to participate.

Repeated content

The website includes several instances of content that is repeated, but not in a consistent way. Overlapping content on one topic can sometimes be found scattered across the site, with nothing to link it together. For example, if wished to find out more about the black-footed ferret - the subject of one of the zoo's successful captive breeding and release programs - we'd have to follow several separate paths to get the full picture:



the Zoo the Zoo & Camps

Explore the Zoo

- Vision Statement
- Visitor Information
- **Animals**
- Animals Off Display
- Animal Outreach
- Cuts Alert
- How We Keep Track
- Games & Videos
- Jobs & Careers
- Organization
- Business Opportunities
- Meet our Zoo Partners
- Sample your Product

| Regions > Americas > Black-footed ferret

Black-footed ferret

Location at the Zoo: Americas

Region: North America


Class: Mammalia

Order: Carnivora

Family: Mustelidae

Genus: Mustela

Scientific Name: *Mustela nigripes*



Description : Black-footed ferrets can be identified by their black feet, face mask and tail tip. The coat is generally coloured yellow-buff with a paler underside. The forehead, muzzle and throat are nearly white. The top of the head and the middle of the back are brown. Their head and body length ranges from 38-50 cm with a tail from 11-15 cm long. Male ferrets weigh between 950-1100 g and females weigh 750-900 g. There are just three species of ferrets in the world and the black-footed ferret is the only ferret native to North America. In the wild, black-footed ferrets live up to two or three years of age and in captivity they typically live between five and seven years.

Distribution : Before European settlement, this species lived throughout North America's Great Plains. In Canada, black-footed ferrets were historically found in southern Saskatchewan and Alberta. For a few years black-footed ferrets lived strictly in captivity. Today, thanks to ongoing international collaborations, ferrets have been reintroduced to the wild at 17 sites in the US, one in Mexico and now one in Canada.

Habitat : The black-footed ferret inhabits temperate grasslands, also known as the Great Plains. Ferrets live exclusively where prairie dogs, their primary prey species occur.

Food : Prairie dogs make up over 90% of a black-footed ferret's diet. It is believed that ferrets will occasionally eat ground squirrels, other small rodents, cottontail rabbits, and birds.

Explore the zoo > Animals > Americas > Black-Footed Ferret

This is a fact sheet in the same format as those for other zoo animals. This is fine, but gives no hint that this ferret is the subject of a special program.

ZOO Explore the Zoo Support the Zoo Conservation Education & Camps Events

Conservation

- **Get Involved**
- Conservation & Initiatives
- Research & Veterinary
- AAZK
- Partnerships & Affiliates
- Contact Conservation

Black-footed Ferret and Vancouver Island Marmot Outreach Program

Black-footed ferret Teacher Activity Guide

Maternal behaviour and pup development in Vancouver Island marmots

Black-footed ferret fact sheet

Vancouver Island Marmot fact sheet

Educational Outreach Program

Toronto Zoo runs an outreach campaign for its captive breeding and release programs for mammals. We have developed a curriculum based black-footed ferret and Vancouver Island marmot outreach program for grade 4, 5 and 6 students. Topics such as conservation, endangered species, habitat and the food chain are discussed in an interactive and interesting manner. More detailed topics such as genetic diversity and the effect of population bottlenecks on small populations are explained in the form of a game. Students play out the black-footed ferret history equipped with genes in the form of coloured marbles, and see how some of the genes are lost when the population drops to a very low number.

The project will reach school children throughout the Greater Toronto Area, community groups and businesses interested in learning about conservation. As the black-footed ferret and Vancouver Island marmot are both native to Canada, these projects will assist in the national recovery efforts by increasing awareness and support.

Parks Canada and Toronto Zoo teamed up to produce a detailed BFF media interactive game which is now being showcased in the Toronto Zoo Conservation Connections building and can be viewed on the [Parks Canada](#) website. Additionally, a video demonstrating the science involved in breeding ferrets will be produced at the Toronto Zoo. Copies of this video will be distributed to community groups and classrooms across Canada and demonstrates the importance of captive breeding and recovery initiatives for


Conservation > Get Involved > Black-Footed Ferret and Vancouver Island Marmot Educational Outreach Programs


This page discusses the captive breeding program in the context of its educational outreach component and includes educational resources for teachers.

Conservation


- Get Involved
- Conservation & Initiatives
- Research & Veterinary
- AAZK
- Partnerships & Affiliates
- Contact Conservation

Black-footed Ferret Conservation Recovery Program

 Black-footed ferret Teacher Activity Guide

 Black-footed ferret fact sheet

The Toronto Zoo has been involved in the recovery program for the endangered black-footed ferret (*Mustela nigripes*) since 1992. Since then, the Toronto Zoo has produced hundreds of kits and animals have been reintroduced to the United States, Mexico and Canada. Genetically valuable animals are kept in the Species Survival Plan program for future breeding. This program is a high priority for the Zoo as we attempt to re-establish black-footed ferret populations across North America. Autumn 2009 marked the first Canadian release of black-footed ferrets into the wild – the crowning achievement of the Canadian recovery program.



In Canada, the black-footed ferret historically ranged in the western prairies (southern Alberta to southern Saskatchewan) but was listed as extirpated in 1978 by COSEWIC. The area in and around Grasslands National Park, Saskatchewan contains the largest black-tailed prairie dog population in Canada and the prairie dog is protected within the park. As the prairie dog is the primary food for black-footed ferrets, this site is ideal for ferret reintroductions.

In 2003, the Toronto Zoo spearheaded black-footed ferret recovery in Canada and in 2004, in partnership with Parks Canada, US Fish & Wildlife Service, the Calgary Zoo, private stakeholders and other organizations, a joint Black-footed Ferret/Black-tailed Prairie Dog Recovery Team was established to set up the reintroduction of black-footed ferrets into Canada. As a result of extensive planning, 34 ferrets were released on to Canadian soil on October 2, 2009. Grasslands National Park now supports Canada's first wild population of black-footed ferrets since they disappeared from the country several decades ago.

Conservation > Conservation & Initiatives > Captive Breeding and Reintroduction > Black-Footed Ferret Captive Breeding

This page includes more detailed information about the captive breeding program, including contact information for prospective donors and volunteers (why is this information here, and not in the "Get Involved" section?). There is no mention of or link to the educational component of the project, although it includes links to the same educational resources as the previous page.

toronto ZOO

Explore the Zoo Support the Zoo Conservation Education & Camps Events

Now

Explore the Zoo

- Vision Statement
- Visitor Information
- Accessibility
- Accommodations
- Admission
- Baby Gorilla
- CityPASS
- Directions & TTC
- Discovery Zone
- First Nation Art Garden
- Food Services
- Giant Pandas
- Hours
- Map of Zoo
- Meet the Keeper
- Photo Tips
- Polar Bear Cub
- Retail & Rides Locations
- Special Needs & Services
- Tundra Trek
- Animals
- Games & Videos
- Jobs & Careers
- Organization
- Business Opportunities
- Meet our Zoo Partners
- Sample your Product

Black-footed ferrets Canadian release

NORTH AMERICA

..... Historic Range
● Current Reintroduction Sites
★ Canadian Release Site

Why are black-footed ferrets (*Mustela nigripes*) endangered?

The arrival of European settlers resulted in a nearly complete conversion of grasslands to agricultural fields. Today urban and suburban development is also threatening black-footed ferret habitat. Furthermore, the extensive persecution of prairie dogs (ferret's primary prey) by ranchers has dramatically reduced the food supply for ferrets. Ferrets are also very susceptible to a number of diseases including rabies, canine distemper, and human influenza.

We found this page through the site's search function, and have not yet figured out how to navigate to it (the URL is <http://www.torontozoo.com/ExploreTheZoo/bff.asp>). It gives additional information about why the black-footed ferret is endangered, and why we should care.

None of these pages link together, potentially leading to many lost opportunities to publicize the zoo's captive breeding efforts, educate children, and secure donations and volunteers. In addition, repeating the same content in different ways makes content creation less efficient and more time-consuming.

Recommendations

Content on the same topic should be integrated. This might mean consolidating all the information on a single page, or it might mean that a main page with a basic overview includes links to additional

information, whose purpose is clearly indicated by the link name and/or annotation. Each related page should *always* be available on every other page. In the case of the black-footed ferret, the main page might be the animal fact sheet, which includes links entitled "Support the the black-footed ferret captive breeding program" and "Learn about the black-footed ferret educational outreach program." Each of these pages will include a link back to the original fact sheet, as well as links to the other related pages. All information about black-footed ferrets that is duplicated on each page can now be removed or consolidated, because it will all be easily available to the website visitor according to their needs.

Summary of Recommendations

The zoo needs online content that supports its mission to engage and educate the public about conservation issues. To sum up the recommendations described above, we would suggest:

- A process by which all content is regularly reviewed, and out-of-date content is either updated or archived. The content management system team can discuss ways to automate this process.
- Create guidelines for content creators that specify the audience, structure and tone for each content type. All new content should be checked against these guidelines before it can be posted, at which time any spelling and grammar errors can also be fixed.
- Headings should be meaningful to site visitors, and should be clearly relevant to *all* of the associated content. Acronyms should be avoided in titles, and only used in content if they have first been clearly explained.
- The description of each research project should clearly highlight items of interest for particular audiences. For example: opportunities to volunteer; opportunities to donate; educational resources and services. Next steps for prospective participants should be very clear.
- Based on the results of the content audit, all pages relating to the same content should be reviewed with an eye to ensuring that content is not repeated, and pages related to the same content are clearly findable in relation to one another.

