**Undergraduate Research Opportunity (WILD 490R): Impacts of plague mitigation on the black-tailed prairie dog**

The Becker Lab is looking for 1 or more upper-level undergraduate students who are interested in research opportunities for course credit in Fall 2024 to contribute to our project on black-tailed prairie dogs in northeastern Montana. The student/s will work with our team on our ongoing efforts to enhance populations of black-tailed prairie dogs by integrating advanced technological solutions into research, management, and conservation efforts. The project is being led by PhD student Itai Namir and the student/s will primarily work with Itai and be overseen by Justine Becker.

Prairie dogs are considered keystone species, making them important for the survival and existence of hundreds of other prairie species including the Endangered black-footed ferret. Unfortunately, black-tailed prairie dogs have been eliminated from the majority of their range, and today exist across 2% of their historic range despite their crucial role in grassland systems. They are highly susceptible to Sylvatic plague (*Yersinia pestis*), an invasive disease introduced to North America. Today, plague is considered the number one threat to prairie dogs. Results from this study will be used to inform plague mitigation strategies aimed at conserving populations of prairie dogs.

The primary responsibilities of the student/s will be assisting with research tasks and data processing throughout the Fall semester in 2024, including behavioral annotations of camera trap videos. The research will take place on campus. The student/s will also have the opportunity to complete a research project designed to quantify the behavior of prairie dogs using camera data.

For more information or to express your interest in the research opportunity, please contact Itai Namir (itainamir@montana.edu) or Justine Becker (justine.becker1@montana.edu) with the subject line “Prairie dog research opportunity”.