

COSEWIC Annual Report

presented to

**The Minister of Environment
and Climate Change**

and

**The Canadian Endangered
Species Conservation Council
(CESCC)**

from

**The Committee on the Status
of Endangered Wildlife in Canada
(COSEWIC)**

2015-2016

COSEWIC
Committee on the Status
of Endangered Wildlife
in Canada



COSEPAC
Comité sur la situation
des espèces en péril
au Canada

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ITEM I – COSEWIC ACTIVITIES

1. Wildlife Species Assessment Meetings

Section 15 (1) of the *Species at Risk Act* states: “The functions of COSEWIC are to (a) assess the status of each wildlife species considered by COSEWIC to be at risk and, as part of the assessment, identify existing and potential threats to the species and

- (i) classify the species as extinct, extirpated, endangered, threatened or of special concern,
- (ii) indicate that COSEWIC does not have sufficient information to classify the species, or
- (iii) indicate that the species is not currently at risk”.

Under Canada’s *Species at Risk Act* (SARA), the foremost function of COSEWIC is to “assess the status of each wildlife species considered by COSEWIC to be at risk and, as part of the assessment, identify existing and potential threats to the wildlife species”.

COSEWIC held two Wildlife Species Assessment Meetings in this reporting year (October, 2015 to September, 2016) from November 22 to November 26, 2015 and from April 24 to April 29, 2016. During the current reporting period, COSEWIC assessed the status or reviewed the classification of 45 wildlife species.

The wildlife species assessment results for the 2015-2016 reporting period include the following:

<u>Extinct:</u>	0
<u>Extirpated:</u>	0
<u>Endangered:</u>	13
<u>Threatened:</u>	13
<u>Special Concern:</u>	12
<u>Data Deficient:</u>	0
<u>Not at Risk:</u>	7
Total:	45

Of the 45 wildlife species examined, COSEWIC reviewed the classification of 25 that had been previously assessed. The review of classification for 8 of those wildlife species resulted in a confirmation of the same risk status as the previous assessment (see Table 1a).

Table 1a. Confirmation of status for wildlife species previously assessed:

EXTIRPATED	ENDANGERED	THREATENED	SPECIAL CONCERN
_____	Eastern Persius Duskywing	Eastern Yellow-bellied Racer	Harbour Porpoise (Pacific Ocean population)
	Pacific Water Shrew	Gray Fox	Northern Rubber Boa
	Sockeye Salmon (Sakinaw population)		River Redhorse

Data Deficient and Not at Risk: COSEWIC assessed six wildlife species in April 2016 that were not assigned into risk categories. Classification was reviewed by COSEWIC for one wildlife species previously designated as Special Concern by COSEWIC and is on Schedule 1 of SARA. COSEWIC assessed the Pygmy Pocket Moss as Not at Risk. Two new wildlife species were assessed as Not at Risk: Porter's Twisted Moss and Unisexual *Ambystoma* (Blue-spotted Salamander dependent population). Three wildlife species were assessed as Not at Risk after a split of original respective assessed units: Northern Sunfish (Saskatchewan – Nelson River populations), River Darter (Southern Hudson Bay - James Bay populations), and River Darter (Saskatchewan - Nelson River populations).

COSEWIC assessed one wildlife species in November 2015 that was not assigned into a risk category. Classification was reviewed by COSEWIC for one wildlife species previously classified as of Special Concern on Schedule 3 of SARA, resulting in a change of status category. COSEWIC assessed the Giant Helleborine as Not at Risk.

With the transmission of this report, COSEWIC provides assessments (see Table 1b) of 30 wildlife species newly classified as Extirpated, Endangered, Threatened and of Special Concern to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to consider whether to recommend to the Governor in Council (GIC) that they be added to Schedule 1 of SARA.

Table 1b. Newly classified wildlife species for consideration of listing on Schedule 1 of SARA:

EXTIRPATED	ENDANGERED	THREATENED	SPECIAL CONCERN
	Colicroot	Bear's-foot Sanicle	Baikal Sedge
	Hoptree Borer	Blue-grey Taildropper	Common Hoptree
	Nine-spotted Lady Beetle	Lake Huron Grasshopper	Flooded Jellyskin
	Nuttall's Sheep Moth	Little Quarry Lake Benthic Threespine Stickleback	Lake Erie Watersnake
	River Darter (Great Lakes – Upper St. Lawrence populations)	Little Quarry Lake Limnetic Threespine Stickleback	Mountain Crab-eye
	Shortface Lanx	Louisiana Waterthrush	Northern Sunfish (Great Lakes – Upper St. Lawrence populations)
	Spiny Softshell	McCown's Longspur	Pygmy Slug
	Spotted Gar	Peary Caribou	Rainbow
	Unisexual <i>Ambystoma</i> (Jefferson Salamander dependent population)	Red Crossbill <i>percna</i> subspecies	Sheathed Slug
	Unisexual <i>Ambystoma</i> (Small-mouthed Salamander dependent population)	Western Yellow-bellied Racer	
		Wrinkled Shingle Lichen	

Detailed results of COSEWIC's status assessment of each wildlife species, including the reasons for each designation, can be found on the COSEWIC website at the following address: http://www.cosewic.gc.ca/eng/sct0/index_e.cfm?#results.

Status reports containing the information on which COSEWIC's status assessments are based will be available on the SARA Public Registry at the following address: www.sararegistry.gc.ca.

As of April 2016, COSEWIC's assessments include 724 wildlife species in various risk categories, including 320 Endangered, 172 Threatened, 209 Special Concern, and 23 Extirpated (i.e. no longer found in the wild in Canada). In addition, 15 wildlife species have been assessed as Extinct.

As of April 2016, a total of 54 wildlife species have also been designated as Data Deficient and 177 have been assessed and assigned Not at Risk status.

2. Important Notes Regarding Status Assessments

Section 27 of SARA states that the Governor in Council may, on the recommendation of the Minister, by order amend the List in accordance with subsections (1.1) and (1.2) by adding a wildlife species, by reclassifying a listed wildlife species or by removing a listed wildlife species, and the Minister may, by order, amend the List in a similar fashion in accordance with subsection (3).

During the period covered in this report COSEWIC did not inform the Minister about any details related to status assessments. It did however write and post two clarification notes on the SARA Public Registry. The first was in response to a request from Environment and Climate Change Canada to provide further information on the nature of designatable units and their geographic distribution in the Western Chorus Frog. The second was a request from Fisheries and Oceans Canada to clarify how COSEWIC would treat farmed-raised Atlantic salmon in designatable unit identification, particularly for the linner Bay of Fundy population.

3. Election – Chair of COSEWIC

Section 19 of SARA states that “COSEWIC may make rules respecting the holding of meetings and the general conduct of its activities, including rules respecting (a) the selection of persons to chair its meetings; “

COSEWIC re-elected Dr. Eric B. (Rick) Taylor for a further term of office as Chair of COSEWIC for the period September 1, 2016 to August 31, 2018.

4. Other Wildlife Species Assessment Activities

Emergency Assessments

Section 29 of SARA provides for the listing of a wildlife species based on an imminent threat to the survival of the wildlife species under an emergency basis. Section 30 (1) of SARA states that COSEWIC is to prepare a status report on the wildlife species and, within one year after the making of the order, COSEWIC must, in a report in writing to the Minister, (a) confirm the classification of the wildlife species; (b) recommend to the Minister that the species be reclassified; or (c) recommend to the Minister that the wildlife species be removed from the List.

During the period covered in this report COSEWIC did not receive any requests for Emergency Assessment.

5. Wildlife Species Assessments returned by the Governor in Council (GIC) to COSEWIC for further information or consideration

Section 27 (1.1) (c) of SARA provides for the Governor in Council to, on the recommendation of the Minister, refer an assessment of the status of a wildlife species back to COSEWIC for further information or consideration.

During the period covered in this report no wildlife species were returned by (GIC) by COSEWIC.

6. Wildlife Species Selected for Status Report Preparation

Section 15.1 (b) of SARA states that one of the functions of COSEWIC is to “determine when species are to be assessed, with priority given to those more likely to become extinct”.

Following COSEWIC's process for prioritizing new wildlife species for assessment, nine wildlife species from COSEWIC's Species Specialist Subcommittees' candidate lists were chosen by the Committee for status report commissioning in 2017. Please see http://www.cosewic.gc.ca/htmlDocuments/CandidateSpecies_List_e.pdf for a list of those prioritized candidate wildlife species.

7. COSEWIC Subcommittees

Section 18 (1) of SARA requires COSEWIC to establish subcommittees of specialists to assist in the preparation and review of status reports on wildlife species considered to be at risk, including subcommittees specializing in groups of wildlife species and a subcommittee specializing in aboriginal traditional knowledge.

Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge Subcommittee

COSEWIC's Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge Subcommittee is responsible for ensuring that Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge (ATK) is appropriately accounted for in COSEWIC's assessment process. The Subcommittee consists of members appointed by the Federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change. The Co-chairs of the ATK Subcommittee are members of COSEWIC and provide COSEWIC with their expertise on ATK.

There were no ATK source reports, which compile all potential sources of documented ATK for a given wildlife species, completed during the period covered in this report. An ATK assessment report, which summarizes the relevant content of documented ATK sources, was completed for the Polar Bear. In addition, an ATK Gathering Project was finalized for the Chinook (Okanagan population). These reports were prepared to inform wildlife species status assessments. The Subcommittee continues with plans related to an ATK Gathering Project for Narwhal.

COSEWIC extends its sincere gratitude to the members of the ATK Subcommittee for their ongoing commitment to ensuring COSEWIC assessments are informed by the best possible information.

Species Specialist Subcommittees

COSEWIC's Species Specialists Subcommittees (SSCs) provide taxonomic expertise to the Committee. Each SSC is typically led by two Co-chairs and members are recognized Canadian experts in the taxonomic group in question, able to demonstrate high standards of education, experience, and expertise and have a demonstrated knowledge of wildlife conservation. Members are drawn from universities, provincial wildlife agencies, museums, Conservation Data Centres, and other sources of expertise on Canadian wildlife species. SSC members support the Co-chairs in developing candidate lists of wildlife species to be considered for assessment, commissioning status reports for priority wildlife species, reviewing reports for scientific accuracy and completeness, and proposing to COSEWIC a status for each wildlife species. Currently, COSEWIC has 10 SSCs: Amphibians and Reptiles, Arthropods, Birds, Freshwater Fishes, Marine Fishes, Marine Mammals, Molluscs, Mosses and Lichens, Terrestrial Mammals and Vascular Plants.

For more information please see http://www.cosewic.gc.ca/eng/sct4/index_e.cfm

SSC meetings take place annually in different locations in Canada or by teleconference held once or twice a year. Observers are invited to attend and public information sessions may also take place.

Aside from their continued work to ensure that high quality status reports are brought to each COSEWIC Wildlife Species Assessment Meeting, SSCs also periodically undertake special projects aimed at assisting the work of the SSCs. For example, the Freshwater Fishes SC had initiated an inland waters Cisco wildlife species flock analysis in the fall of 2014 in order to address the taxonomic issues with respect to this group of whitefishes and in order to plan a larger Cisco designatable unit special report planned for the coming year. The results of this designatable unit report will be the basis for future Cisco assessments as it relates to the Shortjaw Cisco, Upper Great Lakes Kiyi and Blackfin Cisco status reports. A Call for Bids was posted in 2016 for an author of this report. The Amphibians & Reptiles SC's faunal provinces map was updated and will be presented to COSEWIC for its approval at its November Wildlife Species Assessment Meeting. A member of the Mosses & Lichens SC continues to work on the national ranking exercise for lichens (with input from the provinces) which will help with the candidate list for that SSC.

COSEWIC is extremely grateful for the important work of the SSC members who provide their time and expertise on a volunteer basis.

8. COSEWIC Operations and Procedures

Section 19 of SARA states that COSEWIC “may make rules respecting the holding of meetings and the general conduct of its activities.”

COSEWIC is guided in its activities by an Operations & Procedures (O & P) Manual that is reviewed annually by COSEWIC’s O & P Subcommittee, who recommend any necessary changes to the Committee for their approval. During this reporting period, the COSEWIC O & P Manual was updated to reflect some minor changes in COSEWIC’s procedures. The most notable changes are as follows:

- Updated Guideline for the Call for and the Evaluation of Expressions of Interest in COSEWIC Membership as SSC Co-chair (Appendix B8)
- Updated Guidelines for Developing, and Documenting the COSEWIC Candidate List (Appendix E1)

9. Procedural Working Groups

Section 18 (1) of SARA also allows COSEWIC to establish subcommittees to advise it or to exercise or perform any of its functions.

Procedural working groups are essential to ensuring COSEWICs operations and procedures are efficient, effective and clearly followed, thus maintaining the quality and consistency of COSEWIC status assessments and processes.

a) Press Release Working Group

This Working Group was active before and during each Wildlife Species Assessment Meeting on the production of each press release.

b) Criteria Working Group

An updated version of the Threats Assessment Worksheet (Threats Calculator) was provided which included new guidelines (Threats Assessment Instructions) and a summary of changes to the IUCN Redlist.

These proposed changes will be submitted for approval/inclusion in the O & P Manual at the November COSEWIC Wildlife Species Assessment Meeting.

c) New Wildlife Species Priority Setting Working Group

COSEWIC adopted a new way to assign priorities to candidate wildlife species using RAMAS software and this process is now reflected in the O & P Manual.

The Working Group will work on guidelines for the reassessment of wildlife species with highest priority given to wildlife species perceived to be worse off and lowest priority to those wildlife species likely to stay at the same status. The draft guidelines will be prepared for discussion at the November COSEWIC Wildlife Species Assessment Meeting.

d) Wildlife Species Bundling Working Group

A presentation was made at the Spring 2016 COSEWIC Species Assessment Meeting by Don Gayton on “Regional Ecosystem Threat Assessment Report, South Okanagan, British Columbia” which was a pilot study to inform the assessments and reassessments of wildlife species in that area.

The draft report, which was prepared by Don Gayton, following review by the Working Group, was sent for jurisdictional review.

e) Interpreting “Wild by Nature” Working Group

This Working Group continued its work in providing a COSEWIC definition of “Wild by Nature” which occurs in the definition of “Wildlife Species” in the *Species at Risk Act*.

At the November COSEWIC Wildlife Species Assessment Meeting, a number of documents were tabled (a proposed definition of Wild by Nature; a concept document outlining how the proposed definition could be integrated into the existing Manipulated Population Guidelines and case studies for American Ginseng, Blue Ash, Northern Abalone, Salmon and Trout). The Working Group intends to rewrite the Manipulated Population Guidelines and once they have a draft prepared, will submit it for a legal review.

f) Conflict of Interest Guidelines Working Group

A working group was formed to provide some guidance for Conflict of Interest in the O & P Manual. Feedback from members was requested to form a basis for further discussion at the November COSEWIC Wildlife Species Assessment Meeting.

g) Communications Strategy Working Group

A working group was struck to look at a general communication strategy and tactics the committee should be employing.

h) COSEWIC Data Working Group

A working group was struck to discuss and address matters relate to COSEWIC data.

10. COSEWIC Communications

Insofar as resources allow, COSEWIC and its Chairs over the years have made every effort to inform governments and the public on the work of the Committee.

During the current reporting period, COSEWIC released two press releases outlining the results of the Fall 2015 and the Spring 2016 Wildlife Species Assessment Meetings. These releases can be found on the COSEWIC website at www.cosewic.gc.ca.

In addition, the Chair of COSEWIC attended the following meetings /gave presentations on the work of COSEWIC etc.:

- Made a presentation to an Assistant Deputy Minister level Federal/Territorial Steering Group who advise ministers on conservation issues. It was hosted by Sue Milburn-Hopwood, Assistant Deputy Minister, Canadian Wildlife Service. The Chair spoke about how COSEWIC decides what wildlife species to assess and the mandate of the committee.
- Made presentations to University of Toronto Professional Master's Program on designatable units and to University of British Columbia classes in Human Ecology and Applied Fish Biology on the nature and structure of COSEWIC in general.

ITEM II – COSEWIC MEMBERSHIP

Section 16 of SARA states that (1) COSEWIC is to be composed of members appointed by the Minister after consultation with the Canadian Endangered Species Conservation Council and with any experts and expert bodies, such as the Royal Society of Canada, that the Minister considers to have relevant expertise. (2) Each member must have expertise drawn from a discipline such as conservation biology, population dynamics, taxonomy, systematics or genetics or from community knowledge or aboriginal traditional knowledge of the conservation of wildlife species. (3) The members are to be appointed to hold office for renewable terms of not more than four years.

1. Membership Changes

For a current list of members on COSEWIC, please see the COSEWIC website.
http://www.cosewic.gc.ca/htmlDocuments/COSEWIC_Members_and_Secretariat_e.pdf

Members from the Federal, Provincial or Territorial jurisdictions are recommended to the Federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change by the jurisdiction.

The Co-chairs of the ATK Subcommittee are elected by the ATK Subcommittee membership and recommended to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change for appointment to COSEWIC. The Co-chairs and all ATK Subcommittee members are nominated by National Aboriginal Organizations with the exception of two of its members to be nominated by the ATK Subcommittee. Subcommittee members are appointed by the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Species Specialist Subcommittee Co-chairs and Non-government Science Members are recommended to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change by COSEWIC following an in-depth review process.

As the individual who was appointed as Co-chair of the Marine Fishes Specialist Subcommittee resigned, another Call for Membership for that position was posted from June 3 to July 2, 2015. After the call was closed, a Selection Committee comprised of both COSEWIC members and the Marine Fishes Species Specialist Subcommittee members evaluated the applications following procedures for member selection set out in COSEWIC's O & P Manual. The Chair of the Selection Committee prepared a report summarizing the strengths and weaknesses of the applicants. COSEWIC members then evaluated the candidates and a letter was sent on November 18, 2015 to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change Canada providing the nominee's name and curriculum vitae. CESSC members were copied on this correspondence.

A call for six Species Specialist Subcommittee Co-chairs and one Non-government Science member was posted on the COSEWIC website between January 27 and February 24, 2016. Once the call was closed, Selection Committees comprised of both COSEWIC members and Species Specialist Subcommittee members evaluated the applications following procedures for member selection set out in COSEWIC's O & P Manual. The Chairs of each Selection Committee prepared reports summarizing the strengths and weaknesses of the applicants, which were discussed at the Spring 2016 Wildlife Species Assessment meeting. Candidates were ranked by COSEWIC members and their names and CVs were provided to the Federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change in May 2016 for consideration of appointment. Members of CESSC were copied on this correspondence.

ITEM III – WILDLIFE SPECIES ASSESSMENTS

In accordance with Section 25(1) of SARA when COSEWIC completes an assessment of the status of a wildlife species, it must provide the Minister and the Canadian Endangered Species Conservation Council with a copy of the assessment and the reasons for it. A copy of the assessment must also be included on the public registry.

Wildlife Species assessed since the last annual report, including status assigned, reasons for designation (including uncertainties if applicable) and COSEWIC criteria with alphanumeric codes can be found on the COSEWIC website at the following address: http://www.cosewic.gc.ca/eng/sct0/index_e.cfm?#results.

The status reports will be available in English and French on the Public Registry at the following address: <http://www.sararegistry.gc.ca/>

ITEM IV – WILDLIFE SPECIES ASSESSED BY COSEWIC SINCE ITS INCEPTION

In accordance with Section 25(2) of SARA, COSEWIC must annually prepare a complete list of every wildlife species it has assessed since the coming into force of that section and a copy of that list must be included in the public registry.

The Canadian Species at Risk publication is available on the 'Species at Risk Public Registry.

http://www.registrelep.gc.ca/sar/assessment/wildlife_species_assessed_e.cfm

It includes all wildlife species assessed by COSEWIC since its inception up to and including October 2016.