

COSEWIC
Rapid Review of Classification

on the

Northwestern Pond Turtle
Actinemys marmorata

in Canada

EXTIRPATED
2023

COSEWIC
Committee on the Status
of Endangered Wildlife
in Canada



COSEPAC
Comité sur la situation
des espèces en péril
au Canada

The Rapid Review of Classification process is used by COSEWIC for wildlife species that have not changed status since the previous COSEWIC assessment. Readily available information from the previous status report or status appraisal summary, recovery documents, recovery teams, jurisdictions, conservation data centres, and species experts was initially reviewed by the relevant Species Specialist Subcommittees before being reviewed by COSEWIC. The following is a summary of the relevant information.

COSEWIC Rapid Review of Classification are working documents used in assigning the status of wildlife species suspected of being at risk in Canada. This document may be cited as follows:

COSEWIC. 2023. COSEWIC Rapid Review of Classification on the Northwestern Pond Turtle *Actinemys marmorata* in Canada. Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada. Ottawa. ix pp. (<https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/species-risk-public-registry.html>).

Production note:

COSEWIC would like to acknowledge David Fraser, with support from Environment and Climate Change Canada, for preparing the Rapid Review of Classification on the Northwestern Pond Turtle, *Actinemys marmorata*. This report was overseen and edited by Tom Herman, Co-chair of the COSEWIC Amphibians and Reptiles Specialist Subcommittee.

For additional copies contact:

COSEWIC Secretariat
c/o Canadian Wildlife Service
Environment and Climate Change Canada
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0H3

Tel.: 819-938-4125

Fax: 819-938-3984

E-mail: ec.cosepac-cosewic.ec@canada.ca
www.cosewic.ca

Également disponible en français sous le titre Examen rapide de la classification du COSEPAC pour la Tortue de l'Ouest (*Actinemys marmorata*) au Canada.

© His Majesty the King in Right of Canada, 2023.
Catalogue No. CW69-18/22-2023E-PDF
ISBN 978-0-660-49693-1



COSEWIC Assessment Summary

Assessment Summary – May 2023

Common name

Northwestern Pond Turtle

Scientific name

Actinemys marmorata

Status

Extirpated

Reason for designation

This freshwater turtle has only been reported in Canada from extreme southwestern British Columbia, where it was first recorded in the 1930s. Although still present in small and declining numbers in adjacent Washington state, this species has not been confirmed in the wild in Canada since 1961.

Occurrence

British Columbia

Status history

Designated Extirpated in May 2002. Status re-examined and confirmed in May 2012 and May 2023.



COSEWIC Rapid Review of Classification

PREFACE

The Northwestern Pond Turtle (*Actinemys marmorata*) was known as the Pacific Pond Turtle (*A. marmorata*) in the most recent status report (COSEWIC 2012), and as the Pacific Pond Turtle (*Clemmys marmorata*) in the previous status report (COSEWIC 2002). Recent changes are based on the taxonomic revision of *Clemmys* sensu lato outlined by Crother (2017).

The Northwestern Pond Turtle has only been recorded in Canada from southwestern British Columbia. The earliest verified sightings were in the 1930s, from Burnaby Lake (McTaggart-Cowan 1938) and Vancouver (Carl 1944 in Cook et al. 2005) on the Lower Mainland. Three additional occurrences were reported from 1956 to 1961 in Chadsey Creek and Little Sumas Lake in Chilliwack, and in Nathan Slough near Crescent Island in Langley (Cook et al. 2005). A sighting at Burnaby Lake in 1966 is thought to be of an introduced Northwestern Pond Turtle (Cook et al. 2005). It has not been reported in Canada in the wild since 1961, despite numerous herpetological surveys and searches by naturalists.

Archaeological evidence of the Northwestern Pond Turtle's presence is sparse throughout the Pacific Northwest, suggesting that the populations in Washington state and British Columbia have always been small (Fisher 2018). The closest archaeological find to Canada is a plastron fragment from a midden on Whidbey Island, Washington, dated 2400 BP (Fisher 2018).

Apart from anecdotal reports of introductions in Burnaby Lake from 1961 to 1966 (Cook et al. 2005), there is no concrete evidence confirming that the Northwestern Pond Turtle has been established as an introduced species in British Columbia (BCMOE 2012).

The species is now rare and declining in adjacent Washington state (S1, Critically Imperiled), and is assessed as G3 (Vulnerable) by NatureServe (n.d.). There are casual records as recently as 2020 in the Puget Sound area, within 140 km of the Canadian border, although the northernmost research-grade record in Washington (July 2022) is just north of the Oregon border (iNaturalist, accessed May 2023).

COSEWIC (2002) concluded that the Northwestern Pond Turtle is native to Canada based on appropriate climatic conditions in southwestern British Columbia that provide suitable habitat; unverified mid-nineteenth century records of the species in that area; its previous common occurrence in Washington adjacent to the Canadian border; and the rapid widespread decline in numbers in the 20th century in the northern part of its range in adjacent US states.

This report thus concurs with the conclusion in COSEWIC (2002, 2012) that the Northwestern Pond Turtle is native to Canada, with no confirmed records in the wild in this country since 1961.

Status History

Designated Extirpated in May 2002. Status re-examined and confirmed in May 2012 and May 2023.

Updated map

Required Not required

Explanation / updated map provided

Not required. See previous assessment (COSEWIC 2012).

TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Complete Technical Summary not required for Extirpated species assessed by Rapid Review of Classification.

Actinemys marmorata

Northwestern Pond Turtle

Tortue de l'Ouest

Range of occurrence in Canada (province/territory/ocean): British Columbia

Status and Reasons for Designation:

Status: Extirpated	Alpha-numeric codes: Not applicable
Reasons for designation: This freshwater turtle has only been reported in Canada from extreme southwestern British Columbia, where it was first recorded in the 1930s. Although still present in small and declining numbers in adjacent Washington state, this species has not been confirmed in the wild in Canada since 1961.	

Applicability of Criteria

Criterion A (Decline in Total Number of Mature Individuals): Not applicable
Criterion B (Small Distribution Range and Decline or Fluctuation): Not applicable
Criterion C (Small and Declining Number of Mature Individuals): Not applicable
Criterion D (Very Small or Restricted Population): Not applicable
Criterion E (Quantitative Analysis): Not applicable

AUTHORITIES CONTACTED

Not applicable.

INFORMATION SOURCES

- British Columbia Ministry of Environment (BCMOE). 2012. Recovery plan for the Western Pond Turtle (*Actinemys marmorata*) in British Columbia. Surrey, British Columbia. 27 pp. Website: <https://a100.gov.bc.ca/pub/eirs/lookupDocument.do?fromStatic=true&repository=BDP&documentId=11470> [accessed May 2021].
- COSEWIC. 2002. COSEWIC assessment and status report on the Pacific Pond Turtle (*Clemmys marmorata*) in Canada. Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada. Ottawa. vi + 17 pp. <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/species-risk-public-registry/cosewic-assessments-status-reports/pacific-pond-turtle.html>
- COSEWIC. 2012. COSEWIC status appraisal summary on the Pacific Pond Turtle *Actinemys marmota* in Canada. Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada. Ottawa. xii pp. Website: <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/species-risk-public-registry/cosewic-assessments-status-reports/pacific-pond-turtle-appraisal-summary-2012.html> [accessed May 2021].
- Carl, G.C. 1944. The Reptiles of British Columbia. 3rd edition. Revised. Royal British Columbia Museum Handbook. Victoria, British Columbia.
- Cook, F.R., R.W. Campbell, and G.R. Ryder. 2005. Origin and current status of the Pacific Pond Turtle (*Actinemys marmorata*) in British Columbia. *Wildlife Afield* 2(2):58–63.
- Crother, B.I. 2017. Scientific and Standard English Names of Amphibians and Reptiles of North America North of Mexico, with Comments Regarding Confidence in our Understanding. 8th edition. Herpetological Circular No. 43, Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles, Shoreview, Minnesota, USA. 102 pp.
- Fisher, J. 2018. Archaeology and Biogeography of the Western Pond Turtle (*Actinemys marmorata*) in the Puget Sound Region. *Ethnobiology Letters* 9(2).
- iNaturalist. 2023. Northern Pacific Pond Turtle *Actinemys marmorata* Observations. Website: https://www.inaturalist.org/observations?place_id=any&subview=map&taxon_id=39768 [accessed May 2023].
- McTaggart-Cowan, I. 1938. Distribution of turtles in coastal British Columbia. *Copeia* 2:91.
- NatureServe. n.d. Northwestern Pond Turtle *Actinemys marmorata*. Website: https://explorer.natureserve.org/Taxon/ELEMENT_GLOBAL.2.103571/Actinemys_marmorata [accessed May 2023].

RAMAS results graphic output:

RAMAS text output:

- RAMAS not required for extirpated species.

Writer of Rapid Review of Classification:

- David F. Fraser, 2021.



COSEWIC HISTORY

The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) was created in 1977 as a result of a recommendation at the Federal-Provincial Wildlife Conference held in 1976. It arose from the need for a single, official, scientifically sound, national listing of wildlife species at risk. In 1978, COSEWIC designated its first species and produced its first list of Canadian species at risk. Species designated at meetings of the full committee are added to the list. On June 5, 2003, the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) was proclaimed. SARA establishes COSEWIC as an advisory body ensuring that species will continue to be assessed under a rigorous and independent scientific process.

COSEWIC MANDATE

The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) assesses the national status of wild species, subspecies, varieties, or other designatable units that are considered to be at risk in Canada. Designations are made on native species for the following taxonomic groups: mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fishes, arthropods, molluscs, vascular plants, mosses, and lichens.

COSEWIC MEMBERSHIP

COSEWIC comprises members from each provincial and territorial government wildlife agency, four federal entities (Canadian Wildlife Service, Parks Canada Agency, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and the Federal Biodiversity Information Partnership, chaired by the Canadian Museum of Nature), three non-government science members and the co-chairs of the species specialist subcommittees and the Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge subcommittee. The Committee meets to consider status reports on candidate species.

DEFINITIONS (2023)

Wildlife Species	A species, subspecies, variety, or geographically or genetically distinct population of animal, plant or other organism, other than a bacterium or virus, that is wild by nature and is either native to Canada or has extended its range into Canada without human intervention and has been present in Canada for at least 50 years.
Extinct (X)	A wildlife species that no longer exists.
Extirpated (XT)	A wildlife species no longer existing in the wild in Canada, but occurring elsewhere.
Endangered (E)	A wildlife species facing imminent extirpation or extinction.
Threatened (T)	A wildlife species likely to become endangered if limiting factors are not reversed.
Special Concern (SC)*	A wildlife species that may become a threatened or an endangered species because of a combination of biological characteristics and identified threats.
Not at Risk (NAR)**	A wildlife species that has been evaluated and found to be not at risk of extinction given the current circumstances.
Data Deficient (DD)***	A category that applies when the available information is insufficient (a) to resolve a species' eligibility for assessment or (b) to permit an assessment of the species' risk of extinction.

* Formerly described as "Vulnerable" from 1990 to 1999, or "Rare" prior to 1990.

** Formerly described as "Not In Any Category", or "No Designation Required."

*** Formerly described as "Indeterminate" from 1994 to 1999 or "ISIBD" (insufficient scientific information on which to base a designation) prior to 1994. Definition of the (DD) category revised in 2006.



Environment and
Climate Change Canada
Canadian Wildlife Service

Environnement et
Changement climatique Canada
Service canadien de la faune

Canada

The Canadian Wildlife Service, Environment and Climate Change Canada, provides full administrative and financial support to the COSEWIC Secretariat.