

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)**

2016-2017

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, 2016 to September, 2017) from November 27 to December 2, 2016 and from April 23 to April 28, 2017. During the current reporting period, COSEWIC assessed the status or reviewed the classification of 73 wildlife species.

The wildlife species assessment results for the 2016-2017 reporting period include the following:

<u>Extinct:</u>	1
<u>Extirpated:</u>	0
<u>Endangered:</u>	22
<u>Threatened:</u>	9
<u>Special Concern:</u>	24
<u>Data Deficient:</u>	6
<u>Not at Risk:</u>	11
Total:	73

Of the 73 wildlife species examined, COSEWIC reviewed the classification of 40 that had been previously assessed. The review of classification for 21 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
	Blanding's Turtle (Nova Scotia population)	Lake Sturgeon (Great Lakes – Upper St. Lawrence populations)	American Hart's–tongue Fern
	Burrowing Owl		Deepwater Sculpin (Great Lakes – Upper St. Lawrence populations)
	Butternut	Westslope Cutthroat Trout (Saskatchewan – Nelson Rivers populations)	
	Gold–edged Gem		Lake Sturgeon (Southern Hudson Bay – James Bay populations)
	Lake Sturgeon (Western Hudson Bay populations)		Long's Bulrush
	Nugget Moss		Nuttall's Cottontail nuttallii subspecies
	Ord's Kangaroo Rat		Rusty Blackbird
	Prothonotary Warbler		
	Shortnose Cisco		Western Painted Turtle (Intermountain – Rocky Mountain population)
	Speckled Dace		
	Western Prairie Fringed Orchid		Westslope Cutthroat Trout (Pacific populations)

Data Deficient and Not at Risk:

COSEWIC assessed seven wildlife species in April 2017 that were not assigned into risk categories. One new wildlife species was assessed as Data Deficient: Columbia Dune Moth. One wildlife species was assessed as Data Deficient after a split of original respective assessed units: Deepwater Sculpin (Southern Hudson Bay – James Bay populations). One new wildlife species was assessed as Not at Risk: Western Banded Tigersnail. Three wildlife species were assessed as Not at Risk after a split of original respective assessed units: Deepwater Sculpin (Saskatchewan – Nelson River populations), Deepwater Sculpin (Western Arctic populations), Deepwater Sculpin (Western Hudson Bay populations).

Classification was reviewed by COSEWIC for two wildlife species previously classified as of Special Concern on Schedule 3 of SARA. A change of status category resulted for Annual Saltmarsh Aster (Not at Risk), and the status of Special Concern was confirmed for Long's Bulrush.

Atlantic Walrus (Nova Scotia – Newfoundland – Gulf of St Lawrence population) was assessed as Extinct. This population was formerly known as Atlantic Walrus, Northwest Atlantic population, and is currently listed as Extirpated on Schedule 1 of SARA.

COSEWIC assessed ten wildlife species in November 2016 that were not assigned into a risk category. Four new wildlife species were assessed as Data Deficient: Leiberg's Fleabane, Pygmy Whitefish (Saskatchewan – Nelson Rivers populations), Pygmy Whitefish (Southwestern Yukon Beringian populations), and Pygmy Whitefish (Yukon River populations). Two new wildlife species were assessed as Not at Risk: Pygmy Whitefish (Pacific populations) and Pygmy Whitefish (Western Arctic populations). Not at Risk status was confirmed for Western Painted Turtle (Prairie / Western Boreal – Canadian Shield population). A change of status category to Not at Risk resulted for two species: Blue Shark (North Atlantic population) (previously Special Concern), and Blue Shark (North Pacific population) (previously Data Deficient).

Classification was reviewed by COSEWIC for one wildlife species previously designated as Endangered by COSEWIC (on Schedule 1 of SARA). COSEWIC assessed the Sonora Skipper as Not at Risk.

With the transmission of this report, COSEWIC provides assessments (see Table 1b) of 34 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
	Blanding's Turtle (Great Lakes / St. Lawrence population) Caribou (Eastern Migratory population) Caribou (Torngat Mountains population) Channel Darter (Lake Erie populations) Channel Darter (Lake Ontario populations) Chinook Salmon (Okanagan population) Eastern Banded Tigersnail Golden-eye Lichen (Great Lakes population) Lake Sturgeon (Saskatchewan – Nelson River populations) Monarch Pink-footed Shearwater	Caribou (Barren-ground population) Coho Salmon (Interior Fraser population) Lark Bunting Mapleleaf (Saskatchewan – Nelson Rivers population) Pygmy Whitefish (Great Lakes – Upper St. Lawrence populations) Spotted Wintergreen Western Painted Turtle (Pacific Coast population)	Anticosti Aster Atlantic Walrus (Central / Low Arctic population) Atlantic Walrus (High Arctic population) Bullsnake Channel Darter (St. Lawrence populations) Deepwater Sculpin (Waterton Lake population) Eastern Pondmussel Evening Grosbeak Golden-eye Lichen (Prairie / Boreal population) Harris's Sparrow Magdalen Islands Grasshopper Mapleleaf (Great Lakes – Upper St. Lawrence population) Pygmy Whitefish (Waterton Lake population) Rusty Cord-moss Shortfin Mako (Atlantic population) Transverse Lady Beetle

Information pertaining to the wildlife species assessed since the last annual report can be found on the SARA Public Registry website at the following address:
http://www.sararegistry.gc.ca/sar/index/default_e.cfm.

For a copy of the assessment details for these wildlife species, including status assigned, reasons for designation (including uncertainties if applicable) and COSEWIC criteria with alphanumeric codes contact the COSEWIC Secretariat: ec.cosepac-cosewic.ec@canada.ca.

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

As of April 2017, COSEWIC's assessments include 735 wildlife species in various risk categories, including 321 Endangered, 172 Threatened, 219 Special Concern, and 23 Extirpated (i.e. no longer found in the wild in Canada). In addition, 16 wildlife species have been assessed as Extinct.

As of April 2017, a total of 58 wildlife species have also been designated as Data Deficient and 186 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 one clarification note on the SARA Public Registry. It was in response to a request from Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) to reconsider the designatable unit (DU) structure for Winter Skate.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. 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, 14 wildlife species from COSEWIC's Species Specialist Subcommittees' candidate lists were chosen by the Committee for status report commissioning in 2018. The following is a list of those prioritized candidate wildlife species:

Taxonomic Group	Scientific Name	Common Name / Pop. name
1. Arthropods	<i>Agrotis arenarius</i>	[a moth]
2. Arthropods	<i>Atlantius davis</i>	Davis' Shieldback
3. Arthropods	<i>Steiroxys strepens</i>	Noisy Shieldback
4. Arthropods	<i>Tricholochmaea sablensis</i>	Sable Island Beetle
5. Birds	<i>Catharus minimus minimus</i>	Gray-cheeked Thrush minimus subspecies
6. Birds	<i>Charadrius vociferus</i>	Killdeer
7. Birds	<i>Arenaria interpres morinella</i>	Ruddy Turnstone, morinella subspecies
8. Fishes (freshwater)	<i>Hybognathus hankinsoni</i>	Brassy Minnow
9. Fishes (marine)	<i>Oncorhynchus mykiss</i>	Steelhead
10. Lichens	<i>Heterodermia hypoleuca</i>	Cupped Fringe Lichen
11. Lichens	<i>Heterodermia squamulosa</i>	Scaly Fringe Lichen
12. Mosses	<i>Forsstroemia trichomitria</i>	Fan Moss
13. Vascular Plants	<i>Draba pycnosperma</i>	Dense Draba
14. Vascular Plants	<i>Cirsium scariosum</i>	Meadow Thistle

6. 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.

The following is a summary of activities over this past year:

- Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge (ATK) Source or Assessment reports were prepared for the Bowhead Whale, Killer Whale, Northern Abalone, Gooseneck Barnacle, Bees and Berries, Short-eared Owl, Western Sage-grouse and Western Chorus Frog. These reports were prepared to inform wildlife species status assessments. Also, an ATK gap analysis was done on Lake Sturgeon. It provided the Subcommittee an opportunity to determine the gaps in certain regions for future reference. Subcommittee continues with plans related to an ATK gathering projects.

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 available 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/default.asp?lang=en&n=E4EBC18F-1>.

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 initiated a cisco species flock analysis in the fall of 2014 to address the taxonomic challenges in this group of whitefishes. A larger Cisco Designatable Unit (DU) Special Report is planned for the coming year. The results of this Special DU report will be the basis for future cisco assessments as it relates to the pending Shortjaw Cisco, Upper Great Lakes Kiyi, and Blackfin Cisco status reports. A contract was issued to write this report and a draft report is expected by the end of 2017. The Marine Mammals SC commissioned a Beluga DU report which was approved by COSEWIC at its November 2016 meeting. A status report on those DUs will be prepared following a future call for bids. The Amphibians & Reptiles SC completed a special project to update the Amphibians and Reptiles Faunal Provinces map which was approved in principle by COSEWIC. Its adoption for new status reports is pending jurisdictional review and possible minor adjustments to faunal unit boundaries with any additional work to be carried out by COSEWIC.

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

7. 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:

An updated Amphibians & Reptiles Faunal Provinces Map was approved in principle.

A Jurisdictional Subcommittee was established as a forum for all COSEWIC jurisdictional members to meet annually and discuss any common issues and potential solutions.

8. 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) Species Prioritization

COSEWIC continues its work in using RAMAS software for its wildlife species prioritization process. RAMAS is a software package which applies the rules of the IUCN Red List Criteria to obtain an assessment, and also includes an algorithm for explicitly handling any data uncertainty.

Dave Fraser, member from British Columbia, has been invaluable in chairing this Species Prioritization Working Group and in holding workshops to assist COSEWIC members and the Species Specialist Subcommittees in using this software for new candidate species.

The working group is starting to have some initial discussions about a possible approach for dealing with the prioritization of reviews of classification for wildlife species. A report for discussion will be tabled for the November 2017 COSEWIC Wildlife Assessment Meeting.

c) Species Bundling

A regional ecosystem threats analysis was carried out for the South Okanagan. The report is currently being finalized by COSEWIC. The Co-chairs of Species Specialist Subcommittees were encouraged to coordinate their assessments and reassessments of species in the South Okanagan. Patrick Nantel, outgoing member of COSEWIC, chaired this working group and is thanked for his good work.

d) IUCN Criteria and Climate Change

A working group was struck to review/summarize the new IUCN guidelines relevant to COSEWIC with regard to climate change, with a view to offering suggestions to COSEWIC report writers and assessors. The working group is currently looking at the NatureServe vulnerability assessment, which includes Canadian models for climate change, and tracking further implications of IUCN guidance changes for COSEWIC assessments.

9. 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 2016 and the Spring 2017 Wildlife Species Assessment Meetings. These press 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.:

- Presentation to the Canadian Wildlife Directors Committee (CWDC) on COSEWIC. The Chair provided an update to the CWDC on COSEWIC activities. In particular, he noted the committee's work towards using a more innovative and objective manner (i.e. species bundling, threats assessments etc.). He also reconfirmed the importance of jurisdictional participation on the committee.
- The Chair had a telephone meeting with two members of the Canadian Association of Forest Owners (May 2017) to explain the COSEWIC process and answer various questions. The members were very appreciative of the opportunity to learn more about COSEWIC.
- The Chair also met with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of ECCC (June 2017) to discuss various COSEWIC procedures and initiatives that COSEWIC is undertaking to improve species assessments.

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/default.asp?lang=en&n=F4011DD6-1>.

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.

A call for six Species Specialist Subcommittee Co-chairs was posted on the COSEWIC website between January 18 and February 15, 2017. 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 2017 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 2017 for consideration of appointment. Members of CESSC were copied on this correspondence.

The ATK Subcommittee membership elected a new ATK Subcommittee Co-chair. The name and CV of the individual were provided to the Federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change in June 2017 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.

Information pertaining to the wildlife species assessed since the last annual report can be found on the SARA Public Registry website at the following address:

http://www.sararegistry.gc.ca/sar/index/default_e.cfm.

For a copy of the assessment details for these species, including status assigned, reasons for designation (including uncertainties if applicable) and COSEWIC criteria with alphanumeric codes contact the COSEWIC Secretariat: ec.cosepac-cosewic.ec@canada.ca.

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.sararegistry.gc.ca/search/advSearchResults_e.cfm?type=doc&lng=e&advkeywords=&docid=33&startdate=&enddate=.

It includes all wildlife species assessed by COSEWIC since its inception up to and including October 2017.