

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)**

2019-2020

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”.

Due to COVID-19 related travel restrictions, COSEWIC was not able to hold its regular face-to-face Wildlife Species Assessment Meeting in the spring of 2020. Instead, the committee held conference calls for three half-days from May 4-6, 2020 to discuss a range of business items.

Therefore, COSEWIC held only one Wildlife Species Assessment Meeting in this reporting year (October 1, 2019 to September 30, 2020) from November 24 to 29, 2019. During this reporting period, COSEWIC assessed the status or reviewed the classification of 21 wildlife species. Plans are being made for virtual Wildlife Species Assessment meetings in the future, for as long as required by COVID-19 related travel restrictions.

The wildlife species assessment results for the 2019-2020 reporting period include the following:

<u>Extinct:</u>	1
<u>Extirpated:</u>	0
<u>Endangered:</u>	9
<u>Threatened:</u>	5
<u>Special Concern:</u>	6
<u>Data Deficient:</u>	0
<u>Not at Risk:</u>	0
Total:	21

Of the 21 wildlife species examined, COSEWIC reviewed the classification of nine wildlife species that had been assessed previously. The review of classification for four 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
	Western Harvest Mouse <i>dychei</i> subspecies	Great Basin Spadefoot	Columbia Sculpin Rocky Mountain Sculpin (Pacific populations)

Data Deficient, Not at Risk, Extinct:

In November 2019, COSEWIC did not assess any wildlife species as Data Deficient or Not at Risk.

Striped Bass (St. Lawrence River population) was assessed as Extinct in November 2019. This wildlife species was assessed previously as Endangered by COSEWIC (November 2012), and is currently listed as Endangered on Schedule 1 of SARA.

Special Note: Rocky Mountain Sculpin (Eastslope populations) was previously assessed by COSEWIC as Threatened (currently Schedule 1 of SARA); in November 2019 this original unit was split into two populations (Missouri River populations and Saskatchewan–Nelson River populations), each receiving a designation of Threatened (Table 1b).

With the transmission of this report, COSEWIC provides assessments (see Table 1b) of 16 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
	Chestnut-collared Longspur Coastrange Sculpin (Cultus Lake population) Gillman's Goldenrod Reversed Haploa Moth Shagreen Slender Yoke-moss Toothed Globe Western Harvest Mouse <i>megalotis</i> subspecies	Carolina Mantleslug Suckley's Cuckoo Bumble Bee Rocky Mountain Sculpin (Missouri River populations) Rocky Mountain Sculpin (Saskatchewan - Nelson River populations)	Manitoba Oakworm Moth Plains Hog-nosed Snake Puvirnituk Mountain Draba Ringed Seal

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:

https://wildlife-species.canada.ca/species-risk-registry/sar/index/default_e.cfm

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 can be found on the COSEWIC website at the following address:

<http://cosewic.ca/index.php/en-ca/assessment-process>

Status reports containing information on COSEWIC's status assessments will be available on the SARA Public Registry at the following address:

https://wildlife-species.canada.ca/species-risk-registry/sar/assessment/status_e.cfm

As of April 2020, COSEWIC's assessments include 810 wildlife species in various risk categories, including 363 Endangered, 190 Threatened, 235 Special Concern, and 22 Extirpated (i.e. no longer found in the wild in Canada). In addition, 19 wildlife species have been assessed as Extinct.

As of April 2020, 59 wildlife species have been designated as Data Deficient and 198 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).

Striped Bass (St. Lawrence River population) was assessed as Extinct in November 2019. This wildlife species was previously assessed as Endangered by COSEWIC (November 2012), and is currently listed as Endangered on Schedule 1 of SARA. COSEWIC recommends that the wildlife species be removed from Schedule 1 of SARA.

Special Note: Rocky Mountain Sculpin (Eastslope populations) was previously assessed by COSEWIC as Threatened (currently Schedule 1 of SARA); in November 2019 this original unit was split into two populations (Missouri River populations and Saskatchewan–Nelson River populations), each receiving a designation of Threatened (Table 1b). COSEWIC recommends that Rocky Mountain Sculpin (Eastslope populations) be removed from Schedule 1 of SARA.

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 species; (b) recommend to the Minister that the species be reclassified; or (c) recommend to the Minister that the species be removed from the List.

No emergency assessments were conducted during the 2019-2020 reporting period.

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 species back to COSEWIC for further information or consideration.

No Wildlife Species Assessments were returned by the Governor in Council during the 2019-2020 reporting period.

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 wildlife 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, 18 wildlife species from COSEWIC's Species Specialist Subcommittees' candidate lists were chosen by the Committee for status report commissioning in 2021. The following is a list of those prioritized candidate wildlife species:

Taxonomic Group	Common Name / Population name	Scientific Name
1. Arthropods	Sable Island Bordered Apamea*	<i>Apamea sordens sableana</i>
2. Arthropods	Simius Roadside Skipper**	<i>Notamblyscirtes simius</i>
3. Arthropods	Lupine Leafroller Moth	<i>Anacamptis lupinella</i>
4. Arthropods	Pahaska Skipper	<i>Hesperia pahaska</i>
5. Arthropods	Paintedhand Mudbug	<i>Lacunicambarus polychromatus</i>
6. Arthropods	Oslar's Roadside Skipper**	<i>Amblyscirtes oslari</i>
7. Birds	Snowy Owl	<i>Bubo scandiacus</i>
8. Birds	Horned Lark***	<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>
9. Lichens	Arctic Orangebush Lichen	<i>Xanthptychia aurantiaca</i>
10. Vascular Plants	Pine Broomrape	<i>Aphyllon pinorum</i>
11. Vascular Plants	Pale Evening Primrose	<i>Oenothera pallida ssp. pallida</i>
12. Vascular Plants	Prairie Rosinweed	<i>Silphium terebinthinaceum</i>

* Will be added to the Sable Island arthropod bundle from last year.

** Part of the Prairie Skipper bundle.

*** COSEWIC Birds Specialist Subcommittee is in the process of identifying the appropriate designatable units for this species

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 integrated 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:

- ATK Source/Assessment Reports were completed for Atlantic Salmon, Atlantic Cod, and Steelhead (all other Designatable Units not yet assessed by COSEWIC).
- ATK Gathering Reports were completed for the Grizzly Bear in the Okanagan and Cascades regions of British Columbia, and Steelhead in the Scw'exmx Tribal Council and Secwepmc traditional territories in the Thompson River watershed area.
- A gathering Workshop was held to gather ATK on BC aquatic and terrestrial species from Indigenous Knowledge holders.
- ATK was integrated into the COSEWIC Status Report on the Steelhead Trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) Thompson River and Chilcotin River populations scheduled for assessment in November 2020.
- A network of Knowledge Holders was identified to assist with species of concerns in Nova Scotia. The ATK Subcommittee plans to expand on this network to include all of Canada.

COSEWIC extends its sincere gratitude to the members of the ATK Subcommittee for their ongoing commitment to ensuring that 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 led by two Co-chairs, and typically 10-12 members who are recognized Canadian experts in the taxonomic group in question, demonstrate high standards of education, experience, and expertise and have a demonstrated knowledge of

wildlife conservation. These volunteer members are drawn from universities, provincial wildlife agencies, museums, Conservation Data Centres, and other sources of expertise on Canadian wildlife species. They 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://cosewic.ca/index.php/en-ca/about-us/cosewic-subcommittees>

SSC meetings typically take place annually in different locations in Canada or by teleconference. Observers are invited to attend meetings, and public information sessions may also take place.

In addition to 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 their work.

The Freshwater Fishes Specialist Subcommittee completed a Cisco species flock analysis in the fall of 2014 to address the taxonomic challenges in this group of whitefishes. A Cisco Designatable Unit (DU) Special Report was circulated for a jurisdictional review and presented to COSEWIC in November 2019. Discussion pertaining to the results of this Special DU report led to the creation of a COSEWIC Designatable Units Working Group that is working to ensure consistency among taxonomic groups in the interpretation of the guidelines. The results of this Special DU report will be helpful to determine the basis for future Cisco assessments as they relate to the pending Shortjaw Cisco, Upper Great Lakes Kiyi, and Blackfin Cisco status reports.

The Birds Specialist Subcommittee completed a Red Knot Designatable Unit (DU) Special Report this past year, circulated it for jurisdictional review, and presented it to COSEWIC. This report will serve as the basis for the Red Knot population assessments in November 2020.

The Marine Fishes SSC continued work on designatable unit reports for all Coho, Chinook and Sockeye salmon populations that COSEWIC had not already assessed. These reports will help the SSC and COSEWIC to decide on further priorities for assessment.

The Molluscs SSC continued to maintain an annotated bibliography of references on threats to molluscs species. This assists the SSC with bringing the best available information to threats assessment processes.

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, which recommends any changes to the Committee for its 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:

- The inclusion of instructions for the streamlined rapid review of classification meant to confirm the status of species at risk requiring reassessments, new questions to determine the acceptability of a status report, and the eligibility of a species for assessment by COSEWIC.
- A few definitions specific to COSEWIC and their assessments were updated, as well as requirements regarding climate change were included in the Instructions for Status Report Writers (Appendix F1).
- Based on a review from the senior diversity advisor from the ECCC Diversity and Inclusion team, COSEWIC updated their call for memberships (Co-chairs, Non-government Science Members, and SSC members) to encourage increased diversity within the Committee.

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 COSEWIC’s operations and procedures are efficient, effective and followed clearly, thus maintaining the quality and consistency of COSEWIC status assessments and processes.

a) Press Release

This Working Group was active before and during the Wildlife Species Assessment Meeting on the production of two press releases; one pertained to general highlights from the meeting, and the other was specific to Striped Bass.

b) Species Prioritization

The Priority Setting Working Group guided decisions about which species would be assessed for the first time. It also compiled information pertaining to prioritize wildlife species that are due for reassessment, with an emphasis on workload efficiencies. An advanced list of the 2020 and 2021 Call for Bids was also drawn up with a proposed priority allocation for targeting funds.

c) Status Report Streamlining

COSEWIC recognizes that its status report style and format could benefit from review and refinement to make reports more concise and consistent and better meet users' needs. Changes to report formats and instructions to report writers will be proposed to the wider COSEWIC membership at the November 2020 Wildlife Species Assessment Meeting.

d) Species Bundling

This working group continued to develop guidelines to bundle species that have similar characteristics and habitats together into one report, to enhance cost-savings and efficiency.

e) IUCN Criteria and Climate Change

This working group continued to assist COSEWIC with understanding wildlife species' vulnerability to climate change and how to address that in status reports and assessments.

An SSC Co-chair on faculty at the University of Toronto conducted a pilot project with students to assess the costs and benefits of using formalized Climate Change Vulnerability Assessments in status reports. The results gave COSEWIC an indication how much time it takes to conduct such assessments and how important it is that they be completed by people with some expertise on the questions being considered.

f) Data

Review of Appendix F8 (Updated Guidelines Concerning Sensitive Information) of the Operations and Procedures Manual is ongoing. The working group is also developing tools for data sharing agreements with third parties to improve the sharing of COSEWIC-related data. In addition, this working group is exploring mapping methods, such as Ecosystem-based automated range maps (EBAR), to improve maps found within COSEWIC Status Reports. Members of this group are also contributing to the development of data sharing policies with Nature Serve Canada.

g) Co-chair Evaluation Grid

An updated version of the Co-chair Evaluation Grid and the Non-government Science member Evaluation Grid were approved and used for the 2020 Call for Co-chairs and Non-government Science members.

h) Supplementary Information for Status Report Writers

This working group has been reviewing supplementary information documents specific to various taxonomic groups to see if there are commonalities and if one standard document could fill this role.

i) COSEWIC Website

This working group coordinated COSEWIC input into the development of a new external COSEWIC website. This new website went live in September 2019. Improvements are ongoing and updates to content are completed on a monthly basis.

<http://cosewic.ca/index.php/en-ca/>

j) Wildlife Management Board Process

Work is ongoing to improve communication with Wildlife Management Boards.

k) Criteria

This working group offered workshops for use of status criteria to most subcommittees at their annual meetings.

9. COSEWIC Communications

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

During the current reporting period, COSEWIC released two press releases outlining the results of the fall 2019 Wildlife Species Assessment Meetings. The links to the COSEWIC press releases can be found on the COSEWIC website:

<http://cosewic.ca/index.php/en-ca/news-and-events>

COSEWIC's Twitter account informs Canadians about news on Canadian species at risk. The account can be found at <https://twitter.com/cosewic> and now has over 1,600 followers.

The Chair of COSEWIC gave presentations on the work of COSEWIC at the following meetings.

- Canadian Society of Environmental Biologists (webinar)
- DFO Salmon Enhancement AGM
- Invasive Species Council of BC
- Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC
- University of British Columbia
- BC Nature AGM

In addition, the Chair of COSEWIC had written correspondence or attended meetings regarding the following issues.

- Inuvialuit Game Council – invitation to their AGM in Whitehorse to discuss greater involvement by Inuit in COSEWIC.
- Striped Bass – correspondence with the Fédération québécoise des chasseurs et pêcheurs, Ministère des Forêts, de la Faune et des Parcs Québec, and Fisheries and Ocean Canada (DFO).
- Beluga – correspondence with the Inuvialuit Game Council.
- Northern Goshawk – correspondence with the BC Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development.
- Pacific Herring – various phone meetings with NGOs to discuss potential emergency assessment.
- American Bumblebee – phone meetings to discuss COSEWIC's status assessment.
- The Standing Joint Committee for the Scrutiny of Regulations – concerns about timelines for reports to the Minister of ECCC.
- Caribou – discussions about status.

In addition, the Chair of COSEWIC participated in the following media interviews regarding the work of COSEWIC:

- CBC Radio Canada – Status of striped bass.
- Vice – COSEWIC’s consideration of threats from pollution.
- Canadian Geographic – COSEWIC species status assessments.
- National Post – COSEWIC species status assessments.
- Miramichi Leader – Status of striped bass.
- Up Here magazine – COSEWIC’S process.

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://cosewic.ca/index.php/en-ca/about-us/cosewic-members>

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 members and recommended to the Minister of 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 who can be nominated by the ATK Subcommittee. Subcommittee members are appointed by the Minister of 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 and one Non-government Science Member were posted on the COSEWIC website between January 17 and February 14, 2020. Selection Committees composed of both COSEWIC members and Species Specialist Subcommittee members then evaluated the applications following procedures set out in COSEWIC's Operations & Procedures Manual. The Chairs of each Selection Committee prepared reports summarizing the strengths and weaknesses of the applicants, which were discussed by COSEWIC during its conference calls from May 4-6, 2020. Candidates were selected by COSEWIC members and their names and CVs were provided to the Federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change in May 2020 for consideration of appointment. Members of CESCC 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:

https://wildlife-species.canada.ca/species-risk-registry/sar/index/default_e.cfm

The status reports will be available in English and French on the Public Registry at the following address:

https://wildlife-species.canada.ca/species-risk-registry/sar/assessment/status_e.cfm

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.

https://wildlife-species.canada.ca/species-risk-registry/search/advSearchResults_e.cfm?stype=doc&lng=e&advkeywords=&docid=33&startdate=&enddate=&#ot33

It includes all wildlife species assessed by COSEWIC since its inception up to and including October 2019.