

# Canada's Strategy to Protect Species at Risk



## Species at Risk in Canada

Some wildlife on this planet are in danger of becoming extinct. Without human intervention, they will disappear forever. In Canada, there are currently 431 Species identified as at Risk by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC), an arms-length committee of government, academic and NGO scientists. They fall under one of four categories:

- Extirpated
- Endangered
- Threatened
- Special Concern



Photo/image: Bob Milko

## Species at Risk in Canada

**Extirpated** means that the species no longer exists in the wild in Canada, but does exist elsewhere in the world. There are 21 extirpated species in Canada.

**Endangered** is used to classify species that are facing imminent extirpation or extinction. Canada currently has 153 endangered species.



Photo/image: Robert J. Willson, Conservation Scientist,  
The Wilds of Pelee Island

## Species at Risk in Canada

Threatened species are likely to become endangered if limiting factors are not reversed. At last count, there were 102 threatened species in this country.

If a species is considered a **special concern**, because of characteristics that make it particularly sensitive to human activities or natural events. There are 143 species of special concern in Canada.

## Why are some species at risk?

- Loss of habitat
- Use of pesticides
- Acid rain
- Climate change
- Invasive species



## International Concern

In 1992, many countries acknowledged the threat posed by eroding ecosystems and the loss of species and genetic diversity by negotiating and signing the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

The Convention is an international agreement under which more than 180 countries have committed to conserving biodiversity. Canada was the first industrialized country to ratify the Convention.

## Species at Risk Strategy

In keeping with these efforts, Canada developed a Species at Risk Strategy. The Strategy involves three elements:

- An Accord for the Protection of Species at Risk
- A *Species at Risk Act*
- A Habitat Stewardship Program



## Key Federal Departments

Primary responsibility for the issue of Species at Risk falls to:

- Environment Canada
  - Lead department
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada
- Parks Canada





## The Accord

Under the 1996 Accord for the Protection of Species at Risk, all federal, provincial and territorial governments are committed to: protecting species at risk and their habitats; and developing plans for their recovery.



# Species at Risk Act

The main purposes of the *Species at Risk Act*, which came into force in June 2003, are to:

- Prevent wildlife species at risk from becoming extirpated or extinct;
- Provide for their recovery; and
- Prevent species of special concern from becoming further at risk

More information on the *Species at Risk Act* can be found at [www.speciesatrisk.ca](http://www.speciesatrisk.ca)

# Habitat Stewardship Program

The Habitat Stewardship Program (HSP) was created in 2000 to provide federal funding for projects that conserve and protect species at risk and their habitats.

HSP emphasizes the need for all Canadians to become “stewards” of the environment and encourages voluntary conservation actions that benefit wildlife. The Program is administered by Environment Canada and managed cooperatively with Parks Canada and Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

# HSP Objectives

Protecting species at risk and supporting their recovery through secure habitats.

Reducing threats to species at risk caused by human activities.

Supporting other strategies and action plans currently underway or being developed to conserve and protect species at risk.

## HSP In Action

In Nova Scotia, stewards are working to protect Leatherback Turtles by providing guidance to fishers on safe turtle disentanglement techniques.

Conservation plans in the Eastern Townships of Quebec are ensuring the protection of natural environments, wildlife habitats, old-growth or exceptional forests, and at-risk animal and plant species.

Games, skits, and songs are being used to teach students and teachers about prairie and species at risk conservation and management in Saskatchewan.

## Sharing Scientific Knowledge and Forest Expertise

The Canadian Forest Service (CFS) has actively participated in the creation of legislation to protect Canada's Species at Risk, and continues to assist in the development of regulations and strategies with the same goal.

The CFS also participates in a Federal Working Group that funds projects to recover endangered species on federal lands, such as the Garry Oak Ecosystem in B.C., the Pine Marten in Newfoundland and the SAR Forest Bird Species – Carolinian Forest Zone.

## Some Encouraging Results

Over the years, 14 species designated at risk by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) have seen their status improved to the point where they are no longer considered to be at risk.

Other species have been downgraded to a lower risk category.



[www.speciesatrisk.gc.ca](http://www.speciesatrisk.gc.ca)



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