

CANADIAN ANIMALS FACE EXTINCTION

Feature by:
Kira Schoch and Tim Judah

The Great Auk, Labrador Duck, Passenger Pigeon and Sea Mink once found in New Brunswick and elsewhere are now EXTINCT.

In 1974 New Brunswick passed legislation recognizing a species of animal or plant as "endangered" if it is threatened with extinction because of the destruction of its habitat, disease, over-exploitation, predation and the use of chemicals. At the present time six species are declared endangered under the Endangered Species Act.

Eastern Cougar
Canada Lynx
Bald Eagle
Osprey
Peregrine Falcon
Furbish's Lousewort

By Paul Griss
Executive Director
Canadian Nature Federation
(Taken from an Endangered Species Newsletter, Recovery)



BALD EAGLE

COSEWIC considers information from the most reliable sources and assigns status in one of the following categories.
EXTINCT: Any indigenous species of fauna or flora formerly indigenous to Canada no longer known to exist elsewhere.
EXTIRPATED: Any indigenous species of fauna or flora no longer known to exist in the wild in Canada but existing elsewhere.
ENDANGERED: Any indigenous species of fauna or flora that is threatened with imminent extirpation or extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its Canadian range owing to human action.
THREATENED: Any indigenous species of fauna or flora that is likely to become endangered in Canada if the factors affecting its vulnerability do not become reversed.
VULNERABLE: Any indigenous species of fauna or flora that is particularly at risk because of low or declining numbers, occurrence at the fringe of its range or in restricted areas, or for some other reason, but is not a threatened species.
RARE: Any indigenous species of fauna or flora that, because of its biological characteristics, or because it occurs at the fringe of its range, or for some other reasons exists in low numbers or in very restricted areas in Canada, and so is vulnerable, but is not a threatened species.
DE-LISTED: A species previously designated by COSEWIC whose national status is no longer vulnerable, threatened, endangered or extirpated. Designated as threatened from 1976-1986, the White Pelican was de-listed by COSEWIC in 1987.
DOWNLISTED: A species previously designated by COSEWIC whose national status moves from one category to a less vulnerable category. Designated as endangered from 1977 to 1987, the Wood Bison was downlisted by COSEWIC in 1988.

In 1976, The Canadian Nature Federation and World Wildlife Fund (Canada) co-sponsored a conference on endangered species. The conference called for a committee to review the status of Canadian species thought to be in danger. As a result the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) was set up in 1978.

Eleven years later, COSEWIC classifies 183 species as vulnerable threatened or endangered. The committee has yet to extend its efforts to invertebrate so the true number of eligible species is much higher. Even so, the list continues to grow at a rate that would be even greater if sufficient funding was available to produce status reports on all species of concern.

Being on the COSEWIC list does not guarantee protection. Only a few provinces have endangered species acts, nor is there one at federal level. COSEWIC's mandate is simply to classify. It has no authority to draft recovery plans or co-ordinate recovery efforts. That is left to governments, non-governmental organizations and private citizens, working collectively or independently. This tends to be a reactive process that is influenced by the urgency of the species' plight, the opportunity available and the interests of different agencies or individuals. Any species fortunate enough to attract a vocal advocate is more likely to get attention.

Given the public empathy for endangered species, one might rightly question why a more concerted effort is not being made to protect and restore such wildlife in Canada. Perhaps the primary reason is the emphasis of wildlife agencies which, particularly at the provincial level, have traditionally focused on the management of species of commercial or recreational value to humans. Less attention or none at all has been given to non-game species.

Only a few of the thousands of Canadian wildlife species directly benefit from this approach. Yet most wildlife agencies spend only a small percentage of their budgets on non-game programs. More alarmingly, reptiles, plants and invertebrates are either implicitly or explicitly outside the mandate of most current wildlife management programs.

Fortunately there are a few signs of progress, albeit slow. Last year, the Recovery of Nationally Endangered Wildlife (RENEW) program was approved by wildlife ministers. This program is designed to co-ordinate the recovery efforts of government departments, NGO's and others. While RENEW is welcome - long

Here is a complete list of endangered species in Canada as determined by The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) June 1989

	MAMMALS		BIRDS		REPTILES	FISH	PLANTS
EXTINCT	Dawson Caribou	Sea Mink	Great Auk	Passenger Pigeon		Baril Longnose Dace	
EXTIRPATED	Atlantic Grey Whale	Black-footed Ferret				Gravel Chub	Blue-eyed Mary
	Atlantic Walrus	Swift Fox					
ENDANGERED	Bowhead Whale	Sea Otter	Esquimaux Curlew	Piping Plover	Leatherback Turtle	Acadian Whitefish	Cucumber Tree
	Eastern Cougar	Ungava Bay Beluga	Greater Prairie	Spotted Owl		Aurora Trout	Heart-leaved Plantain
	Right Whale	Whale	Chicken	Whooping Crane			Hoary Mountain Mint
	St. Lawrence River	Vancouver Island	Kirkland's Warbler				Slender Bush Clover
	Beluga Whale	Marmot	Mountain Flower				Southern Maidenhair
			Peregrine Falcon				Pink Coreopsis
			subspecies anatum				Small White Lady's
							Slipper
THREATENED	Eastern Beluga	North Pacific	*Baird's Sparrow	Loggerhead Shrike		American Chestnut	Kentucky Coffee
	Whale	Humpback Whale	Burrowing Owl	Peregrine Falcon		Blueheart	Tree
	Maritime Woodland	Peary Caribou	Ferngrouse Hawk	subspecies harrisi		Colewort	Purple Towhee
	Caribou	Prairie Long-tailed Weasel	Hemlock's Sparrow	Rosette Tern		Giant Helleborine	Red Mulberry
	Newfoundland Pine	Wood Bison				Ginseng	Sweet Pepperbush
	Marten					Golden Crest	Fitch's Thistle
VULNERABLE	*Scooby's Beaked	*Western Wolverine			*Northern Pike		
	Whale				*Pike		
					*Pike		
RARE	Black-tailed	Northwest Atlantic	Barn Owl	Least Bittern	Fowler's Toad	*Banded Killifish	
	Prairie Dog	Humpback Whale	Caspian Tern	Peregrine Falcon		Newfoundland	
	Blue Whale	Ball's Bat	Cooper's Hawk	subspecies pealei		Population	
	Eastern Mole	Prairie Pocket Gopher	Eastern Bluebird	Prairie Warbler		*Belted Sculpin	
	Fin Whale	Queen Charlotte	Hamulinated Owl	Prothonotary Warbler		*Orange-spotted Sunfish	
	Fringed Myotis	Islands Ermine	Great Gray Owl	Red-shouldered		*River Darter	
	Gaspé Shrew	Spotted Bat	Ipswich Sparrow	Hawk			
	Gray Fox	Southern Flying	Fairy Gull	Booby Gull			
	Keen's Long-eared	Squirrel	King Rail	Trumpeter Swan			
	Bat	Western Woodland					
		Caribou					
DELISTED							
DOWNLISTED	Wood Bison						

overdue, indeed - it suffers from a major flaw.

Initially, the program will address only the birds and terrestrial mammals that COSEWIC considers threatened or endangered. This includes approximately 21(14%) of Canada listed species. Many of these are already receiving attention, so the major short-term effect of RENEW may be to simply rationalize present efforts. There is a real danger that the majority of species will continue to be given lower priority and that many could still be ignored. Who will help?

The limited focus of RENEW is only part of the problem, however. Establishing and implementing a recovery plan can be a

lengthy and frustrating process. The piping plover, a small, endangered shore-bird, is a case in point. The Canadian Nature Federation began lobbying the Canadian Wildlife Service on behalf of this species in the early 1980's. It was not until January 1987 that a draft recovery plan was released. The final recovery plan will, we hope, be available in 1990.

Naturalists in Atlantic Canada felt unable to wait for the final plan. The Natural History Society of PEI has done excellent work with the PEI National Park to protect piping plover beaches. They have, with the Atlantic Centre for the Environment, produced and distributed educational posters; also a slide show on the

species has been prepared on videocassette. Other volunteer organizations across the country are doing comparable work on species of particular concern to them, often in the absence of recovery plans or formal government support.

Although a tremendous amount of volunteer efforts and private money is devoted to saving species, the chances of finding champions for all 183 of the COSEWIC listings are slim. None the less, this commitment of resources by volunteers and their organizations shows the considerable public support for endangered species. The inadequacy of the priorities and resources given this work by governments is, by comparison, an embarrassment.

Clearly, the priorities of wildlife management in Canada must evolve to reflect present realities. The increasing threats to our wildlife and the current focus of public opinion demand this. The over-riding priority of wildlife management should be to prevent the endangerment of all wildlife species. This requires a much broader approach than is now the case, but it will be far more effective than reacting species by species. Meantime, recovery plans must be implemented for all species on the COSEWIC list.

At present, there is protective legislation in only a few provinces, recovery plans are few and endangered species work receives insufficient government attention or funding. The situation will only be exacerbated by the growing number of species in trouble. Without more emphasis on wildlife management, it is difficult to be optimistic about the fate of those species currently on the COSEWIC list and those to be added in the coming years.

Many countries are fighting a rearguard action to protect what little remains of their wildlife populations. Canada is not yet in that situation, and it is human nature to wait for a crisis before taking preventive measures. In the case of wildlife, that is frequently far too late.

Before Canada faces a crisis situation, we have an opportunity to learn from the problems faced by other countries. By taking a preventive approach to the issue of endangered species, we may be able to avoid walking the same path. Endangered species are a symptom of a greater problem and, as your doctor will tell you, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.