

COSEWIC Wildlife Species Assessments (detailed version), November 2024

Results are grouped by taxon and then by status category. The range of occurrence in Canada (by province, territory or ocean) and history of status designation are provided for each wildlife species.

Mammals

Northern Bottlenose Whale (Scotian Shelf population)

Scientific name: *Hyperoodon ampullatus*

Status: Endangered

Assessment criteria: D1

Reason for designation: This well-studied population of beaked whales appears to be slowly increasing as it continues to recover from historical whaling operations. It remains very small, with an estimated 210 individuals, of which approximately 95 are mature. The population is at risk from several threats, including underwater noise produced by military sonar exercises and seismic surveys for oil and gas, vessel strikes, entanglement in fishing gear, and exposure to contaminants and other marine pollutants and debris.

Range: NL, NS, Atlantic Ocean

Status history: The Northern Bottlenose Whale was given a single designation of Not at Risk in April 1993. Split into two populations in April 1996 to allow a separate designation of the Northern Bottlenose Whale (Scotian Shelf population). Scotian Shelf population designated Special Concern in April 1996. Status re-examined and designated Endangered in November 2002, May 2011, and November 2024.

Black-tailed Prairie Dog

Scientific name: *Cynomys ludovicianus*

Status: Threatened

Assessment criteria: D2

Reason for designation: In Canada, this medium-sized rodent is a prairie specialist found only in southern Saskatchewan. Its restricted distribution, vulnerability to increasing drought frequency and Sylvatic Plague - both of which may cause rapid population declines - threatens its persistence in Canada. Anticipated increases in drought frequency, which especially combined with severe winters, can negatively impact populations. Local knowledge suggests the species is resilient to drought based on their long experience in the area. Disease, especially Sylvatic Plague, is a significant potential threat, exacerbated by low genetic diversity and connectivity among colonies that facilitates disease transmission. However, conservation management actions and land stewardship mitigate this extirpation risk.

Range: SK

Status history: Designated Special Concern in April 1978. Status re-examined and confirmed in April 1988, April 1999 and November 2000. Status re-examined and designated Threatened in November 2011. Status re-examined and confirmed in November 2024.

Northern Bottlenose Whale (Davis Strait-Baffin Bay-Labrador Sea population)

Scientific name: *Hyperoodon ampullatus*

Status: Special Concern

Assessment criteria: Not applicable

Reason for designation: This northern population of long-lived, slow reproducing beaked whales was reduced by whaling in the late 1960s and early 1970s but the extent of this reduction is unknown. Trends in population size since then are uncertain and there is no abundance estimate, but survey sighting rates have been low. The population faces a variety of threats including underwater noise, entanglement in fishing gear, vessel strikes, ingestion of plastic debris, and contaminants. This population may become Threatened if these threats are not reversed or effectively managed.

Range: NL, NU, Atlantic Ocean

Status history: The Northern Bottlenose Whale was given a single designation of Not at Risk in April 1993. Split into two populations in April 1996 to allow a separate designation of the Northern Bottlenose Whale (Scotian Shelf population). The Davis Strait-Baffin Bay-Labrador Sea population was not assessed in 1996; it retained the Not at Risk designation of the original Northern Bottlenose Whale. The population was designated Special Concern in May 2011. Status re-examined and confirmed in November 2024.

Birds

Short-billed Dowitcher *caurinus* subspecies

Scientific name: *Limnodromus griseus caurinus*

Status: Endangered

Assessment criteria: A2b+4b; C2a(ii)

Reason for designation: In Canada, this medium-sized shorebird breeds only in southern Yukon and the northwestern corner of British Columbia. There it nests almost exclusively in calcareous string fens, and migrates south to winter along the Pacific coast from California to South America. This species faces a number of threats, including increasing loss of wintering habitat from several causes; disturbance by dogs and recreational activities at migratory stopover sites and on the wintering grounds; impacts of pollution on birds and their prey; and effects of climate change and increased forest fires on the breeding grounds. The Canadian population estimate is 1,000 to 3,000 mature individuals, or fewer, and monitoring suggests steep population declines exceeding 50% over the past three generations.

Range: BC, YT

Status history: Designated Endangered in November 2024.

Lewis's Woodpecker

Scientific name: *Melanerpes lewis*

Status: Threatened

Assessment criteria: C2a(ii)

Reason for designation: In Canada, this medium-sized woodpecker breeds in scattered habitat patches in southern interior British Columbia and winters in the western United States. It uses scattered trees in open habitat as nest sites and foraging perches. It occupies open Ponderosa Pine and Douglas-fir forests, mature cottonwood floodplain forest habitat and areas recently burned by wildfire. The single Canadian subpopulation holds about 2,600 mature individuals, with an inferred decline of 5-10% over the past ten years that is projected to continue. Key threats contributing to this ongoing decline include habitat loss due to timber harvest and removal of potential nest trees, competition for nest sites with European Starling, and increasing effects of extreme weather events during the nesting period. Habitat is also at risk from ongoing urban and agricultural expansion and effects of both wildfire and fire suppression.

Range: AB, BC

Status history: Designated Special Concern in April 1999. Status re-examined and confirmed in November 2001. Status re-examined and designated Threatened in April 2010. Status re-examined and confirmed in November 2024.

Short-billed Dowitcher *hendersoni/griseus*

Scientific name: *Limnodromus griseus hendersoni/griseus*

Status: Threatened

Assessment criteria: Met criteria for Endangered, A2bd+4bd, but designated Threatened, A2b+4bd, because the wildlife species is not at imminent risk of extinction.

Reason for designation: This medium-sized shorebird is endemic to Canada, where it breeds from Northwest Territories and Alberta to northwestern Quebec and Labrador. Individuals migrate through eastern and central North America, and winter along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts of the United States and the Caribbean coast of Central and South America. The greatest threat is sport and subsistence hunting in the southern portion of the wintering range; other threats include increasing loss of wintering habitat; disturbance by dogs and recreational activities at migratory stopover sites and on wintering grounds; impacts of pollution on birds and their prey; and effects of increased forest fires and climate change on the breeding grounds. The population is estimated at about 78,000 mature individuals, although this estimate is at least 25 years out of date. Data from the International Shorebird Survey suggest 3-generation declines approaching 60%, although these surveys only partially cover the centre of the continent where trends may differ. Because the species does not meet the definition of Endangered (i.e., at immediate risk of extinction), it is designated as Threatened.

Range: AB, MB, NB, NL, NS, NT, ON, PE, QC, SK

Status history: Designated Threatened in November 2024.

Least Bittern

Scientific name: *Botaurus exilis*

Status: Special Concern

Assessment criteria: Not applicable

Reason for designation: This small, secretive member of the heron family relies on semi-open wetlands with emergent plants and relatively stable water levels. In Canada, the centre of its range is in southern Ontario and Quebec. Population size is estimated at 4300 mature individuals, an increase since the

previous assessment which likely reflects improved survey coverage and techniques rather than an increase in numbers. Ongoing regional surveys over the last 10 years suggest that the Canadian population is currently stable. Nonetheless, given its specialized habitat requirements and low numbers, the species is vulnerable to future declines in Great Lakes water levels, loss of non-breeding habitat, and habitat conversion by invasive plants; it may again become Threatened if threats are not effectively mitigated or managed.

Range: MB, NB, NS, ON, PE, QC, SK

Status history: Designated Special Concern in April 1988. Status re-examined and confirmed in April 1999. Status re-examined and designated Threatened in November 2001 and in April 2009. Status re-examined and designated Special Concern in November 2024.

Reptiles

Butler's Gartersnake

Scientific name: *Thamnophis butleri*

Status: Threatened

Assessment criteria: Qualifies as Special Concern, but designated Threatened because the wildlife species may become Endangered if the cumulative threats are not managed.

Reason for designation: Subpopulations of this small, specialized snake occur in small, scattered, isolated habitat remnants in southern Ontario. Fragmentation of urban landscapes from roads in Windsor-Essex and Sarnia-Lambton prevents movement of individuals between subpopulations. Surveys since 2012 have not detected the species at two sites where they were formerly known. The species is threatened by the cumulative threats of residential and commercial development, transportation and service corridors, natural systems modifications, and the negative genetic effects of small population size and demographic stochasticity.

Range: ON

Status history: Designated Special Concern in April 1999. Status re-examined and designated Threatened in November 2001. Status re-examined and designated Endangered in November 2010. Status re-examined and designated Threatened in November 2024.

Arthropods

Valley Grasshopper

Scientific name: *Oedaleonotus enigma*

Status: Endangered

Assessment criteria: B1ab(iii)+2ab(iii)

Reason for designation: This grasshopper is known from one very small area near Osoyoos, British Columbia, where it occurs in some of the hottest and driest grassland habitat in Canada. The species is at risk from potential housing developments and there is a continuing decline in the quality of its habitat due to recreational activities (unregulated camping and all-terrain vehicle use) and garbage accumulation.

Range: BC

Status history: Designated Endangered in November 2024.

Molluscs

Lilliput

Scientific name: *Toxolasma parvum*

Status: Special Concern

Assessment criteria: Not applicable

Reason for designation: This small freshwater mussel has a Canadian distribution restricted to Ontario within the drainages of Lake St. Clair/Detroit River, Lake Erie, and Lake Ontario. Status has been revised from the previous assessment of Endangered because criteria are no longer met: 18 additional subpopulations were discovered during increased sampling effort, there is no evidence of continuing decline in abundance, and numbers appear stable or increasing. However, the species occurs in a very small area where habitats are highly degraded with continuing decline from urban and agricultural pollution, agricultural dredging, water management activities, and droughts.

Range: ON

Status history: Designated Endangered in May 2013. Status re-examined and designated Special Concern in November 2024.

Vascular Plants

Short-fruited Rush

Scientific name: *Juncus brachycarpus*

Status: Endangered

Assessment criteria: B1ab(i,ii,iii,iv,v)+2ab(i,ii,iii,iv,v); C2a(i,ii); D1

Reason for designation: This large perennial rush has a very restricted range in Canada where it is known only from remnant patches of tallgrass prairie in Windsor, Ontario. The Canadian population has declined to 130 flowering stems at only two extant sites. Historically, the plant has lost habitat to agriculture, housing, and transportation infrastructure, and continues to be threatened with habitat degradation due to invasive plants and fire suppression.

Range: ON

Status history: Designated Endangered in November 2024.

Mosses

Circular-leaved Peat Moss

Scientific name: *Sphagnum cyclophyllum*

Status: Endangered

Assessment criteria: B1ab(i,ii,iii,iv,v)+2ab(i,ii,iii,iv,v); C2a(i); D1

Reason for designation: This medium-sized peat moss is known in Canada only from three sites within 10 km from each other in a single watershed of southwestern Nova Scotia; these sites are 700 km from the nearest ones in the United States. Dispersal ability of the species is poor because sexual reproduction is rare and asexual reproduction by fragmentation has never been observed. Fewer than 250 individuals have so far been found in Canada. The species grows in shallow depressions in three open peatlands, each of which supports few individuals. The most important threats include climate change-induced drought and increased fire frequency. The unexpected recent fire that affected one site highlights the importance of the latter threat.

Range: NS

Status history: Designated Endangered in November 2024.