

COSEWIC

Committee on the Status of
Endangered Wildlife in Canada



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Comité sur la situation des
espèces en péril au Canada

From cultural keystones to rediscoveries: complex outcomes for Canadian wildlife

(Ottawa, December 11, 2025). From a poor outlook for Atlantic Salmon to a serendipitous plant rediscovery, the latest assessments of Canada's wildlife species by Canada's Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife (COSEWIC) highlighted complex issues.

Atlantic Salmon are integral to cultural identity and food security for many Indigenous communities in Canada, as well as being a prized angling fish. COSEWIC considered 19 distinct populations, ranging in size from the Inner Bay of Fundy, with fewer than 100 adults, to Northeast Newfoundland, with over 100,000. While many salmon populations in Atlantic Canada are suffering from the effects of warming rivers and continue to show steep declines, a few of the northernmost populations in Ungava Bay and Labrador are increasing quickly as rivers get less chilly.



Atlantic Salmon © Photo 555838239 by v_moss
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There are many threats to Atlantic Salmon. Overfishing, habitat degradation, other fish, dams and obstructions in rivers, and climate change can all contribute to declines, and several populations were assessed as Endangered. Undaunted, Indigenous-led local habitat improvement and

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restocking efforts have been laser-focused to help ensure the fish's long-term future in some areas in the south.

"We need strong leadership at all levels of government, but our shared hard work has helped salmon in the Inner Bay of Fundy," noted Chief Rebecca Knockwood of the Fort Folly First Nation.

"Having salmon back in our rivers is restoring freshwater ecosystem health, helping to heal historic wounds through reconciliation and reconnecting our Indigenous youth to our culture."



Illinois Tick-trefoil © Patrick Deacon

A brightly flowered member of the Pea family, Illinois Tick-trefoil was first recorded in Canada in 1888 but was officially designated as Extirpated in 1991. However, thanks to an expert identification from a couple of photos on the community science iNaturalist website, the plant was rediscovered in 2019. Ontario botanists quickly found more plants, but numbers are still very low, and the plant's habitat is threatened. This species moved from a status of Extirpated to Endangered.

James Pagé, at the Canadian Wildlife Federation and lead for iNaturalist Canada, makes the point: "This goes to show how anyone can contribute to one of the most important processes in conservation. Using iNaturalist to snap a photo of a plant, or animal, even if you don't know what it is, can help inform conservation decisions."

Alongside these species, COSEWIC considered five types of moth found only on Sable Island off the coast of Nova Scotia. Horses and shipwrecks have come to symbolize this island, but both are human legacies. The island's insects are much less known, even to science. All five moth species began charting their own evolutionary path thousands of years ago after melting Ice Age glaciers raised sea levels, stranding the island off our coast. Now, human-caused climate change is raising sea levels and the island's novel creatures have nowhere to go. Increasingly severe weather and

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storm surges were identified as the main threats and all five wildlife species were assessed as Special Concern.

COSEWIC also deliberated on the status of three populations of the elusive and nocturnal American Badger. Those in BC and in Southwestern Ontario were assessed as Endangered, while the population in Central Canada was considered Special Concern. Grizzly Bear retained its status as Special Concern – much like Atlantic Salmon, it is expanding in the north but remains under pressure further south.

“The species assessed this year highlight how a threat like climate change can affect wide-ranging wildlife like Grizzly Bear and Atlantic Salmon differently from narrow-range species like the island moths,” David Lee, COSEWIC’s Chair, noted. “But with cooperative recovery planning and action, we can protect all these vital Canadian species.”

Next meeting

COSEWIC’s next wildlife species assessment meeting is scheduled for May 2026.



Sable Island Cutworm Moth © John Klymko

About COSEWIC

COSEWIC assesses the status of important units of biological diversity considered to be at risk in Canada. To do so, COSEWIC uses scientific, Aboriginal traditional and community knowledge provided by experts from governments, academia and other organizations. Summaries of assessments are currently available to the public on the [COSEWIC](#) website and will be submitted to the Federal Minister of the Environment, Climate Change and Nature in fall 2026 for listing consideration under the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA). At that time, the status reports will be publicly available on the [Species at Risk Public Registry](#).

COSEWIC comprises members from each provincial and territorial government wildlife agency, four federal entities (Canadian Wildlife Service, Parks Canada Agency, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and the Canadian Museum of Nature), four Non-government Science Members, Co-chairs of the Species Specialist and the Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge Subcommittees, and two early career scientists.

At its most recent meeting, COSEWIC assessed 35 wildlife species in various COSEWIC risk categories, including 9 Endangered, 6 Threatened, and 12 Special Concern. In addition to these wildlife species that are in COSEWIC risk categories, COSEWIC assessed 6 as Not at Risk and 2 as Data Deficient.

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Definition of COSEWIC terms and status categories:

Wildlife Species: A species, subspecies, variety, or geographically or genetically distinct population of animal, plant or other organism, other than a bacterium or virus, that is wild by nature and is either native to Canada or has extended its range into Canada without human intervention and has been present in Canada for at least 50 years.

Extinct (X): A wildlife species that no longer exists.

Extirpated (XT): A wildlife species that no longer exists in the wild in Canada, but exists elsewhere.

Endangered (E): A wildlife species facing imminent extirpation or extinction.

Threatened (T): A wildlife species that is likely to become Endangered if nothing is done to reverse the factors leading to its extirpation or extinction.

Special Concern (SC): A wildlife species that may become Threatened or Endangered because of a combination of biological characteristics and identified threats.

Not at Risk (NAR): A wildlife species that has been evaluated and found to be not at risk of extinction given the current circumstances.

Data Deficient (DD): A category that applies when the available information is insufficient (a) to resolve a wildlife species' eligibility for assessment or (b) to permit an assessment of the wildlife species' risk of extinction.

Species at Risk: A wildlife species that has been assessed as Extirpated, Endangered, Threatened or Special Concern.

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<p>For inquiries on arthropods (Lupine Leafroller Moth, Sable Island Bordered Apamea, Sable Island Borer, Sable Island Cutworm Moth, Sable Island Eucosma, Sable Island White-marked Tussock Moth):</p> <p>Jennifer M. Heron jenniferheron@gmail.com</p>	<p>For inquiries on marine fishes (Atlantic Salmon):</p> <p>Dr. Bruce Leaman Telephone: 250-510-3625 bruce.leaman@outlook.com</p>
<p>For inquiries on molluscs (Boreal Awningclam):</p> <p>Dr. Todd J. Morris Fisheries and Oceans Canada Telephone : 289-983-1528 Todd.Morris@dfo-mpo.gc.ca</p>	<p>For inquiries on mosses and lichens (Haller's Apple Moss):</p> <p>Dr. Nicole Fenton Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscaminque Telephone: 819-762-0971 (ext. 2312) Nicole.fenton@uqat.ca</p>
<p>For inquiries on terrestrial mammals (American Badger, Grizzly Bear Western population):</p> <p>Dr. Chris Johnson University of Northern BC Telephone: 250-960-5357 johnsoch@unbc.ca</p>	<p>For inquiries on vascular plants (Hare-footed Locoweed, Illinois Tick-trefoil, Round-leaved Greenbrier):</p> <p>Del Meidinger Meidinger Ecological Consultants Ltd. Telephone (1): 250-881-1180 Telephone (2): 778-977-1180 delmeidinger@gmail.com</p>
<p>For inquiries on Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge:</p> <p>Roger Gallant rgallant@gallantenvironmental.com</p>	