

COSEWIC

Committee on the Status of
Endangered Wildlife in Canada



COSEPAC

Comité sur la situation des
espèces en péril au Canada

Over 850 Canadian wildlife species at risk and counting



Short-billed Dowitcher © Christian Artuso

(Ottawa, December 5, 2024). Canada's list of imperiled wildlife species is getting longer. This past week, the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) considered five species for the first time, and all were assessed as at risk of being lost from Canada. These new assessments bring the Canadian list of at-risk species to 860.

Four of these new species were assessed as Endangered – at imminent risk of being lost from Canada. These include a population of a northern shorebird, an extremely rare peat moss, a rush, and the Valley Grasshopper. The grasshopper is limited to a small area in the south of the Okanagan Valley in British Columbia, the hottest and driest region in the country and an insect biodiversity hotspot.

COSEWIC

Committee on the Status of
Endangered Wildlife in Canada



COSEPAC

Comité sur la situation des
espèces en péril au Canada

“The south Okanagan Valley is a goldmine for insects, with new species found every year,” noted Jennifer Heron, Co-chair of the Arthropods Species Specialist Subcommittee. “We came across the Valley Grasshopper there for the first time in 2010. This little grasshopper’s habitat is threatened by the potential rapid expansion of housing development.”

The Short-fruited Rush was also considered for the first time and assessed as Endangered. This plant is now found only in Windsor, Ontario. The Ojibway Prairie Complex that is home to the largest remaining population is slated to become one of Canada’s new National Urban Parks.

In addition to assessing new species, COSEWIC is also tasked with reconsidering previously identified at-risk species to weigh new information and ongoing recovery efforts.

Of the seven species reassessed by the committee, three were moved to a lower at-risk category. Increases in known range and numbers largely reflect increased effort to locate the species.



Lilliput © Fisheries and Oceans Canada

“These changes highlight the importance of community science, and of folks getting involved in looking for enigmatic species,” said Dwayne Lepitzki, Co-chair of the Molluscs Species Specialist Subcommittee.

For example, increased search effort has shown that the situation may not be as dire as was previously thought for a small freshwater mussel, the Lilliput in southern Ontario.

“This mussel isn’t out of the woods yet and still has to contend with high pollution levels from cities and farms. But it does occur more widely than we thought, which we only discovered because people went looking for it” added Lepitzki. The status of the Lilliput mussel improved from Endangered to Special Concern.

COSEWIC

Committee on the Status of
Endangered Wildlife in Canada



COSEPAC

Comité sur la situation des
espèces en péril au Canada

Several species have maintained the same extinction risk, including two populations of the Northern Bottlenose Whale. These whales live in the North Atlantic, where they spend extensive time at depths of up to 1500m. Although both populations may be recovering slowly from whaling in the past, active threats remain, including high levels of underwater noise and entanglement in fishing gear. With an estimated population size of fewer than 100 adults, the Endangered Scotian Shelf population of Northern Bottlenose Whale remains of particular concern.



Northern Bottlenose Whale © David Gaspard, Whitehead Lab

With an ever-increasing number of species at risk of extinction and limited resources to assess them, COSEWIC finds itself stretched.

“Our assessments rely on the efforts of many dedicated people across the country,” said David Lee, Chair of the committee. “Given the magnitude of the biodiversity crisis, we need all hands on deck to identify, assess and conserve species at risk of extinction in Canada”.

Next meeting

COSEWIC’s next scheduled wildlife species assessment meeting will be held in Spring 2025.

COSEWIC

Committee on the Status of
Endangered Wildlife in Canada



COSEPAC

Comité sur la situation des
espèces en péril au Canada

About COSEWIC

COSEWIC assesses the status of wild species, subspecies, varieties, or other 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 and Climate Change in fall 2025 for listing consideration under the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA). At that time, the status reports and status appraisal summaries will be publicly available on the [Species at Risk Public Registry](#).

At its most recent meeting, COSEWIC assessed 12 wildlife species in various COSEWIC risk categories, including 5 Endangered, 4 Threatened, and 3 Special Concern.

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.

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.

COSEWIC

Committee on the Status of
Endangered Wildlife in Canada



COSEPAC

Comité sur la situation des
espèces en péril au Canada

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.

<p>Dr. David Lee Chair, COSEWIC</p> <p>Telephone: 514-366-9574 david.s.lee@mail.mcgill.ca</p>	<p>For general inquiries:</p> <p>COSEWIC Secretariat Canadian Wildlife Service Environment and Climate Change Canada 351 St. Joseph Blvd, 14th floor Gatineau QC K1A 0H3 cosewic-cosepac@ec.gc.ca www.cosewic.ca</p>
<p>For inquiries on amphibians & reptiles (Butler's Gartersnake):</p> <p>Dr. Pamela Rutherford Brandon University Telephone: 204-727-9607 rutherfordp@brandonu.ca</p>	<p>For inquiries on arthropods (Valley Grasshopper):</p> <p>John Klymko Atlantic Canada Conservation Data Centre Telephone: 506-364-2660 john.klymko@accdc.ca</p>
<p>For inquiries on birds (Least Bittern, Lewis's Woodpecker, Short-billed Dowitcher):</p> <p>Dr. Louise Blight Procellaria Research & Consulting and University of Victoria Telephone: 778-677-8495 louiseblight@cosewic.net</p>	<p>For inquiries on marine mammals (Northern Bottlenose Whale):</p> <p>Dr. John K.B. Ford Scientist Emeritus Fisheries and Oceans Canada Telephone: 250-667-4698 jkbford@gmail.com</p>

COSEWIC

Committee on the Status of
Endangered Wildlife in Canada



COSEPAC

Comité sur la situation des
espèces en péril au Canada

<p>For inquiries on molluscs (Lilliput):</p> <p>Dr. Dwayne Lepitzki Telephone: 403-762-0864 lepitzki@telusplanet.net</p>	<p>For inquiries on mosses (Circular-leaved Peat Moss):</p> <p>Dr. René Belland University of Alberta Telephone: 780-492-0801 rbelland@ualberta.ca</p>
<p>For inquiries on terrestrial mammals (Black-tailed Prairie Dog):</p> <p>Dr. Stephen D. Petersen Assiniboine Park Zoo Telephone: 204-793-4363 spetersen@assiniboinepark.ca</p>	<p>For inquiries on vascular plants (Short-fruited Rush):</p> <p>Bruce Bennett Telephone: 867-689-1767 brbennett@klondiker.com</p>
<p>For inquiries on Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge:</p> <p>Roger Gallant Telephone: 709-638-4343 rgallant@gallantenvironmental.com</p>	