

Species at Risk Action Booklet



For First Nations in
Northeastern Manitoba

Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources

The Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources (CIER) is undertaking the role of Species at Risk Pathfinder in the Manitoba Region in order to :

- 1) Increase awareness among First Nations of species at risk and the Species at Risk Act (SARA); and,
- 2) Help First Nations build their capacity to take action to protect and recover species at risk on their lands and waters.

CIER is a national First Nation directed environmental non-profit organisation. We offer research, advisory, and education and training services to Indigenous communities, governments and private companies through our four program areas: Taking Action on Climate Change, Building Sustainable Communities, Protecting Lands and Waters, and Conserving Biodiversity.

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Photo credit: T. Ruta Fuchs

Guide to the Species at Risk Action Booklet

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Species at Risk in First Nations

Aboriginal peoples have a special historical and cultural relationship to plants and animals on their lands and waters. They, along with scientists and others with an interest in the natural world, have noticed that wildlife species (plants and animals) have been disappearing from lands and waters for some time.

Species at Risk are plants and animals in danger of disappearing from the wild

Species at Risk Designations:

Extinct - No longer exists in the wild

Extirpated - No longer exists in the wild in Canada or in a certain area

Endangered - Facing immediate extinction or extirpation

Threatened - Will become endangered if threats continue

Special Concern - Sensitive to threats

Action Booklet Purpose

Learning about what species at risk are in your area is the first step to caring for these plants and animals. This booklet provides information about what species at risk are potentially in your First Nation territory.

You can use this Action Booklet to learn about:

- Species at risk, their habitat, and their *Species at Risk Act (SARA)*¹ designation;
- Why these species are at risk; and,
- How you can get your community involved in protection and recovery of these unique plants and animals.

Area of Focus - First Nations in Northeastern Manitoba

First Nations in northeastern Manitoba were selected as a focus for this Action Booklet because several unique species at risk occur in northeastern Manitoba, potentially within First Nation territories.

It is our hope that this Action Booklet can assist you and your First Nation to undertake stewardship initiatives and consider species at risk in future land-use planning.



Photo credit: T. Ruta Fuchs

¹ The *Species at Risk Act (SARA)* is a Canadian federal law. The *SARA* aims to prevent plants and animals from becoming extinct, help in their recovery, and protect their habitat. The *SARA* applies to all federal lands, including First Nations Reserves. Please see CIER's 'Species at Risk Information Package' for further information (<http://www.cier.ca/information-and-resources/publications-and-products>).

Lake Sturgeon (*Acipenser fulvescens*)

Have You Seen Me?



Photo credit: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

COSEWIC* status:

Endangered (Red-Assiniboine Rivers-
Lake Winnipeg / Nelson River populations)

*COSEWIC is the 'Committee on the Status of
Endangered Wildlife in Canada'.

Sturgeon is currently not listed under SARA,
listing (legal protection) is being considered.

What Do I Look Like?

Where Do I Live?

What Do I Do?

- I am considered a living fossil that has not changed much over the last 100 million years. I have a long snout, whiskers, and bony plates along the sides of my body.
- I can grow to over 9 feet long, and weigh more than 300 pounds! I can also live to be over 100 years old (reaching maturity at about 20 years).
- I feed on the bottom of shallow areas of lakes or rivers. I prefer spawning sites with fast-flowing waters up to 5 metres deep, and clay, sand, or rocky bottoms.

Lake Sturgeon Life Cycle:

May-June: Spawning
July-September: Shallow Water
October-April: Deep Water

Why Are Lake Sturgeon at Risk?

- Physical damage /removal of sturgeon habitat, such as spawning areas, from hydroelectric and other developments on waterways.
- Pollution of waterways from human practices such as forestry or farming can make spawning areas unsuitable, and pollutants can accumulate within sturgeon.
- In the 1800s, over-fishing of sturgeon for commercial markets contributed to the decline of some Lake Sturgeon populations in Canada.

Sturgeon Habitat

(spawning in shallow, fast-flowing waters)



Photo credit: Poplar River First Nation/T. Ruta Fuchs

Name in Your Language: _____

Our Actions

- Working to limit the amount of impact of development on natural systems (e.g. hydroelectric development impacts on spawning areas) is important to maintain habitat for fish such as sturgeon.
- Pollution is often a significant threat to fish species at risk. Implementing best management practices in agriculture or forestry and making improvements to wastewater treatment plants can improve water quality for all species.

First Nations in Action:

The Nelson River Sturgeon Co-Management Board includes members from First Nations such as Cross Lake and Norway House. The board has a sturgeon release program that increases awareness through hands-on action. First Nations youth and others have participated in releasing young sturgeon and learning about sturgeon through both traditional and scientific methods. Such actions help to increase knowledge and stewardship of Lake Sturgeon.



Photo credit: Konrad P. Schmidt

First Peoples' Connection Nanabosho, Soaring Eagle and the Great Sturgeon

One day Nanabosho and Soaring Eagle went out fishing and caught many fish. The trickster Nanabosho stole all the trout for himself and this left Soaring Eagle and his family without fish. They had no food for the winter. The spirits felt sorry for Soaring Eagle and his family and invited Soaring Eagle to a feast. They spent the evening teasing, laughing and joking with Soaring Eagle. After Soaring Eagle was fed, the spirits gave him food to take home to his family. The Trout spirit told Soaring Eagle that he and his wife needed to make twine so that Soaring Eagle could use it to tie and lower his oldest son into a hole that he would make in the ice. This would allow his son to catch some trout and then be pulled out of the hole. Trout told him that as soon as he had enough fish to live on for the winter, he had to stop fishing. Soaring Eagle and his family did as they were told and were rewarded with plentiful fish. Soaring Eagle became greedy though and wanted more fish so they kept fishing. Soon, the twine broke and Soaring Eagle lost his son to the Great Sturgeon.

With Otter's help, Soaring Eagle went to see the Great Sturgeon to get his son back. Great Sturgeon told Soaring Eagle that he had taken too many fish and that is why his son was taken. After Soaring Eagle returned many of the fish, Great Sturgeon gave Soaring Eagle his son back and told him, "Let this be a lesson to you. Take only what you need." Soaring Eagle and his son returned to the surface and Soaring Eagle gave Otter the excess fish.

Adapted from Nanabosho, Soaring Eagle and the Great Sturgeon, Joe McLellan, Pemmican Publications 1993; with permission from Joe McLellan.

What Can You Do?

1. Contact the The Freshwater Institute in Winnipeg to learn more about sturgeon (Phone: 204-983-5000 or E-mail: info@dfo-mpo.gc.ca).
2. Participate in a sturgeon release program at your First Nation (www.nelsonriversturgeon.ca).

Woodland Caribou - Boreal (*Rangifer tarandus caribou*)

Have You Seen Me?



Photo credit: Parks Canada/W. Lynch

SARA status: Threatened

What Do I Look Like?

Where Do I Live?

What Do I Do?

- I am a member of the deer family, but, unlike other members of this family, both male and female caribou have antlers.
- I live in the boreal region of Canada in conifer forests (such as spruce and pine).
- I feed on plants and lichens that grow on the ground and trees. In the winter, I search for lichens to eat by digging (or pawing) through the snow. My name *caribou* probably came from the Aboriginal (Mi'Kmaq) name *xalibu*, which means "the one who paws."

Woodland Caribou Life Cycle:

May-June: Calving
October: Rutting
Summer and Winter: Feeding

Why are Woodland Caribou at Risk?

- Disturbance of caribou habitat by humans (e.g. roads, pipelines, forestry, mining, agriculture, and recreation) has contributed to population declines.
- There have been increases in human development (e.g. roads), and increases in deer and/or moose populations, in some caribou habitat. Predators such as wolves may be attracted to such areas by the increase in prey and have increased access along roads and other corridors. Increased predators can decrease already low caribou populations.
- Changes in snow conditions as a result of climate change may impact survival, by affecting winter feeding and travelling.

Woodland Caribou Habitat (evergreen forests with lichens)



Photo credit: Manitoba Conservation

Name in Your Language: _____

Our Actions

- Destroying or modifying Woodland Caribou habitat can greatly impact their populations. Ensuring that we consider their habitat when planning development activities (e.g. forestry, roads) will assist with Woodland Caribou recovery.
- Mapping where caribou habitat is on your First Nation territory, and including traditional knowledge about caribou, can provide useful information for First Nations land-use management plans.

First Nations in Action:

First Nations are planning for the protection and recovery of species at risk, such as the Woodland Caribou. Pikangikum First Nation in northwestern Ontario have shared their knowledge about Woodland Caribou, and mapped caribou habitat in their traditional territory (through their Whitefeather Forest Initiative). This information was incorporated into their *Keeping the Land* land use strategy; to assist them in stewardship of their lands and waters and the plant and animal species that live there (<http://www.whitefeatherforest.com/>).



Photo credit: CIER

First Peoples' Connection The Woman Who Lives in the Earth

The Woman Who Lives in the Earth is a story about respecting plants, animals, and the Earth. It is from the Chugach Inuit and tells of *Nunam-shua*, the spirit that lives within plants and animals who sometimes appears as a woman. In the story, one man dies because he is disrespectful to the spirit of the Earth, while another is rewarded by *Nunam-shua* because he showed respect to both plants and animals while on a caribou hunt.

To read the story 'The Woman Who Lives in the Earth', see:
Caduto, M.J. and Bruchac, J. 1994. *Keepers of Life*.
Fulcrum Publishing, Golden, Colorado. Pg 179 of 265.



Photo credit: Jeffrey Hochstrasser

What Can You Do?

1. To find out how your First Nation can become involved in caribou protection and recovery, such as participating on a caribou management committee, contact Manitoba Conservation, Wildlife and Ecosystem Protection Branch (<http://www.gov.mb.ca/conservation/wildlife>).
2. Celebrate National Forest Week (mid-September). Hold a public event where Elders, youth, and others can share ideas on forest protection.

Canada Warbler (*Wilsonia canadensis*)

Have You Seen Me?



Photo credit: Christian Artuso

SARA status: Threatened

What Do I Look Like?

Where Do I Live?

What Do I Do?

- I am a brightly-coloured songbird, recognisable by my blue-grey back and tail contrasting with my yellow throat and breast. I also have a distinct white eye-ring.
- I am a bird of the northern forests. In fact, Canada is home to eighty percent of the Canada Warblers' global breeding population.
- My favoured habitat is moist forests with an understory of shrubs where I feed on insects. I build my nest on or very close to the ground, often in dense ferns or fallen logs.

Canada Warbler Life Cycle:

Spring: Arrive at breeding grounds in Canada

Early Summer: Nesting and hatching young

Fall: Migration to South America

Why Are Canada Warblers at Risk?

- The forests of the northern Andes (the main wintering habitat of the Canada Warbler) are being threatened by clearing for agriculture.
- The loss of wetland forests in eastern Canada and road development into the boreal forest in western Canada threaten their habitat.
- Spruce budworm is a food source for the Canada Warbler. The decrease in spruce budworm outbreaks in eastern forests since the 1970s may have contributed to declines in the population.

Canada Warbler Habitat (moist forests with shrub understory)



Photo credit: T. Ruta Fuchs

Our Actions

- Canada Warblers are able to adapt to some human disturbance (e.g. able to live in cut forest, after understory begins to grow back). However, habitat changes that decrease understory and forest canopy can negatively impact these birds. It is important to consider their habitat needs during forestry planning.
- These warblers are sensitive to habitat loss from human activity such as roads or pipeline development. Populations living in northern forested areas should be taken into consideration prior to development.

First Nations in Action:

Several First Nations in Manitoba have been involved in surveying for species at risk birds and their habitat on their lands. For example, one Interlake First Nation has completed surveys and has been monitoring Red-headed Woodpeckers on their lands for the past several years. This bird survey work has involved the community, including leadership, Elders, and youth in learning about species at risk. The leadership has started planning for ways to protect species habitat and for continued community involvement.



Photo credit: CIER/T. Ruta Fuchs

First Peoples' Connection

Birdsong

“At the edge of the cornfield a bird will sing with them in the oneness of their happiness. So they will sing together in tune with the universal power, in harmony with the one Creator of all things. And the bird song and people’s song, and the song of life will become one.”

Song of the Long Hair Kachinas
- Hopi

Frank Waters, Book of the Hopi (New York: Ballantine Books, 1969), 211. Cited in: Caduto, M.J. and Bruchac, J. 1991. Keepers of the Animals. Fifth House Ltd., Calgary, Alberta. Pg 140 of 266.



Photo credit: Christian Artuso

What Can You Do?

1. Contribute to the Manitoba Breeding Bird Atlas (2010-2014) by gathering information about the Canada Warbler and other bird populations and habitat in your area. Volunteers record the birds that they see and hear within a certain block of land, then the information gets recorded and mapped on-line to create an interactive atlas. To volunteer or for more information, contact Christian Artuso at 204-945-6816 or cartuso@birdscanada.org.
2. Incorporate information about SAR birds (e.g. locations of habitat) into your First Nation’s land use plan.

Yellow Rail (*Coturnicops noveboracensis*)

Have You Seen Me?



Photo credit: Jacques Brisson

SARA status: Special Concern

What Do I Look Like?

Where Do I Live?

What Do I Do?

- I am a tiny bird (only about 60 grams). I have yellowish feathers with black and white markings. I have a short tail and some say I resemble a quail.
- I like to live in wet meadows or fields where water-loving plants such as sedges and rushes grow. I live where there is a small amount of standing water (0-12 cm deep), and the ground remains wet throughout the summer.
- Although I am rarely seen, my distinct call is often heard at night - it sounds like two coins or stones tapping together.

Yellow Rail Life Cycle:

Spring: Nesting in dead vegetation

Early Summer: Young learn to fly
(35 days after hatching)

Fall: Migration to coastal wetlands

Why Are Yellow Rails at Risk?

- The loss and degradation of wetlands due to agricultural and human development is the greatest threat to these birds in Canada.
- Habitat loss in the Southern United States where Yellow Rails over-winter is also a threat.
- In the Hudson/James Bay region, habitat has been degraded by Snow Geese feeding in wet areas where Yellow Rails may live.

Yellow Rail Habitat

(Meadows or fields that are wet all summer)



Photo credit: CIER

Name in Your Language:

Our Actions

- Destroying or modifying the Yellow Rail's habitat (e.g. a wet meadow) can eliminate a local population. Our protection of these wetland habitats is needed to sustain populations.
- Woody vegetation (e.g. tree saplings) spreading into wet meadows can limit habitat for Yellow Rails. Some control of woody vegetation encroaching into open areas may benefit these birds (R. Bazin, pers. com., 2007).

First Nations in Action:

First Nations in Manitoba with wetlands in their territory, such as Lake Manitoba and Sandy Bay First Nations, have been learning about the importance of wetland habitat for species at risk. Through workshops and events, these communities have come together to learn more about species at risk such as the Yellow Rail. These communities are currently working to develop land-use practices that will benefit species at risk and their wetland habitats.



Photo credit: Ron Bazin

First Peoples' Connection - Our connection to wetlands

Wetlands are vital to many Aboriginal cultures as places to hunt, trap, and gather foods and medicines. For example, duck hunting, collecting eggs, and fishing are supported by these wet areas. Each wetland plant and animal, including the Yellow Rail, are important to keep wetland ecosystems healthy.

For some First Nations, wetlands and their inhabitants are a part of their connection to their community. In Lake Manitoba First Nation, youth recognised the call of the Yellow Rail as a familiar sound heard in the evening (Lake Manitoba First Nation, pers. comm. 2008).



Photo credit: CIER

What Can You Do?

1. Find out more about Yellow Rails and other species at risk birds that rely on wetlands by contacting the Canadian Wildlife Service (Ron Bazin at 204-984-0863 or ron.bazin@ec.gc.ca).
2. Help protect wetlands for species at risk such as the Yellow Rail by not using chemicals or placing garbage near wetlands or waterways.
3. Hold a community clean-up day to learn about species at risk and remove garbage that could cause pollution of important wetland habitat.

Common Nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*)

Have You Seen Me?



Photo credit: Christian Artuso

SARA status: Threatened

What Do I Look Like?

Where Do I Live?

What Do I Do?

- My feathers are mottled brown, black, white and buff; often camouflaged against the places where I sit, such as a branch or a lichen-covered rock. However, a wide, white stripe across my wings can be seen in flight.
- My breeding habitat in Canada is forest with rock outcrops, clearings, or burned areas. I do not build a nest, but lay my eggs on bare rock, gravel or sand.
- My call is a loud, nasal *beep* or *peet*, often heard at dusk.

Nighthawk Life Cycle:

Late May-June: Migration to breeding areas in Canada

June-August: Lay eggs and raise young

August-September: Migration to South America

Why Are Nighthawks at Risk?

- Decline in insect populations that nighthawks feed on, due to insecticide use since the mid-1900s.
- Nighthawks need open areas for breeding. Changes in habitat (e.g. fire suppression and changes in forestry harvesting practices) reduce habitat for nighthawks.
- Collisions with vehicles.

Nighthawk Habitat

(Open areas, such as rock outcrops)



Photo credit: T. Ruta Fuchs

Our Actions

- Fires play an important role in maintaining open habitat areas for species such as the nighthawk. Allowing naturally occurring fires to burn, where appropriate, instead of suppressing them can help to maintain habitat.
- Nighthawks feed on flying insects. Avoiding the use of insecticides will help not only the nighthawk, but many other species of birds that feed on insects. Healthy populations of insect-feeding birds will in turn help to keep insect pests in check.

First Nations in Action:

The Pikangikum, Slate Falls and Cat Lake First Nations have worked with Ontario Nature, supported by the Canadian Boreal Initiative, to study the breeding bird populations in northern Ontario. Both Indigenous and western science knowledge were applied to record information about birds, including rare species. The knowledge gained from this study is valuable in assisting with land use plans, conservation strategies, and recovery plans for species at risk (www.ontarionature.org/protect/campaigns/boreal_birds_study.php).



Photo credit: T. Ruta Fuchs

First Peoples' Connection - Birds: the 'winged creatures'

Birds play a central role in Aboriginal culture. In Manitoba, the Ojibwa, Dakota, Cree and Dene Nations all place significance on birds or the *winged creatures*, that are not confined to the earth as are other creatures. Evidence of this is reflected in the place names of Manitoba, such as Chitek (Pelican) Lake and Singipsiew sibi (Waterhen River). Peoples' names also reflect this significance. Some people received the name of a bird, according to which bird most resembled their personality (Petch *in* Taylor 2003).

Petch, V. Aboriginal People and Birds: A Brief Cultural History of Manitoba's First People. In Birds of Manitoba; Taylor, P., Ed., Manitoba Naturalists Society: Winnipeg, Manitoba, 2003, pg 56-63.



Photo credit: Gavin Keefe Schaefer

What Can You Do?

1. Have an Elder assist your school or community group to identify some of the culturally important birds in your area. Follow-up with a fieldtrip to learn more about the places where these species live.
2. Join Bird Studies Canada in monitoring birds such as the Common Nighthawk across the country. You can join in such programs as the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network or Project NestWatch (www.bsc-eoc.org/national) to record information that will help conserve species at risk birds and their habitat.

Additional Species at Risk

In selecting the species to focus on for this Action Booklet, our aim was to select species at risk that were most likely to be in your area, and representative species at risk and habitats that exist in northeastern Manitoba. The following is a list of additional species at risk that may occur in your area. Many of the following species are known to occur in specific locations. However, they may occur in areas not previously recorded, such as on First Nation lands. Therefore, it is important to be aware of these species and their habitats.

To learn more about species at risk in your area go to:

www.sararegistry.ca



photo credit: Christian Artuso

Olive-sided Flycatcher
(*Contopus cooperi*)

SARA status:
Threatened

Habitat:
Open areas (bogs or
burns) with tall trees or
standing dead wood



photo credit: Jim Flynn

Whip-poor-will
(*Caprimulgus vociferus*)

SARA status: none
COSEWIC status:
Threatened

Habitat:
Deciduous or mixed
woods



photo credit: Seabrooke Leckie

Rusty blackbird
(*Caprimulgus vociferus*)

SARA status:
Special Concern

Habitat:
Boreal bogs and wet
areas



photo credit: Jim Flynn

Short-eared Owl
(*Asio flammeus*)

SARA status:
Special Concern

Habitat:
Open areas in forest
or areas with stunted
vegetation



photo credit: Mike Danzenbaker

Horned Grebe
(*Podiceps auritus*)

SARA status:
Special Concern

Habitat:
Small lakes



photo credit: Balcer

Northern Leopard Frog
(*Lithobates pipiens*)

SARA status:
Special Concern

Habitat:
Deep ponds surrounded
by vegetation

Funding Options

Funding opportunities are available to assist your First Nation community to get involved in species at risk recovery and protection activities (such as those suggested in the “What Can You Do?” sections of this Action Booklet.).

The following is a list of possible funders. For more information about species at risk in your area and potential funding for species at risk projects:

- 1) Go to www.sararegistry.ca and click on the link ‘Learn about funding.’
- 2) See the *Get Involved Fact Sheet* in CIER’s ‘Species at Risk Information Package’.

Funds (Federal):

Aboriginal Funds for Species at Risk (AFSAR)

Contact Environment Canada at
1-780-951-8672

EcoAction Community Funding Program

Contact EcoAction office at
e-mail ecoaction@ec.gc.ca

Habitat Stewardship Program (HSP)

Contact Canadian Wildlife Service
1-204-984-0863

Interdepartmental Recovery Fund (IRF)

(requires partnership with a federal organisation)
Contact www.irf-fir.gc.ca

Funds (Manitoba Provincial):

Sustainable Development Innovations Fund

Contact Manitoba Conservation, Pollution
Prevention Branch at 1-204-945-3554 or e-mail
pollupreve@gov.mb.ca

Species at Risk Pathfinder

Contact the Species at Risk Pathfinder at CIER for assistance in getting your community involved in protecting/recovering species at risk, or with any questions about the information found in this Action Booklet.

Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources
(CIER)

1-204-956-0660 or www.cier.ca



Photo credit: Christian Artuso

Action Booklet References

These references were used to develop the ‘Have You Seen Me?’ and ‘Why Are...At Risk?’ sections of the Action Booklet. Other references are found associated with text on the Action Booklet pages.

Environment Canada, www.sararegistry.ca

Manitoba Conservation, Manitoba’s Species at Risk Fact Sheets, www.gov.mb.ca/conservation/wildlife/sar/

Taylor, P., Ed. 2003. Birds of Manitoba. Manitoba Naturalists Society: Winnipeg, Manitoba, pp 504.

The views expressed herein are solely those of the Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources (CIER).

This Project was undertaken with the financial support of the Government of Canada provided through the Department of the Environment.



Photo credit: Christian Artuso



Photo credit: K. Schmidt
Lake Sturgeon
(young of the year)

If you have any questions or comments about this Action Booklet, please contact:

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A circular background image for the contact information showing a sunset over a calm lake. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a golden glow across the water and silhouetting a line of trees in the distance.

Photo credit: Parks Canada/W. Lynch



Photo credit: Ron Egan