



Mummichog ©Roger Gallant

Red Pine ©Emily Herdman

SSAC Activity Report

2013-2014

Prepared by the Species Status Advisory Committee

**Annual Activity Report
Species Status Advisory Committee
2013-2014**

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Message from the Chairperson

I am pleased to provide the Annual Activity Report for the Species Status Advisory Committee (SSAC). The mandate of the SSAC is derived from section 6 of the *Endangered Species Act*, 2001, which provides for an Advisory Committee to review the status of species at risk, to recommend to the Minister, designations and re-designations of species and to advise the Minister on related designation matters.

The SSAC is a category 3 government entity and as such, in accordance with the *Transparency and Accountability Act*, is required to provide annual performance reports based on activities in the preceding fiscal year. Such a report is also required of the SSAC under the *Endangered Species Act*, 2001. This report presents an overview of the SSAC and our accomplished objectives from April 1, 2013 to March 31, 2014. It is the intention of the SSAC to report on the same Objectives and Indicators in each year, thereby providing a reference for the following year. As Chair of the SSAC for the period 2013-2014, I am pleased to report that the committee successfully achieved all objectives set forth in its activity plan for 2013-2014. I also attest that the SSAC is accountable for the preparation of this report and for the results explained herein.



Dr. Christine Campbell
Chair, SSAC
April 3, 2014

Overview of the Committee

a. Key Statistics

Nine species recommended to the Minister in 2008-2009 were listed under the *Endangered Species Act* in 2013-2014. One new report was commissioned and reviewed in 2013-2014, with assessment and submission to the Government to occur in 2014-2015. A report commissioned in 2010-2011 is undergoing continued editing and addition of new information, date of final review and assessment has not been determined for this report.

b. Representation

This SSAC consists of up to **nine** (9) members appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council. Members serve for a period of two (2) or three (3) years; and are eligible for re-appointment.

At the end of 2013-14, the committee had **six** members:

Dr. Christine Campbell (Chair) - Aquatic invertebrates
Dr. Luise Hermanutz - Plant ecology, conservation biology
Dr. Thomas Knight – Freshwater fish, small mammals
Dr. Paul Marino – Mosses, terrestrial invertebrates
Mr. John E. Maunder - General natural history, plants, invertebrates
Dr. William Montevecchi - Birds

Committee members serve as volunteers. They normally meet in person once to twice a year. Meetings may also be held via telephone or other telecommunication devices. The committee normally contracts the preparation of species status reports to private consultants.

The secretariat to the SSAC is provided by the Wildlife Division and managed by:

Endangered Species and Biodiversity Program, Wildlife Division
Department of Environment and Conservation
PO Box 2007, 117 Riverside Dr., Corner Brook, NL, A2H 7S1

c. Description of Revenues and Expenditures

A total of \$4689.46 of an allocated \$10,000 was spent on SSAC related activities in 2013-14. A breakdown: \$2000.00 on reports and \$2689.46 on travel (airfare, hotels, meals).

Travel, accommodations and related costs, as well as contractual fees, are provided for within the account budget of the Wildlife Division, Department of Environment and Conservation.

d. Lines of Business

The Species Status Advisory Committee undertakes the following line of business:

1. Advises government on the designation and re-designation of species under the *Endangered Species Act*.

The Committee's duties include:

- developing, and submitting to the Minister, criteria for the designation of a species
- developing criteria for species status reports that facilitate a review of the status of the species
- commissioning and receiving species status reports
- making recommendations to the Minister about designating species and protecting critical and recovery habitat
- referring concerns about the status of species to COSEWIC (Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada), when the species is of national importance
- maintaining a list of species for future review of their status
- conducting periodic reviews of the status of designated species at least once every 10 years after the designation
- submitting a report to the Minister on its activities in the preceding calendar year, before April 15 of each year

Copies of Annual Reports and Status Reports can be found on the Wildlife Division's website at:

<http://www.env.gov.nl.ca/env/wildlife/endangeredspecies/ssac/index.html>

e. Mandate

The mandate of the Species Status Advisory Committee is derived from section 6 of the *Endangered Species Act*, 2001, which provides for an Advisory Committee to review and recommend to the Minister designations and re-designations of species.

f. Vision

The vision of the Species Status Advisory Committee is the perpetuation of viable populations of all native species in Newfoundland and Labrador.

g. Mission

By 2017, the Species Status Advisory Committee will have made recommendations to the responsible minister about the conservation status of high priority species based on species status assessments using the best available scientific, traditional, and local ecological knowledge.

Highlights and Accomplishments

The committee currently consists of six members, thus not at full complement.

Candidates to fill the three vacant positions, with expertise in non-vascular plants/lichens, insects, and/or Labrador region have been identified by the Committee for consideration by the Minister.

The Committee met twice in the 2013-2014 fiscal year: April 15, 2013 via conference call and in St. John's on September 24, 2013.

The committee met all its objectives for the 2013-2014 year.

Activities

The activities of the Species Status Advisory Committee were guided by the *Endangered Species Act* and the *Species Status Advisory Committee Regulations*; this has not only been reflected in the committee's line of business but also in the objectives, measures and indicators established in their initial Activity Plan. Appendix A presents the appropriate portions of the legislation that were used to establish the committee's objectives, measures and indicators. The SSAC reported on the same Objectives and Indicators in each year, which provided a reference for the following year.

Objective 1: The Species Status Advisory Committee will have processed 2 to 5 species status reports annually as required, depending on the availability of resources and expertise.

Measure: Processed species status reports

Indicators	Accomplishments
Number of reports commissioned and reviewed	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Red Pine (<i>Pinus resinosa</i>) – author Bruce Roberts, commissioned in 2010-2011, revised version edited in 2013-2014. Final review and assessment on hold until report is complete enough to yield a recommendation. 2. Mummichog (<i>Fundulus heteroclitus</i>) – author Roger Gallant, commissioned in 2013-2014, under revision. Final review and assessment scheduled for 2014-2015. 3.
Number of species assessed	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Northern Twayblade (<i>Listera borealis</i>) assessed as Endangered. 2. Mountain Bladder Fern (<i>Cystopteris montana</i>; Newfoundland Designatable Unit) assessed as Endangered. 3. Mountain Bladder Fern (<i>Cystopteris montana</i>; Labrador Designatable Unit) assessed as Data Deficient.
Recommendations provided to the responsible Minister	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Northern Twayblade recommended as Endangered in September 2013. 2. Mountain Bladder Fern (NF Designatable Unit) recommended as Endangered in September 2013.

Objective 2: The Species Status Advisory Committee will have re-evaluated the criteria for developing priority lists, re-evaluated existing priority lists, and developed new priority lists for future status assessments.

Measure 1: Criteria for developing priority lists are re-evaluated

Indicators	Accomplishments
Criteria for developing priority lists are reviewed.	The SSAC completed a review of the criteria used to develop priority lists during the SSAC meeting in September 2013. Evaluation and implementation of criteria will be an ongoing process as the usefulness of criteria and availability of appropriate information are evaluated.
Formal records of criteria met for each priority species are developed and kept on file.	Records of criteria met for each priority species are included in the SSAC meeting minutes from 2012-2013, for species that have been on the list since then and in the meeting minutes from 2013-2014 for the removal of Eastern Star Sedge (<i>Carex radiata</i>) and Ascending Moonwort (<i>Botrychium ascendens</i>).

Measure 2: Existing priority lists are re-evaluated

Indicators	Accomplishments
Existing priority lists are revised as necessary	Completed for 2013-2014. Taxonomic priority lists including those for lichen, vascular plants, mosses, amphibians, birds, freshwater fish, mammals, and invertebrates were reviewed by members and changes made as necessary.
Existing priority lists are published in the Annual Report and made public.	Existing priority lists are included in the SSAC's Annual Report (under the Endangered Species Act, which will be available on the SSAC website: http://www.env.gov.nl.ca/env/wildlife/endangeredspecies/ssac/index.html

Measure 3: New assessment lists are developed, as required.

Indicators	Accomplishments
A list of candidates for species status assessment is developed annually using new priority lists.	The 2013-2014 assessment list developed by the SSAC includes Common Dodder (<i>Cuscuta gronovii</i>), Menzie's Rattlesnake Plantain (<i>Goodyera oblongifolia</i>), Hops (<i>Humulus lupulus</i> var. <i>lupuloides</i>), Mermaidweed (<i>Proserpinaca pectinata</i>), Matchstick Lichen (<i>Pilophorus fibula</i>), Wrinkled Shield Lichen (<i>Pannaria lurida</i> subsp. <i>russellii</i>), and Mummichog (<i>Fundulus heteroclitus</i>).
The assessment list is published in the annual report and made public.	The assessment list is included in the 2013-2014 Annual Report and provided on the SSAC website: http://www.env.gov.nl.ca/env/wildlife/endangeredspecies/ssac/index.html

Objective 3: The Species Status Advisory Committee will have reviewed the IUCN and COSEWIC species status report guidelines and assessment criteria and revised the SSAC species status report guidelines and assessment criteria as required.

Measure 1: SSAC species status report guidelines and assessment criteria are reviewed and revised.

Indicators	Accomplishments
SSAC species status report guidelines are reviewed and revised as required to ensure they encompass any changes made to IUCN or COSEWIC species status report guidelines and assessment criteria.	Completed in 2013-2014. No changes were made to International Union for the Conservation of Nature or Committee on the Status of Wildlife in Canada species status report guidelines or assessment criteria, thus no changes were made to SSAC guidelines or criteria.
SSAC species status report guidelines and assessment criteria are revised as required.	No revisions required in 2013-2014.
Any revisions to the SSAC species status report guidelines and assessment criteria are published in the annual report and made public.	The SSAC Annual Report for 2013-2014 (required under the Endangered Species Act) contains up to date species status report guidelines and assessment criteria. http://www.env.gov.nl.ca/env/wildlife/endangeredspecies/ssac/index.htm No changes were made to either the report guidelines or the assessment criteria in 2013-2014.

Opportunities and Challenges Ahead

The potential addition of three new members to the SSAC, one with expertise in invertebrates, one with knowledge of Labrador, and one with knowledge of non-vascular plants/lichen, will ensure greater coverage of taxonomic groups and an increase in regional expertise. The committee has reviewed several potential candidates with the noted experience; all candidates could support the committee and provide a great deal of valuable information. An updated candidate list and supporting information was provided to the Minister in October 2013.

Predetermining information needs and expertise that will be required is a challenge as species needing detailed assessments do not always fall into a specific taxon or geographic area. Given the current workload combined with the varying expertise required, the limit of nine members is insufficient to meet SSAC commitments and consideration should be given to increasing the size of the Committee.

Finding authors to prepare status reports continues to be a significant challenge. The SSAC has decided to maintain a larger assessment list in the hopes of attracting a wider array of experts to complete status reports. With the growing list of candidate species the SSAC, as a volunteer body, will also face challenges to the members to find adequate time to carry out report reviews and do the other tasks associated with membership. The SSAC has been encouraged by the listing of nine species under the *Endangered Species Act* in 2013-2014. Ongoing improvements

in the timeliness of feedback on species status recommendations is one way to encourage members of the SSAC to continue to commit significant time and effort to their roles on the committee.

Financial Statement

Expenditures on the SSAC are included in the expenditures reported for the Wildlife Division. This committee does not require an audited financial statement.

Appendix A: Legislation relevant to the mandate and activities of the SSAC

(Source: Endangered Species Act)

6. (1) A species status advisory committee is established to review and recommend to the minister designations and re-designations of species.

(2) The SSAC shall base its decisions on the best scientific knowledge available to it and on traditional ecological and local ecological knowledge about a species.

11. (1) The SSAC shall

(a) develop and submit to the minister, criteria for the designation of a species under sections 7 and 9;

(b) develop criteria for species status reports which facilitate a review of the status of a species;

(c) commission and receive status reports;

(d) make recommendations to the minister about designating species and the protection of critical and recovery habitat;

(e) refer concerns about the status of species to COSEWIC where the species is of national importance;

(f) maintain a list of species for future review of their status;

(g) conduct periodic reviews of the status of designated species, at least once every 10 years after the designation;

(h) submit a report to the minister on the activities of the committee in the preceding calendar year, before April 15 of each year; and

(i) perform other duties that may be prescribed in the regulations made under subsection 44(1).

(2) the SSAC shall make the following documents available to the public:

(a) species status reports;

(b) criteria for designation of a species; and

(c) annual reports submitted under paragraph 11(1)(h) within 30 days after the report is released to the minister.

12. (1) the SSAC shall consult with groups or individuals that have traditional and local ecological knowledge about a species and its habitat.

(2) Traditional ecological and local ecological knowledge shall be considered by the SSAC in evaluating the status of a species.