



SSAC

Species Status Advisory Committee

Annual Activity Report 2007-08



**Annual Activity Report
Species Status Advisory Committee
2007-08**

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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*, 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. Given the Committee's current mandate, the SSAC provides support for, but does not contribute directly to, the Department's strategic directions.

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 calendar. Such a report is also required of the SSAC under the *Endangered Species Act*. This report presents an overview of the SSAC and goals accomplished in 2007-08. As co-chair of the SSAC for the period 2007-08, I am pleased to report that the committee successfully achieved all goals set forth in its activity plan for 2007-08. 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
August 22, 2008

Overview of the Committee

a. Key Statistics

One new report was commissioned, 1 report was reviewed and withdrawn until new information can be incorporated into the report and 11 assessments were carried out. No recommendations based on status report assessments were made to the Minister in 2007-08.

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 2007-08, the committee had seven members:

Dr. Luise Hermanutz - Plant ecology, conservation biology
Dr. William Montevecchi - Birds
Ms. Nathalie Djan-Chékar (co-chair) - Vascular and non-vascular plants
Mr. John E. Maunder - General natural history, plants, invertebrates
Dr. Christine Campbell (co-chair) - Aquatic invertebrates
Ms. Shelley Pardy-Moores - Terrestrial invertebrates
Mr. Mac Pitcher – General natural history, lichens

Committee members serve as volunteers. They normally meet in person 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 in the person of:

Mr. Joe Brazil, Senior Manager
Biodiversity and Endangered Species 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 \$12,458.21 of an allocated \$20,000 was spent on SSAC related activities in 2007-08. A breakdown: \$5,000 on reports, \$1500.15 on catering and room rental, and \$5958.06 on travel (air fare, 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, Status reports and fact sheets for listed species can be found on the Wildlife Division's website at:

http://www.env.gov.nl.ca/env/wildlife/wildatrisk/ssac_mainpage.htm

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 2011, the Species Status Advisory Committee will have made recommendations to the responsible minister about the conservation status of a targeted selection of high priority species representing diverse taxonomic groups.

Highlights and Accomplishments

The committee started the year with eight members. Dr. Christine Doucet (chair) declined re-appointment in September 2007.

The SSAC selected potential candidates and made recommendations to the Minister, in January and February 2008, for two additional members, with expertise in traditional ecological knowledge, freshwater species, and Labrador environments.

The committee met three times in 2007-08: April 10 and 11, 2007 in St. John's, October 10 and 11, 2007 in Corner Brook, and February 19 and 20, 2008 in St. John's. The committee also had one conference call in March 2008.

The committee met all its goals and objectives for the 2007-2008 year.

Activities

The activities of the Species Status Advisory Committee are guided by the *Endangered Species Act* and the Species Status Advisory Committee Regulations; this is not only reflected in the committee's line of business but also in the goals, measures and indicators established in their initial Activity Plan. Appendix A presents the appropriate portions of the legislation that have been used to establish the committee's goals, measures and indicators.

a. Progress on strategic directions

Given the committee's current mandate, the SSAC provides support for but does not contribute directly to the Department's strategic directions.

b. Goals, Measures and Indicators for the next fiscal year

Goal 1: By 2008, the Species Status Advisory Committee will have processed at least 10 species status reports.

Measure: Processed reports.

| Indicators | Accomplishments |
|--|---|
| Number of reports commissioned | <p>1. Lindley's aster (<i>Symphyotrichum ciliolatum</i>), report commissioned in 2006-07, reviewed, however assessment deferred to a later date in order to incorporate new information.</p> <p>2. Graceful felt lichen (<i>Erioderma mollissimum</i>), Dr. David Richardson selected to author the report. Report was completed and accepted in 2007-08 and <i>Erioderma mollissimum</i> will be assessed next year.</p> |
| Number of species assessed | <p>1. Bodin's milkvetch (<i>Astragalus bodinii</i>)</p> <p>2. Oval-leaved creeping spearwort (<i>Ranunculus flammula</i> var. <i>ovalis</i>)</p> <p>3. Rock dwelling sedge (<i>Carex petricosa</i> var. <i>misandroides</i>)</p> <p>4. Shaved sedge (<i>Carex tonsa</i> var. <i>tonsa</i>)</p> <p>5. Cutleaf Fleabane (<i>Erigeron compositus</i>)</p> <p>6. Sharpleaf aster (<i>Oclemena acuminata</i>)</p> <p>7. Alaska rein orchid (<i>Platanthera foetida</i>)</p> <p>8. Water pygmyweed (<i>Tillaea aquatica</i>)</p> <p>9. Tradescant's aster (<i>Symphyotrichum tradescantii</i>)</p> <p>10. Gmelin's watercrowfoot (<i>Ranunculus gmelinii</i>)</p> <p>11. Feathery False Solomon's Seal (<i>Maianthemum racemosum</i> subsp. <i>racemosum</i>)</p> |
| Recommendations provided to the responsible Minister | No recommendations were forwarded to the minister in the 2007-08 fiscal year. A recommendation requires submission of a finalized report to the Minister. The reports of these 11 species took a considerable amount of time, and they were completed only at the end of 2007-08, too late for submission in that year. |

Goal 2: By 2008, the Species Status Advisory Committee will have evaluated existing priority lists and developed new priority lists for future status assessments.

Measure 1: Existing priority lists are evaluated.

| Indicators | Accomplishments |
|--|--|
| If required, existing priority lists are revised | In 2007-08 the SSAC re-evaluated the priority lists of several taxonomic groups including birds, amphibians, vascular plants, mammals and invertebrates. |

| | |
|--|--|
| If required, a report is prepared summarizing the evaluation results of existing priority lists. | The changes to priority lists were summarized in the SSAC Annual Report http://www.env.gov.nl.ca/env/wildlife/wildatrisk/ssac_mainpage.htm |
|--|--|

Measure 2: New priority lists are developed.

| Indicators | Accomplishments |
|--|---|
| A report is prepared to identify taxa specific priority lists for further species assessments. | In 2007-08 a new species assessment priority list was developed. The 2007-08 SSAC Annual Report summarizes this list http://www.env.gov.nl.ca/env/wildlife/wildatrisk/ssac_mainpage.htm |

Goal 3: By 2008, the Species Status Advisory Committee will have reviewed assessment guidelines and evaluation criteria.

Measure: Guidelines are reviewed.

| Indicators | Accomplishments |
|--|---|
| If required, a report is prepared summarizing the review of the guidelines for the production of species assessment reports. | There was a re-evaluation of the template developed for writing SSAC reports during the spring meeting in 2007-08. The new template is available in the The 2007-08 SSAC Annual Report http://www.env.gov.nl.ca/env/wildlife/wildatrisk/ssac_mainpage.htm |
| If required, the guidelines for the production of species assessment reports are revised. | Completed in 2007-08. See SSAC Annual Report http://www.env.gov.nl.ca/env/wildlife/wildatrisk/ssac_mainpage.htm |
| If required, a report is prepared summarizing the results of the Committee's review of existing evaluation criteria. | Not required. |
| If required, existing evaluation criteria are revised and submitted to the responsible minister. | Not required. |

Opportunities and Challenges Ahead

With the addition of several new members in the next fiscal year the SSAC will have additional taxa and aboriginal knowledge specialists. This should ensure an even greater coverage of species and knowledge bases within the Province. It is anticipated that finding authors to prepare status reports will continue to be a significant challenge. 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 also considers that it needs timely feedback to its recommendations. This should normally occur, as Government is required under the *Endangered Species Act* to make a public decision within 90 days of the recommendations. A response to several recommendations from the previous year remains outstanding.

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 preceeding 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.