



Mummichog ©Roger Gallant

Red Pine ©Emily Herdman

SSAC Activity Report

2014-2015

Prepared by the Species Status Advisory Committee

**Annual Activity Report
Species Status Advisory Committee
2014-2015**

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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. 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 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 in 2014-2015. It is the intention of the SSAC to report on the same Objectives, Measures and Indicators in each year, thereby providing a reference for the following year. As Chair of the SSAC for the period 2014-2015, I am pleased to report that the committee has partially completed most of the objectives set forth in its activity plan for 2014-2015. 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
July 3, 2015

Overview of the Committee

a. Key Statistics

In 2014-2015, based on recommendations to the Minister from the SSAC three species were listed under the *Endangered Species Act* and one removed. Added to the list were the threatened Newfoundland Gray-cheeked Thrush (*Catharus minimus minimus*), and Sharpleaf Aster (*Oclemena acuminata*) and the vulnerable Bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*). The Species Status Advisory Committee reassessed the status of Gray-cheeked Thrush (*Catharus minimus*) across the province and determined the species as a whole was not at risk, while maintaining risk status for the island subspecies *C. minimums minimus*. No new reports were commissioned and reviewed in 2014-2015. Two species were assessed with reports and recommendations expected to be submitted to government in September of 2015. One of the species assessed was based on a report commissioned in 2010-2011.

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 2014-15, 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.

Dr. Luise Hermanutz expressed her intention to step down to the committee in late 2014-15 and formally resigned in the 2015-16 year.

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

The SSAC expenditures were limited in 2014-15 to the cost of a teleconference in March. Activities were minimal given several of the members were preparing to

leave the province or were gone out of the province for a year. The committee has been actively seeking authors for several priority species but has yet to start any new status reports.

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 Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC), 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

During the 2014-15 fiscal year the committee consisted of six members, thus not at full complement. Currently the committee consists of five members with the resignation of Dr. Hermanutz

Candidates to fill the four vacant positions, with expertise in non-vascular plants/lichens, insects, and Labrador region have been identified by the Committee and are awaiting approval for appointment by the Minister.

The Committee met once in the 2014-2015 fiscal year: March 5, 2015 via conference call.

The committee partially met its objectives for the 2014-2015 year. This included completing an assessment on 2 species the Mummichog and Red Pine.

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 will on the same Objectives and Indicators in each year, which will provide a reference for the following year.

Objective 1: The Species Status Advisory Committee will have processed 1 to 3 species status reports annually as required, depending on the availability of resources and expertise.

Measure: Species status reports processed and recommendations provided to Minister

Indicators	Accomplishments
Number of reports commissioned and reviewed	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Red Pine (<i>Pinus resinosa</i>) – report being revised following assessment. 2. Mummichog (<i>Fundulus heteroclitus</i>) – report being revised following assessment.
Number of species assessed	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Red Pine (<i>Pinus resinosa</i>) – (NF Designatable Unit) Assessment to be sent to Minister in 2015, following report revisions. 2. Mummichog (<i>Fundulus heteroclitus</i>) – (NF Designatable Unit) Assessment to be sent to Minister in 2015, following report revisions.
Recommendations provided to the responsible Minister	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No recommendations forwarded 2014-15, however expected in 2015-16. Insufficient time in the reporting period to revise status reports and recommendations and provide them to the minister.

Objective 2: The Species Status Advisory Committee will have reviewed and revised priority lists and criteria for their development on an annual basis, or as deemed necessary by the Committee.

Measure 1: Criteria for the development of priority lists are reviewed and revised as necessary.

Indicators	Accomplishments
Up to date criteria for the development of priority lists are maintained.	The SSAC completed a review of the criteria used to develop priority lists during the SSAC meeting in March 2015. Current criteria were maintained. The committee in conjunction with Endangered Species and Biodiversity Staff will develop a guidance document with criteria for developing priority lists in 2016.

Measure 2: Priority lists are reviewed and revised as necessary.

Indicators	Accomplishments
Up-to-date taxonomic priority lists are maintained	These lists are being updated as part of the 2015 general status review which was started in 2014 and will be completed in 2016. Several 1000 species are part of this review. The SSAC will incorporate the General Status Ranks into their priority setting. General Status Ranks are not developed by the SSAC but are developed by species experts and Biodiversity Program Staff (Wildlife Division).
A list of candidates for species status assessment is reviewed annually and updated as necessary	Partially completed for 2014-2015. Taxonomic priority lists including those for mosses, fish, mammals, birds and several invertebrate groups are in the process of being re-evaluated based on finalized General Status of Wildlife in Newfoundland and Labrador lists. These general status ranks for vascular plants, lichens, mammals, and other vertebrate groups are being updated. The SSAC will finalize all priority lists when the Wildlife Division completes its General Status Ranking project for 2015-

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The SSAC webpage is maintained with up-to-date priority lists.	Existing priority lists will be available on the SSAC website following the General Status review in 2015: http://www.env.gov.nl.ca/env/wildlife/endangeredspecies/ssac/index.html

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

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

Indicators	Accomplishments
SSAC species status report guidelines and assessment criteria are reviewed annually and revised as required to ensure they encompass any changes made to IUCN or COSEWIC species status report guidelines and assessment criteria	Completed in 2014-2015. No changes were made to IUCN or COSEWIC species status report guidelines or assessment criteria, thus no changes were made to SSAC guidelines or criteria.
Up-to-date SSAC species status report guidelines and assessment criteria are published in the annual report and made public	The SSAC Annual Report for 2014-2015 contains up to date species status report guidelines and assessment criteria. http://www.env.gov.nl.ca/env/wildlife/endangeredspecies/ssac/index.html No changes were made to either the report guidelines or the assessment criteria in 2014-2015.

Objective 4: The SSAC will have provided a regional perspective on national status recommendations to the Minister when appropriate.

Measure 1: Provided a regional perspective on national status recommendations to the Minister through the Department of Environment and Conservation.

Indicators	Accomplishments
National status recommendations from COSEWIC are reviewed.	No reviews were conducted an update on assessments was provided by the NL COSEWIC member.
Regional perspective on national status	None required.

<p>recommendations are provided to the Minister through the Department as appropriate.</p>	
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Opportunities and Challenges Ahead

The potential addition of four new members to the SSAC, one with expertise in terrestrial invertebrates, one with knowledge of Labrador, one with knowledge of non-vascular plants/lichen, and additional expertise in vascular plants, 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 Department in spring 2015.

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 the Committee continues to feel that consideration should be given to increasing the size of the Committee. The Department of Environment and Conservation has been actively working to fill the vacant positions in the near future.

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 continuing efforts of the department of Environment and Conservation with respect to listing recommended species under the *Endangered Species Act* in. 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.