

Response Statement - Western Yellow-bellied Racer

January 11, 2017

Common Name: Western Yellow-bellied Racer

Scientific Name: *Coluber constrictor mormon*

Status assessment by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC): Threatened

How the Minister of the Environment intends to respond to the assessment: COSEWIC has reassessed the Western Yellow-bellied Racer, which is currently on Schedule 1 as Special Concern and concluded its status has changed. The Minister of the Environment will forward the new COSEWIC assessment of the Western Yellow-bellied Racer as Threatened to the Governor in Council as soon as possible after the close of the extended consultation period, and analysis as appropriate. During the extended consultation period the Minister of Environment will consult with the government of British Columbia, Indigenous Peoples, stakeholders, and the public on whether or not the Western Yellow-bellied Racer should have its status on the *List of Wildlife Species at Risk* (Schedule 1) of Special Concern changed to Threatened.

Once a species has been assessed by COSEWIC, further steps must be undertaken before it is added to Schedule 1 of the *Species at Risk Act*. For more information on this process, please view [The Species Listing Process Under SARA](#).

Reason(s) for status designation provided by COSEWIC: The Canadian distribution of this snake is confined to arid valleys of south-central British Columbia, an area with intensive agricultural development and an expanding human population and tourism industry. While relatively little is known of this elusive snake, it likely faces similar threats as other large snakes with which it shares its habitat (Western Rattlesnake, Great Basin Gophersnake). Migratory behaviour of snakes between overwintering dens on valley slopes and lowland foraging habitats, together with increasing numbers of roads and traffic volumes, make populations particularly sensitive to road mortality and habitat loss and fragmentation. Life history characteristics, such as small clutch size and infrequent reproduction by females, increase vulnerability of populations to disturbance, persecution, and changes in land use.

Occurrence: British Columbia

Competent Minister(s):
Minister of Environment

Province(s) and territory (territories) to be consulted:
British Columbia

Other applicable legislation: Where it occurs in a National Wildlife Area this species is subject to the *Wildlife Area Regulations* under the *Canada Wildlife Act*, which prohibits activities that could be harmful to species and to their habitat, unless a permit is issued indicating the permitted activity.

Conservation activities underway: The Management Plan for the Western Yellow-bellied Racer (*Coluber constrictor mormon*) in Canada has been posted as final on the Species at Risk Public Registry.