

## **REASONS FOR EXTENDING THE TIME PERIOD PROVIDED FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF SCHEDULE 2 SPECIES**

COSEWIC's main function is to assess the level of risk to wildlife species based on the best available scientific information, aboriginal traditional knowledge and community knowledge regarding the status of species suspected of being at risk. This assessment is based on biological factors compiled in detailed status reports (SARA, subsection 21(1)) and the application of assessment criteria, followed by classification into categories based on level of risk as extirpated, endangered, threatened or special concern.

In 1999, COSEWIC adopted new quantitative assessment criteria based on criteria developed by the World Conservation Union (IUCN). Application of these criteria results in more objective, more consistent and more easily explained assessments.

After the new criteria were adopted, the Government asked COSEWIC to reassess all previously designated species using these criteria. This reassessment work is ongoing and has not yet been completed. Schedule 1, the List of Wildlife Species at Risk, sets out the COSEWIC list of species at risk that were assessed as of the end of 2001 (either as new listings or as reassessments of previous listings) using these new criteria. Schedule 2 contains 39 species that had been designated prior to the adoption of the new criteria as endangered or threatened, and that as of the end of 2001 had not been reassessed by COSEWIC. Schedule 3 lists the species previously designated in the Special Concern category that have not yet been reassessed using the new criteria.

COSEWIC has already reassessed 13 of the 39 species on Schedule 2 of SARA. For the remaining 26 species (11 endangered and 15 threatened), the information contained in status reports is more than ten years old. These 26 species include 14 mammals (of which 9 are marine), 7 fish, 2 birds, 2 reptiles and 1 plant. The 9 marine mammals include 4 populations of the Beluga Whale (St. Lawrence River, Ungava Bay, Southeast Baffin Island-Cumberland Sound and Eastern Hudson Bay populations), the Right Whale, the Bowhead Whale (Eastern Arctic and Western Arctic populations), the Humpback Whale (North Pacific population), and the Harbour Porpoise (Northwest Atlantic population). The five land mammals include the Peary Caribou (Banks Island, High Arctic and Low Arctic populations), the Wolverine (Eastern population) and the Townsend's Mole. The fish are the Blackfin Cisco, Shortjaw Cisco, Shortnose Cisco, Black Redhorse, Copper Redhorse, Deepwater Sculpin (Great Lakes population), and Lake Whitefish (Lake Simcoe population). The two birds awaiting reassessment are the Northern Bobwhite and the Prairie Loggerhead Shrike, and the two reptiles are the Lake Erie Water Snake and the Blanding's Turtle (Nova Scotia population). The only plant is a tree, the American Chestnut.

COSEWIC is in the process of updating the status reports on all of these species with the most current and best available scientific information and aboriginal

traditional knowledge (ATK), so that it can make accurate reassessments. For example, the inclusion of ATK is vital to the assessment of the Peary Caribou, and requires time for the necessary consultations to occur. COSEWIC expects to complete these reassessments by 2006.

Recognizing the urgency of determining whether species continue to be a risk, SARA sets tight timelines, ensuring that species at risk are considered for legal protection as soon as possible. As a result, COSEWIC must report its reassessments of species on the existing Schedule 2 to the Canadian Endangered Species Conservation Council and the public. Unless this period has been extended, reassessments of Schedule 2 species must be completed within 30 days of section 130 of SARA coming into force.

An extension of three years has been granted for COSEWIC to complete its reassessment of Schedule 2 species. This was necessary because COSEWIC does not currently have up-to-date scientific information and aboriginal traditional knowledge, where relevant, to complete the reassessment of some of these species. This extension will give COSEWIC the time it requires for a thorough reassessment of their status.

NOTE: The extension order was developed before COSEWIC met in May 2003 and reassessed six of the Schedule 2 species included in the order. This means that currently there are 20 species awaiting reassessment.