

**Alberta Conservation Association
2008/09 Project Summary Report**

Project name: *Alberta Wildlife Status Reports*

Project leader: Sue Peters

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Partnerships: Alberta Sustainable Resource Development

Key findings

- ACA has published 65 status reports (5 of which have been updated) on species at risk in Alberta since 1997, including reports on mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates and plants.
- The reports include current information on each species' conservation biology, habitat, population, distribution, limiting factors, and management in Alberta.
- These reports are used by Alberta's Endangered Species Conservation Committee to recommend a legal status designation to the Minister of Alberta Sustainable Resource Development.

Abstract

The Alberta Wildlife Status Report Series provides comprehensive summaries of the status of selected wildlife species in Alberta. High priority species are those considered *At Risk* or *May Be At Risk* in *The General Status of Alberta Wild Species 2005*, or considered to be at risk at a national level by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada. Each spring, we meet with government staff to prioritize the species that are most in need of a detailed status assessment. Status reports summarize the most current information on the species in Alberta, and provide a basis for the Scientific Subcommittee (of Alberta's Endangered Species Conservation Committee; ESCC) to complete a formal status assessment of that species using criteria developed by The International Union for Conservation of Nature. The Subcommittee provides the ESCC with the formal status evaluation, and the stakeholder-based ESCC then recommends a legal designation for that species to the Minister of ASRD. ACA oversees the entire publication process for status reports, including the contracting of experts to write the report, editing drafts, supervising the external review process, and completing the final formatting, and the distribution of printed reports. In 2008-09, three new reports were completed: Verna's flower moth, Athabasca rainbow trout and northern long-eared bat (now called northern myotis) update. The trout and bat reports await printing.

Introduction

Every five years, the Fish and Wildlife Division of Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (ASRD) reviews the general status of wildlife species in Alberta. These overviews, the most recent of which was conducted in 2005 (*The General Status of Alberta Wild Species 2005*), assign “ranks” to individual species that reflect the perceived level of risk to populations. Such designations are determined from extensive consultations with professional and amateur biologists, and from a variety of readily available sources of population data. A key objective of these reviews is to identify species that may be considered for more detailed status assessments.

The Alberta Wildlife Status Report Series is an extension of the general status exercise, and provides comprehensive current summaries of the biological status of selected wildlife species in Alberta. Priority is given to species that are considered *At Risk* or *May Be At Risk* in *The General Status of Alberta Wild Species 2005*, or that are considered to be at risk at a national level by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC; <http://www.cosewic.gc.ca/>).

In *Alberta's Strategy for the Management of Species At Risk* (Fish and Wildlife 2008), assessing and documenting the risk of becoming endangered (i.e., detailed status) is one of six main strategies outlined. Status reports are the primary source of information on species at risk used by the Scientific Subcommittee (of Alberta's Endangered Species Conservation Committee; ESCC), and therefore play a key role in the legal designation of *Endangered* and *Threatened* species in Alberta.

Reports in this series are published and distributed by the Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) and the Fish and Wildlife Division of ASRD.

Methods

Each spring, ACA staff meets with ASRD's provincial wildlife status biologist and one or more of their species at risk biologists to prioritize the species that are most in need of a detailed status assessment. We use the following criteria to prioritize species: the general status rank, COSEWIC priorities, the availability of new Alberta data, and new threats to a species at risk in Alberta.

Once a suite of new species has been decided, the ACA contracts species experts (individuals with unique local expertise in the biology and management of each species) to write the status reports. The project leader manages these contracts, receives and edits the report drafts, supervises the external review process, formats the reports for printing, distributes the reports, and loads them onto the internet (<http://www.ab-conservation.com>).

Results

In 2008-09, three new reports were completed: Verna's flower moth, Athabasca rainbow trout, and northern long-eared bat (now called northern myotis). The trout and bat reports await printing. In total, 65 reports on species at risk in Alberta have been published in this series since 1997, including reports on mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates and plants (Figure 1). Five older reports have also been completely updated with new information.

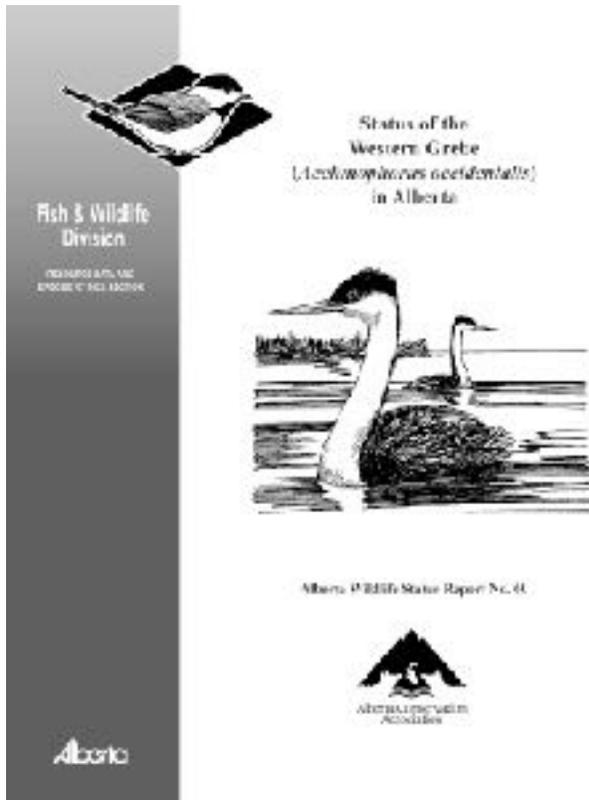


Figure 1. Example of a status report cover.

These reports provide detailed and up-to-date information that is useful to resource professionals for managing populations of species and their habitats in Alberta. Most importantly, status reports also provide current information to the Scientific Subcommittee (of Alberta's Endangered Species Conservation Committee; ESCC), an independent body of scientists that completes a formal status assessment for the target species using criteria developed by The International Union for Conservation of Nature. The Subcommittee then provides the ESCC with both the formal status evaluation and conservation recommendations. The ESCC, which is comprised of members from groups representing resource-based land users, corporate and government land managers, conservation organizations and university scientists, then decides what recommendations to make to the Minister of ASRD concerning the legal designation (e.g.,

Endangered or *Threatened* under Alberta’s *Wildlife Act*) (see Figure 2). ACA is a voting member of the ESCC.

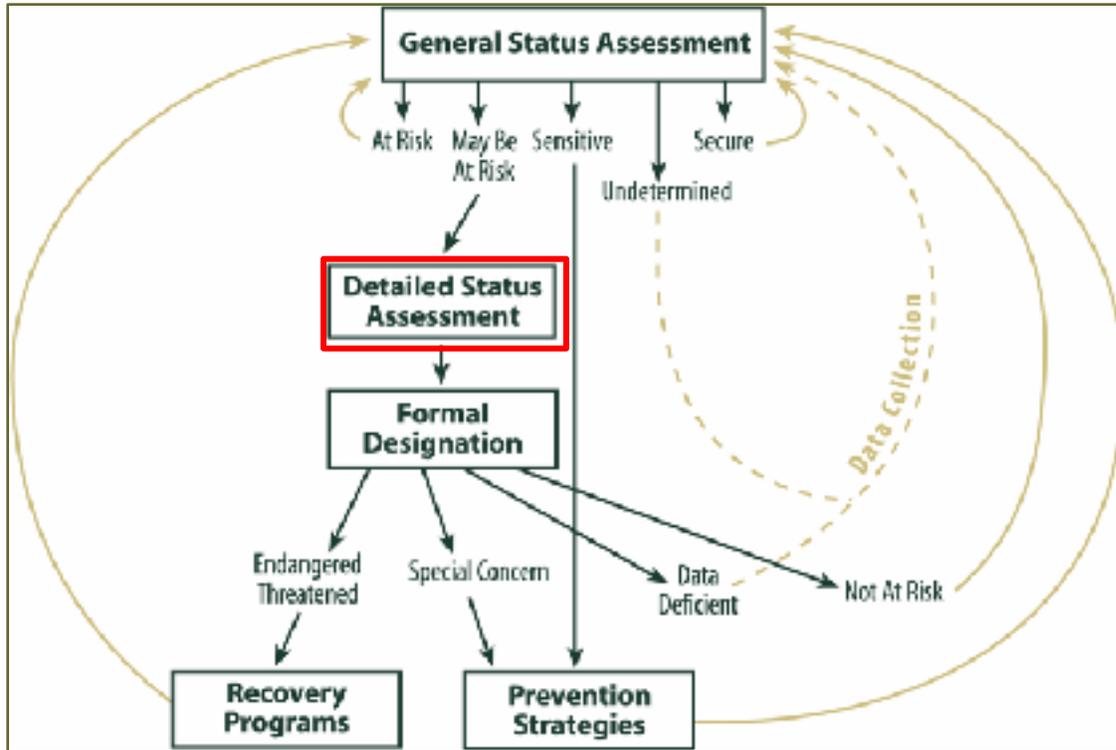


Figure 2. This flowchart (taken from Fish and Wildlife Division 2005) shows the species at risk process; the box outlined in red is where the Alberta Wildlife Status Report Series (and hence, the ACA) plays a key role.

Conclusions

The Alberta Wildlife Status Report Series plays a key role in identifying *Endangered* and *Threatened* species in Alberta that need legal protection to keep them from becoming extinct or extirpated. As well, species of *Special Concern* and those that are *Data Deficient* are identified using status reports, instigating the necessary actions to either prevent their decline, or to obtain the information needed to further clarify their status in the province.

Communications

- Reports in the Alberta Wildlife Status Report Series are considered an authoritative summary for species at risk in Alberta, and all of the reports published in the series since 1998 have the ACA logo on the cover.

- All status reports are available as pdfs online (ACA and SRD websites) and as hard copies.

Literature cited

Alberta Sustainable Resource Development. 2007. The 2005 general status of Alberta wild species. URL: <http://www.srd.gov.ab.ca/fishwildlife/speciesatrisk/statusofalbertawildspecies/>.

Fish and Wildlife Division. 2005. Alberta species at risk program and projects 2003-2004. Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, Fish and Wildlife Division, Alberta Species at Risk Report No. 100, Edmonton, Alberta. 64 pp.

Fish and Wildlife Division. 2008. Alberta's Strategy for the Management of Species at Risk (2009-2014). Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, Fish and Wildlife Division, Edmonton, AB. 30 pp.