

Alberta Conservation Association 2011/12 Project Summary Report

Project Name: *Alberta Wildlife Status Reports*

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Partnerships

Alberta Sustainable Resource Development

Key Findings

- Published 67 status reports (12 of which have been updated) on species in Alberta since 1997, including reports on mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates and plants.
- Published one status report in 2011/12: pygmy whitefish. Initiated four other reports (prairie rattlesnake, hare-footed locoweed, western grebe, brassy minnow).
- Reports include current information on each species' conservation biology, habitat, population, distribution, limiting factors and management in Alberta.
- Alberta's Endangered Species Conservation Committee uses these reports to recommend a legal status designation to the Minister of Alberta Sustainable Resource Development.

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 2010 (ASRD 2010), 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 2010*, or that are considered to be at risk at a national level by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC; www.cosewic.gc.ca).

Status reports are the primary source of information on species at risk used by the Scientific Subcommittee (SSC) (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, which is comprised of members from groups representing resource-based land users, corporate and government land managers, conservation organizations and university scientists, with both the formal status evaluation and conservation recommendations. The ESCC then either concurs or withholds concurrence with the recommended status, which is then provided to the Minister of ASRD for determining the legal designation (e.g., *Endangered* or *Threatened* under Alberta's *Wildlife Act*) (see Figure 1; also refer to Fish and Wildlife Division (2008) for more information on Alberta's species at risk process). Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) is a voting member of the ESCC.

Reports in this series are published and distributed by 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, ACA contracts species experts (individuals with unique local expertise in the biology and management of the species) to write the status reports. ACA staff manages these contracts, receives and edits the report drafts, develops the current range maps, supervises the external review process, formats the reports for printing, distributes the reports, and ensures they are loaded onto the internet (www.ab-conservation.com).

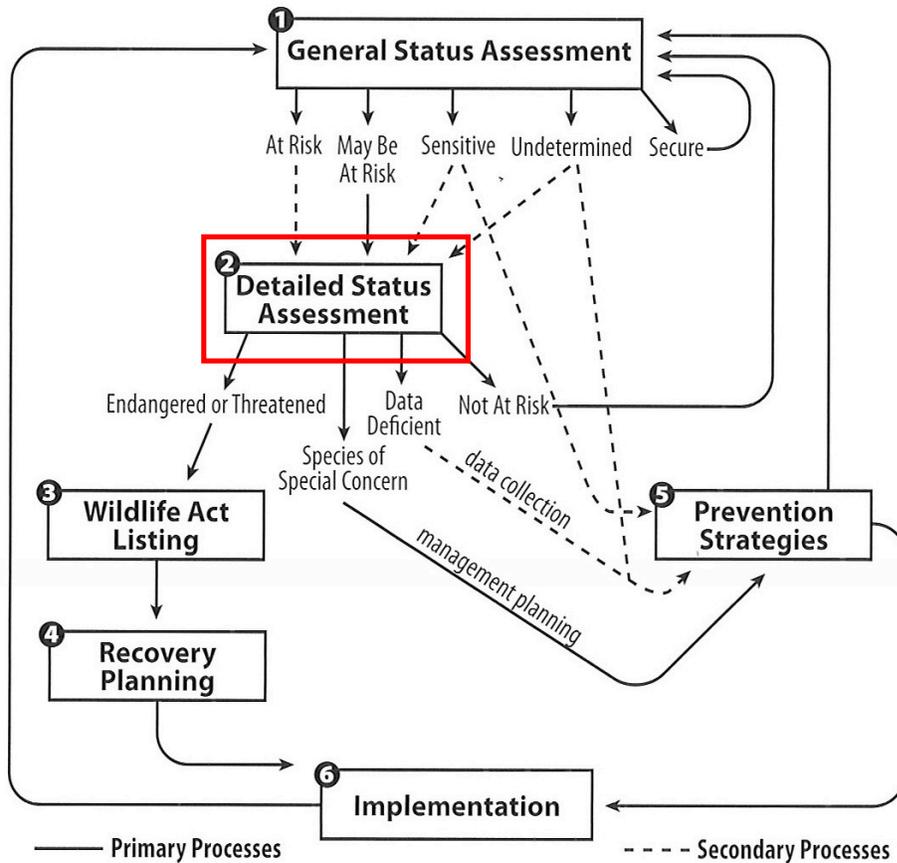


Figure 1. This flowchart, taken from Fish and Wildlife Division (2010), shows the species at risk process; the box outlined in red is where the Alberta Wildlife Status Report Series (and hence, Alberta Conservation Association) plays a key role.

Results

In 2011/12, one status report was published: pygmy whitefish update. In addition, one report was completed and sent to the SSC/ ESCC for review (chestnut-collared longspur), while four new reports (prairie rattlesnake update, hare-footed locoweed, brassy minnow and western grebe update) were initiated and will be completed in 2012/13. In total, 67 reports on species in Alberta have been published in this series since 1997, including reports on mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates and plants (Figure 2). Twelve older reports have also been completely updated with new information.

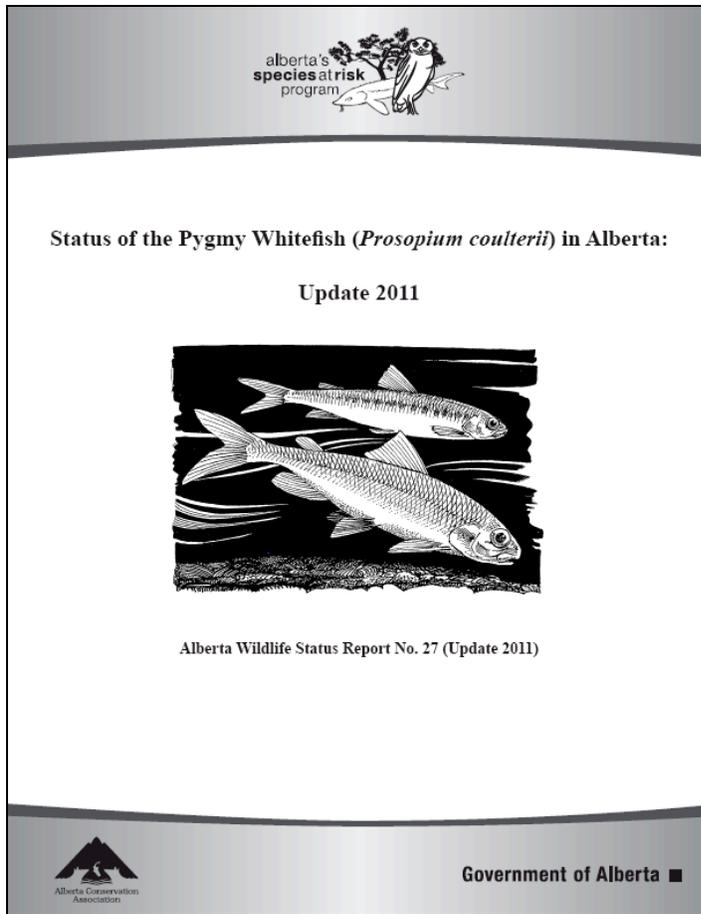


Figure 2. Example of a status report cover.

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

- All reports published in the series since 1998 have ACA's logo on the cover.
- All status reports are available online (ACA and ASRD websites) and as hard copies.
- The status report series editor promotes ACA's involvement with status reports through formal and informal presentations (ASRD meeting [April 2011], SSC meeting [September 2011], ACA Wildlife Workshop [August 2011], and school talks [June 2011]).

Literature Cited

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