

Project name: Alberta Wildlife Status Reports

Project leader: Sue Peters

Primary ACA staff on this project: Lance Engley and Sue Peters

Partnerships:

Alberta Sustainable Resource Development

Key findings

- 64 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.
- The reports include current information on each species' conservation biology, habitat, population, distribution, limiting factors, and management in Alberta.
- The reports are used by Alberta's Endangered Species Conservation Committee, and its Scientific Subcommittee, to recommend a legal status designation to the Minister of ASRD.

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*; www.albertawildspecies.ca), assign individual species "ranks" 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/>).

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 meet 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, new threats to a species at risk in Alberta, and a recovery plan with a commitment to re-assess the status of a species.

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 series editor 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 2007-08, three new reports were completed: limber pine, whitebark pine and western small-footed bat. In total, 64 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.

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 World Conservation Union (IUCN). 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.

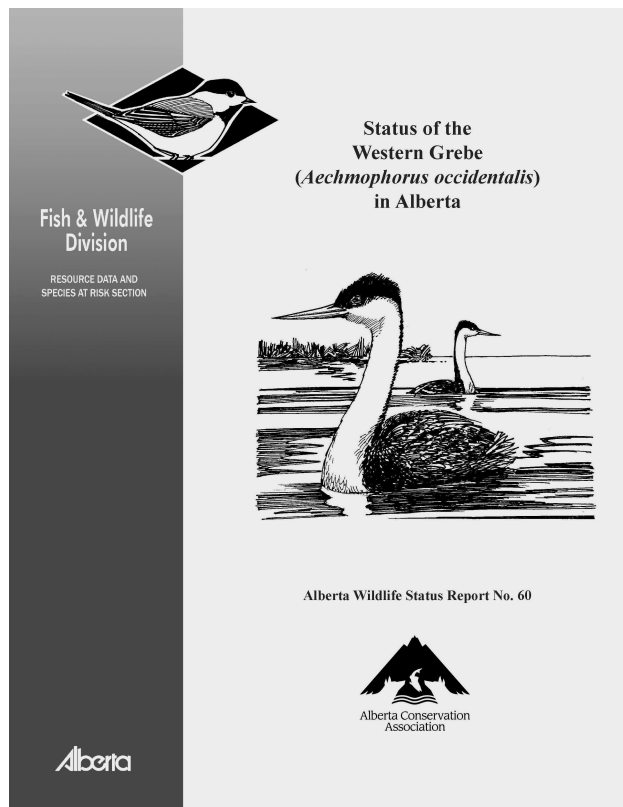


Figure 1. Example of a status report cover.

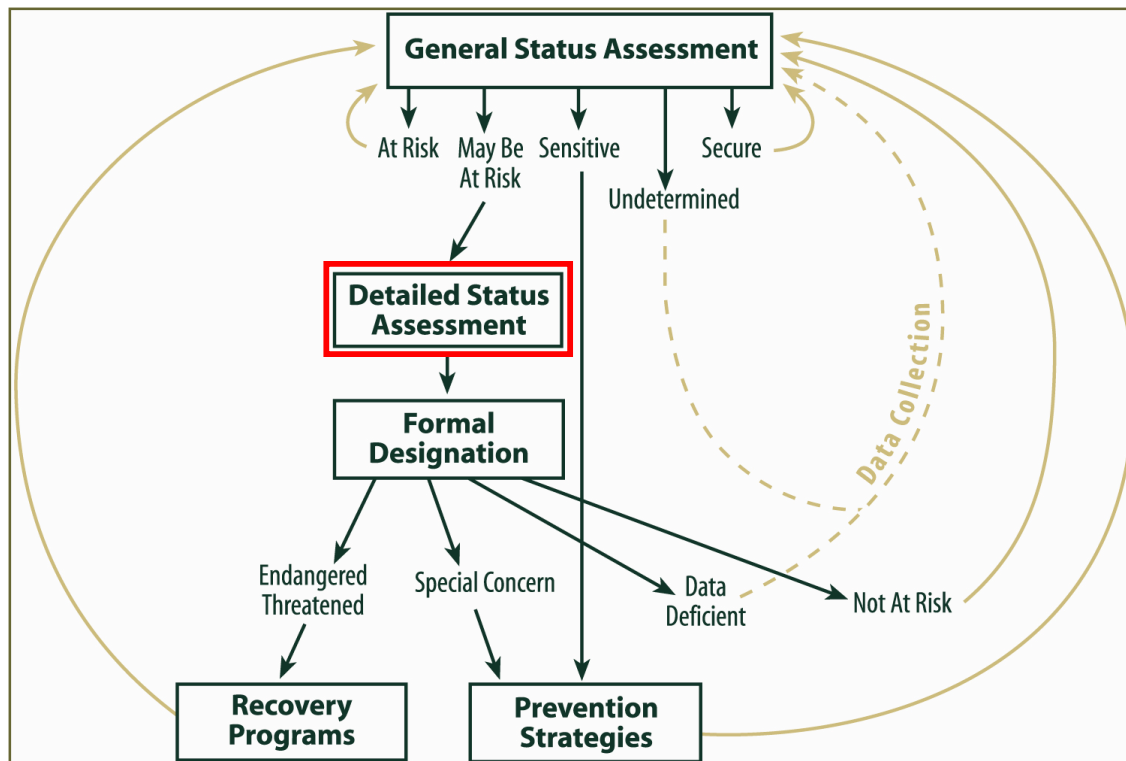


Figure 2. This flowchart (taken from Fish and Wildlife Division 2005) shows the species at risk process; the box outlined in red is where the Alberta Wildlife Status Report Series (and hence, the ACA) plays a key role.

Conclusion

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

Literature cited

Alberta Sustainable Resource Development. 2007. The 2005 general status of Alberta wild species. URL: <http://www.srd.gov.ab.ca/fw/wildspecies/index.htm>.

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.