

Alberta Conservation Association 2013/14 Project Summary Report

Project Name: Alberta Wildlife Status Reports

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Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development

Key Findings

- Published 81 status reports (14 updates) on species in Alberta since 1997, including reports on mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates and plants.
- Published two status reports in 2013/14 (western grebe update 2012, hare-footed locoweed). Three others (Canada warbler, brassy minnow, trumpeter swan) have been submitted to the Endangered Species Conservation Committee/Scientific Subcommittee for review. One report (Arctic grayling update) is in draft stage.
- Alberta's Endangered Species Conservation Committee uses these reports to recommend a legal status designation to the Minister of Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development.
- Reports include current information on each species' conservation biology, habitat, population, distribution, limiting factors and management in Alberta.

Introduction

Every five years, Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development (ESRD) reviews the general status of wildlife species in Alberta. These overviews, the most recent of which was conducted in 2010 (ESRD 2011), 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.

Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) coordinates the production of the Alberta Wildlife Status Report Series. Reports in this series are published by ACA and ESRD. This 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*

(ESRD 2011) 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 SSC 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 ESRD 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). ACA is a voting member of the ESCC.

Methods

Each spring, ACA and ESRD staff meet to prioritize the species that are most in need of a detailed status assessment. We prioritize species based on the general status rank, COSEWIC priorities, the availability of new Alberta data (that will likely change the existing status of a species at risk), and new threats to a species at risk in Alberta.

Once a suite of new species has been identified, ACA contracts species experts (individuals with unique local expertise in the biology and management of the species) to write the status reports. We manage these contracts, edit the report drafts, develop the species range maps, supervise the external review process, and format the reports for online publishing on our website.

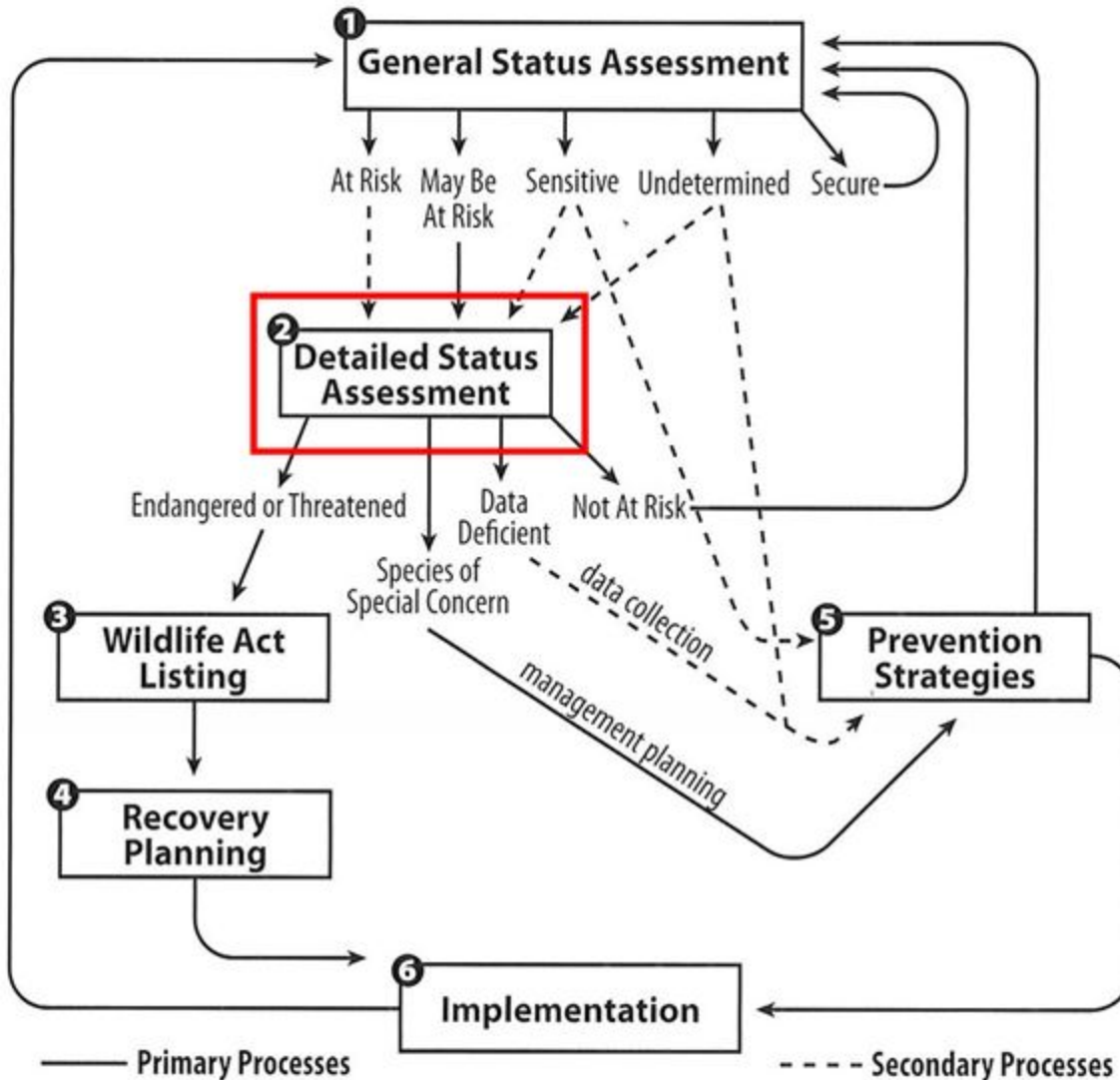


Figure 1. This flowchart, taken from Fish and Wildlife Division (2010), shows the species at risk process; the box outlined in red is where the Alberta Wildlife Status Report Series (and hence, Alberta Conservation Association) plays a key role.

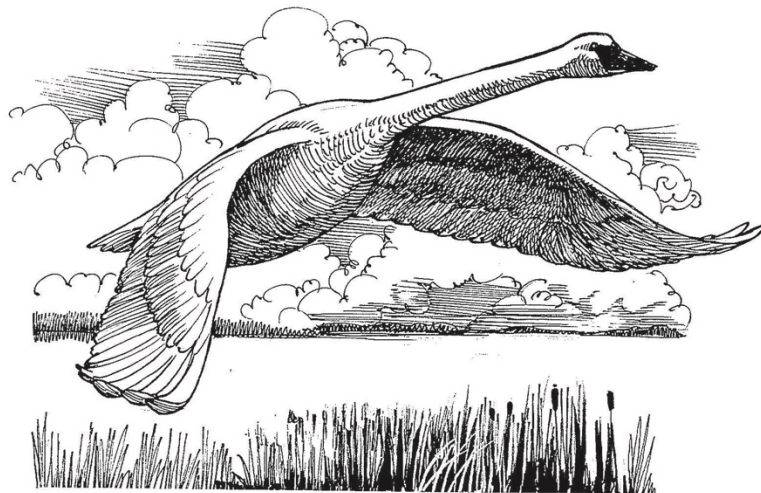
Results

In 2013/14, we published two status reports: western grebe update 2012 and hare-footed locoweed. In addition, we submitted three reports for review by the SSC/ESCC (Canada warbler, brassy minnow, trumpeter swan) and initiated an update report (Arctic grayling update) that we will complete in 2014/15. In total, we have published 81 reports on species at risk in Alberta in this series since 1997, including reports on mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates and plants (Figure 2). This includes updates to 14 older reports, revised with new information.



Status of the Trumpeter Swan (*Cygnus buccinator*) in Alberta:

Update 2013



Alberta Wildlife Status Report No. 26 (Update 2013)



Alberta Government

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 status reports are available online (ACA and ESRD websites); reports published until 2011 are also available as hard copies.
- The status report series editor promotes ACA's involvement with status reports and species at risk through formal and informal presentations: SSC meeting (September 2013), ESCC meeting (October 2013), school talks (November 2013) and the Alberta Chapter of the Wildlife Society BioBlitz (January 2014).

Literature Cited

- Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development (ESRD). 2011. The general status of Alberta wild species 2010. Available online: www.esrd.alberta.ca/fish-wildlife/species-at-risk/albertas-species-at-risk-strategy/general-status-of-alberta-wild-species-2010/default.aspx.
- 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, Alberta, Canada. 30 pp.
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