

Northwest Territories Species at Risk Committee (SARC) CHECKLIST FOR ESTABLISHING ASSESSMENT PRIORITY

Species eligible to be assessed by SARC

(from sections 8 and 144 of the *Species at Risk (NWT) Act*)

In order to be eligible for assessment by SARC, a species must be:

- a species, subspecies or distinct population of animal, plant or other organism;
and
- wild by nature;
and
- indigenous to the Northwest Territories (NWT), or has extended its range into the NWT without human intervention. (Note: a species can be indigenous even if it is extirpated.)

In order to be eligible for assessment by SARC, a species must not be:

- a bacterium, virus, or single-celled organism;
- a fish (as defined in section 2 of the *Fisheries Act* (Canada); unless there is an agreement between the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources and the Government of Canada that SARC should assess it);
- a marine plant (as defined in section 47 of the *Fisheries Act* (Canada); unless there is an agreement as described above; or
- a migratory bird (as defined in subsection 2(1) of the *Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994* (Canada)); unless there is an agreement as described above.

Ranking eligible species in order of priority for assessment

Inclusion on the assessment schedule, and priority for assessment, is determined using the criteria detailed here. SARC developed these criteria as required under section 28 of the *Species at Risk (NWT) Act*.

First, SARC determines whether and to what degree species are at risk of extirpation from the NWT, using the Scoring Checklist (p. 3 of this document). The total score is a reflection of the degree of risk faced by the species.

Second, SARC determines the order in which these eligible species should appear on the assessment schedule, subject to approval by the Conference of Management Authorities. This should be guided by the following principles:

- Species with the highest scores (from the Scoring Checklist) should be considered for assessment first.

- Species for which there is a high degree of community and local interest can be considered for assessment before species for which there is little community and local interest.
- Species that are used for food in the NWT can be considered for assessment before species that are not harvested or used for food in the NWT.
- To increase efficiency and streamline the assessment process, species can be bundled by region or species grouping on the assessment schedule.

SCORING CHECKLIST¹

To substantiate inclusion of a species on the assessment schedule, SARC must determine whether the species may be at risk of extirpation from the NWT. The final score from the table below is a representation of this risk.

If SARC is uncertain about a row score, the score can be marked with an asterisk (*) (e.g., declining trends are seen to be moderate [3], but this isn't clearly reflected in best available information [3*]). Where the final score includes three row scores with asterisks, the species is likely to return as data deficient and should not be included on the assessment schedule.

Species for which there are no known threats in the NWT, or no known threats impacting the species in the NWT, are not considered a priority for assessment and should not be included on the assessment schedule.

A. Uniqueness (scores of 0 = population, 0.5 = subspecies, 1 = species)
This is a reflection of how distinct or special the animal or plant is. Species are given higher priority than subspecies, and subspecies are given higher priority than distinct populations.
B. Trends (scores of 0 = none, 1 = low, 3 = moderate, 5 = high)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is the species, subspecies, or distinct population undergoing a population decline?<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ If yes, is the amount of decline low, moderate or high?• Is the amount of habitat declining for the species?<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ If yes, is the amount of decline low, moderate or high? <p>A species whose numbers are showing a decline is higher priority than a species whose numbers are stable or increasing.</p>
C. Rarity (scores of 0 = none, 1 = low, 3 = moderate, 5 = high)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How many are there in the NWT?<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ If the species very rare, then use a score of 5. If the species is very common, then use a score of 0. <p>A species that has only one small population in the NWT is higher priority than a species that is abundant.</p>
D. NWT responsibility (scores of 0 = less than 5%, 1 = less than half in the NWT,

¹ Checklist is adapted from COSEWIC's Assessment Process and Criteria. However, adjustments have been made for circumstances and conditions unique to the NWT.

but more than 5%, 3 = more than half the population in the NWT, 5 = 100%)

- What percentage of the global population for this species occurs in the NWT?
- What percentage of the global range or important seasonal range is in the NWT?
 - If the species is only found in the NWT, then use a score of 5.

A species that is found only in the NWT is higher priority than a species that is widespread in the world because the NWT has a higher responsibility for that species.

E. Threats and limiting factors (scores of 0 = none, 1 = low, 3 = moderate, 5 = high)

- Is the species affected by threats in the NWT?
- Is it *likely* to be affected by threats in the near future?
- Are the threats widespread or are they localized?
- Does the species have limiting biological characteristics that could adversely impact its ability to adapt to changes or its ability to recover from population declines?
- Do threats elsewhere in their global/North American range have the potential to impact the population of that species in the NWT?²

A species with threats affecting over half the population is higher priority than a species for which the threats have minor to no impact.

F. Positive influences (scores here should be subtracted from the total score) (5 = well-managed species, 3 = reasonably well-managed species, 1 = some management in place, 0 = no management in place)

- Is the species already well-managed in the NWT?
- Are there any structures/processes in place (e.g., protected areas) that are having a positive influence on the species?

The purpose of the *Species at Risk (NWT) Act* is to address the needs of species whose needs are not being met through normal wildlife management processes and that are in serious trouble. A species for which no management is in place will be a higher priority than a well-managed species.

FINAL SCORE

- Subtotal = Sum the scores from each of rows A through E.
- Total = Subtract the row F score from the subtotal.

² Please note that threats outside the NWT should only be considered if they directly impact the status of the species in the NWT.