



Examples of Stewardship Successes in Canada's Prairies

Burrowing Owls DEPEND on grazing

The endangered burrowing owl typically nests in burrows within grasslands. Ranches are an ideal provider of this important type of habitat.

Did you know that burrowing owls:

- prefer pastures grazed by livestock for nesting
- use manure to line their burrows and nests
- eat insects and small rodents often considered pests by land-holders
- nest in holes excavated by badgers.

Over 700 landholders across Canada have volunteered to keep their grasslands grazed and intact, thus conserving an area of burrowing owl habitat larger than the City of Edmonton!

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

Environment Canada

Canadian Wildlife Service
Prairie and Northern Region office
(780) 951-8700 or 1-800-668-6767

Species At Risk Act

www.sararegistry.gc.ca

This site includes COSEWIC assessments, recovery strategies, action plans, regulations and orders and is intended to provide open and transparent information to the public.

Habitat Stewardship Program,
Aboriginal Funds for Species at Risk Program,
and Ecological Gifts Program

www.ec.gc.ca/nature

This information sheet has been prepared to provide information to the interested public on the *Species at Risk Act* and its implementation. The material has been prepared for informational purposes only and is not to be interpreted as legal advice. If there is a discrepancy between the information presented in this information sheet and the *Species at Risk Act*, the *Act* prevails.



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Canada's Species at Risk Act

Questions and Answers

Farmers, ranchers, Aboriginal peoples, scientists, and other people with an interest in the natural world have noticed and documented the disappearance and decline in abundance of certain plants and animals for some time. These species are often referred to as "species at risk." The *Species at Risk Act* is one part of the Government of Canada's strategy for protecting wildlife species at risk.



Geoff Holroyd

The National Strategy for the Protection of Species at Risk

In a country as vast and diverse as Canada, conservation of species at risk requires the participation, cooperation and commitment of many people and organizations. The Government of Canada has therefore adopted a three-part strategy to protecting species at risk: stewardship and incentive programs, the Accord for the Protection of Species at Risk and the *Species at Risk Act*.

Stewardship and incentive programs

Stewardship refers to a wide range of voluntary actions that people take to care for their environment. Working together to find solutions is the essence of cooperative stewardship. The Government of Canada supports stewardship initiatives through the Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk and the Aboriginal Funds for Species at Risk. These programs provide funding to landowners and land managers through various conservation and aboriginal organizations for projects that protect species at risk and their habitats.

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Canada

The Accord for the Protection of Species at Risk

Responsibility for the conservation of wildlife is shared among the governments of Canada. In 1996, the federal, provincial and territorial governments endorsed an Accord that recognized the importance of cooperation among governments in protecting species at risk. As part of this commitment, Environment Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and Parks Canada Agency implement the federal *Species at Risk Act*, complementing the work being done through provincial and territorial laws. Standards, guidelines and best management practices for species at risk are being developed and landowners and other directly affected parties will be consulted for their input.



C. Neufeld

Species at Risk Act

The purpose of the *Act* is to:

- prevent wildlife species from becoming extinct or lost from the wild in Canada (extirpated);
- help recover species that are extirpated, endangered or threatened;
- ensure species of special concern do not become endangered or threatened.

How are species listed?

The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC), a group of government and non-government experts, assesses and recommends wildlife species for listing. The committee uses the best available scientific, community and aboriginal traditional knowledge to make its recommendations. The government then decides if the species should be added to the *Species at Risk Act* list. The government’s decision process also considers the social and economic implications of listing a species.



Jason J. Dombroskie



To which species does the *Act* apply?

There are over 400 species on the legal list of the *Act*, over 70 of which are found in the Prairie Provinces. Examples of endangered species in the prairies include the burrowing owl, swift fox, loggerhead shrike and Mormon metalmark butterfly. The legal list of species can be found at www.sararegistry.gc.ca and is updated about once a year.

How are listed species and their residences protected?

Protection under SARA makes it an offense to kill, harm, capture or take an individual of a species listed as extirpated, endangered or threatened or to damage or destroy the residence (e.g. nest or den) of an endangered or threatened species. These prohibitions apply to:

- all threatened, endangered and extirpated species found on federal lands such as national parks, national wildlife areas, federally owned pastures and military training areas, and Aboriginal reserve lands for species listed in Schedule 1 of the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA);
- all threatened, endangered and extirpated aquatic species (e.g. fish) listed in Schedule 1 of the SARA, anywhere they occur;
- all threatened, endangered and extirpated migratory birds listed in the *Migratory Birds Convention Act*, 1994, listed in Schedule 1 of SARA, anywhere they occur;

Other species on provincial or private land

Species at risk that are neither aquatic nor protected under the *Migratory Birds Convention Act*, and that are not on federal lands, do not receive immediate protection upon listing under SARA. In most cases, the protection of terrestrial species on non-federal lands is the responsibility of the provinces. The Government of Canada has the discretion to apply SARA prohibitions to any listed species on provincial or private land. The Cabinet may make such an order if the species is not being effectively protected within the province. In such a case, the federal government would consult with the province before invoking the SARA prohibitions.

What is critical habitat and how does the *Act* protect it?

Critical habitat is the habitat necessary for the survival or recovery of a listed threatened, endangered or extirpated species on Schedule 1 of SARA. Critical habitat will be described within recovery strategies or action plans within a few years after the species is listed. These strategies and plans are being developed in co-operation with various agencies and in consultation with people who are directly affected.

The intent of SARA is to protect critical habitat from destruction. Critical habitat found on federal lands and critical habitat for aquatic species wherever it occurs will be protected within six months after it is described. For non-aquatic species on private or provincial land, the intent of SARA is to protect critical habitat as much as possible through voluntary actions, stewardship measures or provincial law. If these measures do not succeed, a prohibition on the destruction of critical habitat may be applied.

Why does this species live on my land?

In most cases, a species at risk inhabits an area because the current conditions are already suitable. The habitats that currently feed, house and provide breeding, nesting and resting areas for threatened and endangered species exist in great measure because landowners are already managing their lands in accordance with the needs of species through good stewardship. Support and incentives may be available to land owners and non-government organizations through federal programs such as the Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk, the Aboriginal Funds for Species at Risk Program, and the Ecological Gifts Program.

Examples of Stewardship Successes in Canada’s Prairies

The Swift Fox – a recovery success

The swift fox was common in the southern Prairies during the 19th century. Due to habitat loss, trapping and poisoning campaigns aimed at other animals, as well as severe weather factors, the swift fox was gone from the Canadian prairies by 1978!

How do I get involved in stewardship projects?

Stewardship projects are run by organizations and individuals, often in cooperation with the Government of Canada. The Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk is one place to start. Using funding from the Habitat Stewardship Program, various organizations work cooperatively with landowners and land managers on education and outreach, and on projects that secure or improve habitat.

What is the role of Aboriginal peoples?

A National Aboriginal Council on Species at Risk has been established to advise the government on the *Act*. Recovery planning for species at risk will be done in cooperation with Aboriginal people especially if matters involve reserve lands, land claim areas, or species of interest. Aboriginal people or organizations can also conduct stewardship activities on aboriginal lands; assistance for these activities may be accessed from the federal Aboriginal Funds for Species at Risk Program.

How will compliance with the *Act* be encouraged?

Making landowners aware of species at risk on their land, and helping them to protect the species and its habitat are important first steps. Voluntary actions and stewardship can protect species and critical habitat on private lands. If violations of the *Act* are identified, measures will be taken to ensure that they no longer occur. The type of enforcement action will be determined on a case by case basis.

Wildlife agencies and partners have helped to bring the swift fox back. Foxes obtained from the U.S. were released directly into the wild or bred in captivity to produce offspring that were then released in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

About 600 of these graceful little animals are now re-established in Canada.

