



SPECIES AT RISK ACT

The Species at Risk Act (SARA) was voted into federal law in December 2002. It was established to protect the flora and fauna of Canada. More specifically, that entails preventing **endangered** or **threatened** species from disappearing, helping in the recovery of endangered, threatened and **extirpated** species and managing **species of special concern** to prevent them from becoming further depleted.

Although SARA automatically applies only to **federal lands**, it aims to protect species and critical habitat from coast to coast to coast through cooperation; with the provinces and territories, relevant wildlife management groups, concerned Aboriginal groups and any other person or organization whom the Minister of the Environment and/or the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans considers appropriate.

Critical habitat may be protected by various stewardship agreements such as the creation of a conservation district or designated riparian area. For species listed as extirpated, endangered or threatened under SARA, it is illegal to kill, harm, harass, capture or take an individual; possess, collect, buy, sell or trade an individual or any part of an individual; and damage or destroy the residence of one or more individuals.

How does the government decide to list a species as extirpated, endangered, threatened or of special concern under SARA? The bulk of this responsibility falls unto the Committee on the Status of Endangered wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC), a scientific advisory body. Basing itself on the best available scientific data as well as Aboriginal traditional knowledge and community knowledge, COSEWIC rates the risk to any given species and regularly reports its findings in a Species Status Report. After being submitted to the public for consultations, the report's findings aid the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans to list species in the web-based SARA Registry. The registry's rankings represent the final risk assessment to species.

As the largest repository of federal lands, Parks Canada manages close to 265,000 square kilometres of land that is home to approximately half of the species at risk currently listed in Canada. Although Parks Canada has been working to protect species at risk for decades already under the *Canada National Parks Act* and the *Canada National Marine Conservation Areas Act*, SARA gives it a new tool by which to further the cause of conservation. It has many partners and needs to work with as many interested parties as possible to further its goals, including young people.

There are many ways you can help Species at Risk. You can actively help with the recovery and protection of a species and its habitat by being consciously aware of how you use and manage your land. You can ask COSEWIC to assess a species at any time, although you should discuss your request first with the COSEWIC specialists. You can participate in the public consultations announced on the web-based SARA Registry during the legal listing process and express any concerns you have about a species or its protection under SARA. You can also participate in public consultations throughout recovery planning for a species.

Take an active part in helping to protect species at risk in your area!

