

Protecting our natural heritage

Manitoba is Taking Action

Because every plant and animal species at risk faces its own threats and has its own specific needs, efforts to help each one vary. Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship is taking specific action for each listed species, in partnership with government agencies, non-government partners and knowledgeable individuals.



Grassland birds, such as the Burrowing owl, have declined throughout their range due to loss of habitat in both their breeding and wintering ranges.

Manitoba is home to many species and ecosystems, all of which are part our natural heritage. Some of these species and ecosystems are rare in Manitoba, Canada, or even the world, and are at risk of disappearing from all, or part, of their natural range.

Species and Ecosystems at Risk

Plants and animals have come and gone as long as there has been life on earth, with many reasons for their extinction. Today, however, the rate at which species are becoming extinct appears to be increasing. In addition, more species seem to be showing signs of decline.

An ecosystem is the network of relationships between plants and animals, and the environment (ex: soil, water, air) in which they live. Examples of ecosystems in Manitoba include tundra, boreal forest, and tall-grass prairie. Like species, the rate of ecosystem change and loss appears to be increasing.

Possible causes for the decline and loss of species and ecosystems include:

- habitat loss and degradation due to human activity
- alien invasive species out-competing native ones
- the earth's changing climate

The situation is often worse for species found at the edge of their range, especially if there is little habitat available. In such cases, these species may be even more at risk.

Protecting Our Natural Heritage

Many countries, provinces and states have laws to protect species at risk of extinction. Manitoba's *Endangered Species and Ecosystems Act* protects certain species and ecosystems from harm and proposes plans for recovery. Manitoba's *Endangered Species and Ecosystems Act* prohibits activities that would:

- kill, disturb or interfere with any listed species

- damage, destroy or remove habitat and natural resources on which a listed species depends

Possession of listed species is prohibited. Manitoba's conservation minister may grant permits for exceptions to these rules for scientific research or reintroduction efforts.

Manitoba was the first jurisdiction in North America to introduce legislation for protection of ecosystems at risk. *The Endangered Species and Ecosystems Act* allows the Manitoba government to establish Ecosystem Preservation Zones to protect ecosystems at risk where they occur on provincial crown land.

Protecting species and ecosystems at risk can be complicated. Many are found in areas of heavy human use. Protection plans must balance the interests of the species at risk and the people with which they co-exist. In Manitoba, recovery planning efforts take these factors into consideration by bringing different people and organizations together to find solutions for protected species and ecosystems at risk.

Four Categories of Species

Under Manitoba's *Endangered Species and Ecosystems Act*, species may be legally designated in one of four categories:

- **Extirpated** species are species that were once native to Manitoba, but have disappeared throughout all of their former range in Manitoba. Extirpated species may still be found elsewhere or in captivity.
- **Endangered** species are species that are at risk of disappearing throughout all, or most, of their Manitoba range.
- **Threatened** species are species that are likely to become endangered due to low or declining numbers in Manitoba, if the factors affecting them do not improve.
- Species of **Special Concern** are those species that are at risk of becoming threatened or endangered.

Cool Facts

Many of Manitoba's species at risk, such as the Piping plover and Western Prairie Fringed-orchid, are at risk throughout their entire range. Others, such as the Great Plains Ladies'-tresses, are considered common in nearby provinces and states.

An extirpated species such as the Grizzly bear are occasionally observed in Manitoba. This species, however, will remain listed as extirpated until confirmed as regular breeding residents in Manitoba.

Species at risk are often clustered together, based on their habitat preferences such as grassland birds on mixed-grass prairies in southwestern Manitoba, or tall-grass prairie species in southeastern Manitoba. Multi-species recovery plans may be needed to examine how to conserve all of them, especially in cases where their needs may differ.



Western spiderwort can be displaced from its sandhill habitat by Leafy spurge, an invasive plant that is difficult to control.

Two Categories of Ecosystems

Under Manitoba's *Endangered Species and Ecosystems Act*, ecosystems may be legally designated in one of two categories:

- **Endangered** ecosystems are ecosystems whose continued viability is at serious risk throughout all or a significant portion of their Manitoba range.
- **Threatened** ecosystems are those ecosystems at risk of becoming endangered.

Help Conserve Our Natural Heritage

If you are interested in conserving Manitoba's biodiversity, including species and ecosystems at risk, you are encouraged to get involved. Consider participating in one of the many citizen-based projects in Manitoba. Become informed about conservation programs and share this information with friends, family and the community. Commit to any action that reduces our impact on the environment, including conserving energy, driving less often and reducing waste and water use.

Landowners Can Do their Part

If you are working on land that supports species and ecosystems at risk, good planning can help minimize potential harm to these important parts of Manitoba's natural heritage. Landowners can:

- conduct work outside of breeding season and other sensitive periods
- move work away from sensitive habitats
- learn more about the species and ecosystems and how to reduce negative effects

Landowners with species at risk on their property may wish to provide voluntary protection through a conservation agreement. This agreement allows landowners to protect natural ecosystems, fish and wildlife habitat and plant or animal species while continuing to use and develop their land.

For more information on Manitoba's species at risk and what can be done to conserve them, please contact:

Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship Wildlife Branch

Box 24, 200 Saulteaux Crescent
Winnipeg, MB R3J 3W3
204-945-7775

Toll free 1-800-214-6497

www.manitoba.ca/conservation/wildlife/sar



Polar bears are threatened by loss of sea ice, due to climate change, along the western coast of Hudson Bay.

Extirpated Species

Any species once native to Manitoba that has disappeared through all of its Manitoba range. Extirpated species are declared as such by regulation under the *Endangered Species Act*.

Endangered Species

Any native Manitoba species threatened to disappear through all or most of its Manitoba range. Endangered species are declared as such by regulation under the *Endangered Species Act*.

Threatened Species

Any native Manitoba species likely to become endangered or at risk due to low or declining numbers in Manitoba if the factors affecting it don't improve. Threatened species are declared as such by regulation under the *Endangered Species Act*.

Special Concern Species

Species not regulated under the *Endangered Species Act* but which could eventually be considered Endangered or Threatened if the factors affecting them do not improve.