
C. Hanel


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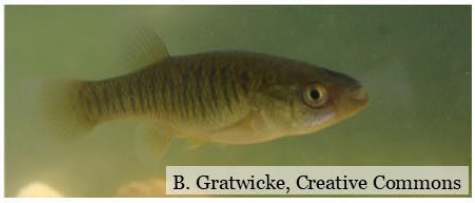
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SSAC Annual Report

2020-2021

Prepared by the Species Status Advisory Committee

Newfoundland Labrador

THE COMMITTEE

The Species Status Advisory Committee (SSAC) was established under the *Endangered Species Act*, which was passed on December 13, 2001. Its role is to review and recommend, to the responsible Minister, species status designations and re-designations based on the best scientific, traditional, and local ecological knowledge available for the species.

MEMBERSHIP

The *Act* allows for a committee of up to nine members. At the end of the 2020-2021 fiscal year, the Committee consisted of six members:

Committee Members from 2020-2021:
Dr. Christine Campbell (Chair) – Aquatic invertebrates
Dr. Paul Marino – Mosses, terrestrial invertebrates
Mr. John E. Maunder – General natural history, vascular plants, molluscs
Dr. William Montevecchi – Birds
Dr. André Arsenault – Lichens, bryophytes, forest ecology
Dr. David Langor – Terrestrial arthropods, forest ecology

In the 2020-2021 fiscal year, the Committee had three vacancies representing the following gaps in expertise:

- Vascular plants / conservation biology; expertise formerly provided by Dr. Susan Squires
- Freshwater fish / small mammals; expertise formerly provided by Dr. Tom Knight
- Labrador species /Indigenous/local/traditional ecological knowledge; long-term vacancy.

The terms of all SSAC committee members expired as of October 29, 2017 (4 members) and October 29, 2018 (2 members). The SSAC Regulations state that when a member's term is expired they shall continue to be a member unless they resign or unless the minister removes them from the committee. All six members have continued to serve in their roles on the committee until further direction is received. In correspondences dated March 7, 2019, members were informed by the (then) Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources that a new merit-based process for appointments has been put in place by the Independent Appointments Commission. As such, all SSAC seats were posted on the Agencies, Boards and Commissions website (https://www.exec-abc.gov.nl.ca/public/agency/detail/?id=572&). Current members wishing to apply for re-appointment to the Committee were required to submit applications. As of the end of the 2020-2021 fiscal year, there has been no notification on member appointments or re-appointments, and committee membership remains incomplete.

The secretariat to the SSAC is provided by the Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture. The role of the secretariat is to help organize meetings and keep minutes, arrange funding for status reports, and provide other necessary logistical support to the Committee. The secretariat is managed by:

Wildlife Division
Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture
P.O. Box 2007, 192 Wheeler's Road
Corner Brook, NL, A2H 7S1

THE MINISTER AND THE DEPARTMENT

At the end of the 2020-2021 fiscal year, responsibility for species at risk, the *Endangered Species Act* and the SSAC rested with Minister Elvis Loveless of the Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture. Previously the responsibility for the SSAC fell under Minister Gerry Byrne.

MEETINGS AND BUSINESS

The Committee met once (virtually) in the 2020-2021 fiscal year on February 10, 2021. The primary purpose of this meeting was to develop a strategy to help address key information gaps in provincial species diversity, and to develop approaches for bolstering data available to support species assessments. This followed correspondence dated October 9, 2020 to Minister Elvis Loveless, and previous correspondences with Minister Gerry Byrne, in which the SSAC requested a meeting to help address some of these concerns. At the conclusion of the 2020-2021 fiscal year, a response regarding a meeting time is still outstanding. The inability of the committee to address these outlined data deficiencies, combined with continued incomplete committee membership previously outlined in 'Membership', above, have created challenges to species assessment and have resulted in a lack of species status reports and assessments in 2020-2021, as mandated under the *ESA*.

Progress was made in 2020-2021 including the preparation and finalization of a new streamlined species re-assessment report template. The purpose of this re-designed template is to enable more efficient re-assessment of species status. Section 11 (1)(g) of the Act requires the SSAC to conduct periodic reviews of the status of designated species at least once every 10 years after the designation. A large number of species assessments have reached or are approaching this 10 year mark. The new status report format will improve the committee's ability to manage the heavy workload associated with species re-assessments, while still ensuring that the best available knowledge is incorporated and that all status re-assessments continue to be based on internationally-recognized criteria.

Following the February 2021 annual meeting, progress has also been made on the drafting of an SSAC 'vision' document, which will present big-picture ideas and opportunities for biodiversity data gathering in the province. The intention is to present this document to the responsible Minister. Committee members are also identifying shorter term priorities for species assessment that may be possible despite the limited data that currently exist for many species, including those on its existing species priority list.

Additional time was spent by members, outside of the confines of the meeting, reviewing and finalizing the status review template, preparing reports as required under the *Endangered Species Act* and the *Transparency and Accountability Act*, and preparing correspondence for the Minister. The committee operated under a 3-year activity plan for 2020-2023, which provides an overview of the duties and responsibilities of the SSAC along with objectives to be accomplished between 2020 and 2023. It is anticipated that a more detailed work plan will be developed following confirmation of committee membership.

PROCEDURES

While every effort is made to convene meetings only when all members can be present, a quorum of

50% + 1 of the membership will be the minimum required to hold a meeting.

Voting on procedural matters is on the basis of a simple majority of members present but, in the event of a status recommendation to the Minister, failing a consensus, a two thirds majority of all members, whether present or not, will be required.

CRITERIA

The criteria for decisions on the level of risk for a species (Endangered, Threatened, Vulnerable, Extinct, or Extirpated) follow those of the federal Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC), which in turn are based on those of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) with minor adjustments for local circumstances and conditions. Note that COSEWIC defines designatable units (e.g. *species, subspecies, variety, etc.)* as discrete and evolutionarily significant groups where "significant" means that the unit is important to the evolutionary legacy of the species as a whole and if lost would likely not be replaced through natural dispersion. A copy of the current COSEWIC criteria can be found in Appendix 1.

STATUS REPORTS AND PRIORITY LISTS

No new species status reports were prepared during 2020-2021 fiscal year due to the challenges outlined in 'Meetings and Business' above.

All previous SSAC status reports are available on the SSAC website (see https://www.gov.nl.ca/ffa/publications/wildlife/#status). Note that some sensitive data – mostly locational – has been omitted from this public resource where deemed to be in the best interest of species protection. In 2020-2021, updates were made to the SSAC website to add eight recent status re-assessment reports as well as three previous status reports to the website. This section of the SSAC website is now fully up-to-date.

RECOMMENDATIONS

No new species were assessed and no listing recommendations were provided in 2020-2021 due to the challenges outlined in 'Meetings and Business' above. Ministerial decisions are anticipated for previously recommended species: Red Pine (Threatened), Mummichog (Threatened), Bank Swallow (support of COSEWIC recommendation of Threatened) and Mackenzie's Sweetvetch (status change Endangered to Threatened).

THE FUTURE

Data deficiency is a significant obstacle to the assessment of many potentially at-risk species in Newfoundland and Labrador, as has been noted previously. Lack of sufficient baseline data on species occurrences, changes to populations over time, and magnitude of threats to habitats means that the committee is unable to apply COSEWIC/IUCN criteria (see Appendix I) to assess species. Prioritization

of species for assessment is also impacted when insufficient data exist on the distribution and abundance of species in the province, since the relative population viability of one species versus another cannot be evaluated.

The most immediate goal of the SSAC in the 2021-2022 fiscal year is to meet with the current Minister of the Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture to discuss the long-standing issues which inhibit the committee's ability to assess species. Committee members are hopeful that such a meeting will help dissolve many roadblocks and bring fresh direction and opportunities to this committee of devoted volunteers, such that this critically important work can continue.

In 2021-2022, subject to new SSAC member appointments, the SSAC should be in a position to proceed with streamlined species re-assessments, prioritizing the following species:

- Feathery False Solomon's Seal (*Maianthemum racemosum*)
- Rock Dwelling Sedge (*Carex petricosa*)
- Water Pygmyweed (*Tillaea aquatica*)
- Oval-leaved Creeping Spearwort (*Ranunculus flammula*)
- Sharpleaf Aster (*Oclemena acuminata*)
- Gmelin's Watercrowfoot (*Ranunculus gmelinii*)
- Tradescant's Aster (*Symphyotrichum tradescantii*)
- Lindley's Aster (*Symphyotrichum ciliolatum*)
- Vreeland's Striped Coralroot (*Corallorhiza striata var. vreelandii*)

Potential authors for re-assessment reports are being explored. It is hoped that re-assessment of at least one of these species will occur before March 31, 2022.

In addition, once membership has been confirmed, the SSAC hopes to commission at least one (1) new status report in 2021-2022, pending availability of data. Potential priority species under consideration are Muskrat, Mermaidweed, freshwater (unionid) clams, and some insect species.

The number of additional new and re-assessment status reports that can be commissioned in 2021-2022 will ultimately depend upon data availability, the SSAC budget, author availability, the quality of draft reports received, and the capacity of the Committee to review and assess reports. The SSAC continues to seek to identify ways to optimize funds available for assessments and to coordinate multi-species field data collections where possible.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1. COSEWIC criteria.
Appendix 2. Chronology of assessments completed by the Species Status Advisory Committee

Appendix 1. COSEWIC Criteria

A. Decline in Total Number of Mature Individuals

Indicator	Endangered	Threatened
A1. An observed, estimated, inferred or suspected reduction in total number of mature individuals over the last 10 years or 3 generations, whichever is the longer, where the causes of the reduction are: clearly reversible **and** understood **and** ceased, based on (and specifying) any of the following*:	Reduction of ≥ 70%	Reduction of ≥ 50%
(a) direct observation		
(b) an index of abundance appropriate to the taxon		
(c) a decline in index of area of occupancy, extent of occurrence and/or quality of habitat		
(d) actual or potential levels of exploitation		
(e) the effects of introduced taxa, hybridization, pathogens, pollutants, competitors or parasites.		
A2. An observed, estimated, inferred or suspected reduction in total number of mature individuals over the last 10 years or 3 generations, whichever is the longer, where the reduction or its causes may not have ceased **or** may not be understood **or** may not be reversible, based on (and specifying) any of (a) to (e) under A1.	Reduction of ≥ 50%	Reduction of ≥ 30%
A3. A reduction in total number of mature individuals, projected or suspected to be met within the next 10 years or 3 generations, whichever is the longer (up to a maximum of 100 years), based on (and specifying) any of (b) to (e) under A1.	Reduction of ≥ 50%	Reduction of ≥ 30%
A4. An observed, estimated, inferred, projected or suspected reduction in total number of mature individuals over any 10 year or 3 generation period, whichever is longer (up to a maximum of 100 years in the future), where the time period must include both the past and the future, and where the reduction or its causes may not have ceased **or** may not be understood **or** may not be reversible, based on (and specifying) any of (a) to (e) under A1.	Reduction of ≥ 50%	Reduction of ≥ 30%

*Whereas (a) and (b) are methods to determine the decline in number of mature individuals and (d) and (e) are potential causes, all of (a) through (e) that indicate and/or contribute to the reduction should be stated. In addition, to use (c), there must be a reason to infer or suspect that a decline in IAO, EOO, or quality of habitat will lead to a decline in number of mature individuals that is in excess of the thresholds.

B. Small Distribution Range and Decline or Fluctuation

Indicator	Endangered	Threatened
B1. Extent of occurrence estimated to be	< 5,000 km²	< 20,000 km²
and/or		
B2. Index of area of occupancy estimated to be	< 500 km²	< 2,000 km²
and (for either B1 or B2) estimates indicating at least two of a-c:		
a. Severely fragmented **or** known to exist at:	≤ 5 locations	≤ 10 locations
b. Continuing decline, observed, inferred or projected, in any of (i) extent of occurrence, (ii) index of area of occupancy, (iii) area,		

extent and/or quality of habitat, (iv) number of locations or subpopulations, (v) number of mature individuals.		
c. Extreme fluctuations in any of (i) extent of occurrence, (ii) index of area of occupancy, (iii) number of locations or subpopulations, (iv) number of mature individuals.		

C. Small and Declining Number of Mature Individuals

Indicator	Endangered	Threatened
C. Total number of mature individuals estimated to be:	<2,500	<10,000
and one of either C1 or C2:		
C1. An estimated continuing decline in total number of mature individuals of at least:	20% within 5 years or two generations, whichever is longer, up to a maximum of 100 years in the future	10% within 10 years or three generations, whichever is longer, up to a maximum of 100 years in the future
or		
C2. A continuing decline, observed, projected, or inferred, in numbers of mature individuals **and at least one of the following:**		
a.(i) No subpopulation estimated to contain **or**	>250 mature individuals	>1000 mature individuals
a.(ii) one subpopulation has **or**	≥ 95% of all mature individuals	100% of all mature individuals
b. There are extreme fluctuations in number of mature individuals.		

D. Very Small or Restricted Total Canadian Population

Indicator	Endangered	Threatened
D. Total number of mature individuals very small or restricted in the form of either of the following:		
D1. Population estimated to have	<250 mature individuals	<1000 mature individuals
or		
D2. For threatened only: Canadian population with a very restricted index of area of occupancy (typically < 20 km²) or number of locations (typically ≤ 5) such that it is prone to the effects of human activities or stochastic events within a very short time period (1-2 generations) in an uncertain future, and is thus capable of becoming extinct, extirpated or critically* endangered in a very short period of time.	Does not apply	Index of area of occupancy typically <20 km² **or** Number of locations typically ≤ 5

E. Quantitative Analysis

Indicator	Endangered	Threatened
E. Quantitative analysis (population projections) showing the probability of extinction or extirpation in the wild is at least	20% within 20 years or 5 generations, whichever is longer, up to a maximum of 100 years	10% within 100 years

***critically endangered (used only to inform application of D2)**

COSEWIC procedures do not allow for a possible status of Critically Endangered; however, these criteria are useful in understanding whether or not a taxon is facing the extremely high risk of extinction in the wild required by D2. Criteria thresholds for Critically Endangered are defined in IUCN (2014). Threshold changes from Endangered are as follows:

A Criterion:

A1, ≥ 90% population reduction.
A2,A3 or A4, ≥80% population reduction

B Criterion:

B1, EOO < 100 km^2
B2, IAO < 10 km^2
a) Severely fragmented or Number of locations is changed to = 1

C Criterion: Number of mature individuals <250

C1, an estimated continuing decline in total number of mature individuals of at least 25% in 3 years or 1 generation, whichever is longer
C2, a continuing decline, observed, projected, or inferred, in numbers of mature individuals and at least one of the following:
(i) No subpopulation estimated to contain more than mature individuals, or
(ii) at least 90% of mature individuals in one subpopulation

D1 Criterion: Population estimated to have < 50 mature individuals

E Criterion: Quantitative analysis (population projections) showing the probability of extinction or extirpation in the wild is at least 50% within 10 years or 3 generations, whichever is longer, up to a maximum of 100 years.

Special Concern:

Those wildlife species that are particularly sensitive to human activities or natural events but are not endangered or threatened wildlife species.

Wildlife species may be classified as being of Special Concern if:

a. the wildlife species has declined to a level of abundance at which its persistence is increasingly threatened by genetic, demographic or environmental stochasticity, but the decline is not sufficient to qualify the wildlife species as Threatened; or
b. the wildlife species may become Threatened if factors suspected of negatively influencing the persistence of the wildlife species are neither reversed nor managed with demonstrable effectiveness; or
c. the wildlife species is near to qualifying, under any criterion, for Threatened status; or
d. the wildlife species qualifies for Threatened status but there is clear indication of rescue effect from extra-limital subpopulations.

Examples of reasons why a wildlife species may qualify for "Special Concern":

- a wildlife species that is particularly susceptible to a catastrophic event (e.g., a seabird population near an oil tanker route); or
- a wildlife species with very restricted habitat or food requirements for which a threat to that habitat or food supply has been identified (e.g., a bird that forages primarily in old-growth forest, a plant that grows

primarily on undisturbed sand dunes, a fish that spawns primarily in estuaries, a snake that feeds primarily on a crayfish whose habitat is threatened by siltation; or
- a recovering wildlife species no longer considered to be Threatened or Endangered but not yet clearly secure.

Examples of reasons why a wildlife species may not qualify for "Special Concern":
- a wildlife species existing at low density in the absence of recognized threat (e.g., a large predatory animal defending a large home range or territory); or
- a wildlife species existing at low density that does not qualify for Threatened status for which there is a clear indication of rescue effect.

Guidelines for use of Extinct or Extirpated
A wildlife species may be assessed as extinct or extirpated from Canada if:
- there exists no remaining habitat for the wildlife species and there have been no records of the wildlife species despite recent surveys; or
- 50 years have passed since the last credible record of the wildlife species, despite surveys in the interim; or
- there is sufficient information to document that no individuals of the wildlife species remain alive.

Guidelines for use of Data Deficient
Data Deficient should be used for cases where the status report has fully investigated all best available information yet that information is insufficient to: a) satisfy any criteria or assign any status, or b) resolve the wildlife species' eligibility for assessment.

Examples:
- Records of occurrence are too infrequent or too widespread to make any conclusions about extent of occurrence, population size, threats, or trends.
- Surveys to verify occurrences, when undertaken, have not been sufficiently intensive or extensive or have not been conducted at the appropriate time of the year or under suitable conditions to ensure the reliability of the conclusions drawn from the data gathered.
- The wildlife species' occurrence in Canada cannot be confirmed or denied with assurance.

Data Deficient should **not** be used if: a) the choice between two status designations is difficult to resolve by COSEWIC, or b) the status report is inadequate and has not fully investigated all best available information (in which case the report should be rejected), or c) the information available is minimally sufficient to assign status but inadequate for recovery planning or other such use.

Government of Canada| COSEWIC Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada
(https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/committee-status-endangered-wildlife/wildlife-species-assessment-process-categories-guidelines/quantitative-criteria.html)
Date modified: 2017-04-13

Appendix 2. Chronology of Assessments by the Species Status Advisory Committee

Common Name	Scientific Name	SSAC Assessment	Date of Recommendation:	Designated Status or Reason Not Designated:
Low Northern Rockcress *(original assessment)*	*Braya humilis(*formerly *Neotorularia humilis*)	Endangered	6-Oct-04	Endangered
Gray-cheeked Thrush Reassessed June 21, 2010	*Catharus minimus*	Vulnerable	4-Nov-05	Vulnerable
Northern Wheatear	*Oenanthe leucorhoa*	Not at Risk	No recommendation required.	
Caspian Tern	*Sterna caspia*	Not at Risk	No recommendation required.	
Redwine Caribou Herd	*Rangifer tarandus caribou* (Redwine Population)		SSAC has decided not to assess populations but species as a whole.	
Blowout Tiger Beetle	*Cicindela limbata labradorensis*	Data Deficient	Status report being revised due to new information.	
MacKenzie's Sweetvetch *(original assessment)*	*Hedysarum boreale* subsp. *mackenzii*	Endangered	21-Oct-06	Endangered
Rattlesnakeroot *(original assessment)*	*Prenanthes racemosa*	Endangered	21-Oct-06	Endangered
Northern Bog Aster *(original assessment)*	*Symphyotrichum boreale*	Endangered	21-Oct-06	Endangered
Crowded Wormseed Mustard *(original assessment)*	*Erysimum inconspicuum* var. *coarctatum*	Endangered	21-Oct-06	Endangered
Mountain Fern *(original assessment)*	*Thelypteris quelpaertensis*	Vulnerable	21-Oct-06	Vulnerable
Graceful Felt Lichen	*Erioderma mollissimum*	Endangered	8-May-08	Endangered
Bodin's Milkvetch *(original assessment)*	*Astragalus bodinii*	Threatened	29-May-08	Threatened
Shaved Sedge	*Carex tonsa* var. *tonsa*	Threatened	29-May-08	Returned to SSAC for re-assessment (new data)
Cutleaf Fleabane *(original assessment)*	*Erigeron compositus*	Endangered	29-May-08	Endangered
Feathery False Solomon's Seal	*Maianthemum racemosum* subsp. *racemosum*	Endangered	29-May-08	Endangered
Sharpleaf Aster	*Ocelmena acuminata*	Threatened	29-May-08	Threatened
Alaska Rein Orchid *(original assessment)*	*Platanthera foetida*	Endangered	29-May-08	Endangered
Gmelin's Watercrowfoot	*Ranunculus gmelinii*	Endangered	29-May-08	Endangered
Tradescant's Aster	*Symphyotrichum tradescantii*	Threatened	29-May-08	Threatened
Water Pygmyweed	*Tillaea aquatica*	Vulnerable	29-May-08	Vulnerable

Appendix 3: Chronology of Assessments by the Species Status Advisory Committee (continued, page 2 of 3)

Common Name	Scientific Name	SSAC Assessment	Date of Recommendation:	Designated Status or Reason Not Designated:
Rock Dwelling Sedge	*Carex petricosa* var. *misandroides*	Endangered	29-May-08	Endangered
Oval-leaved Creeping Spearwort	*Ranunculus flammula* var. *ovalis*	Endangered	29-May-08	Endangered
Lindley's Aster	*Symphyotrichum ciliolatum*	Endangered	07-Oct-10	Endangered
Arctic Hare	*Lepus arcticus*	Data Deficient	*No recommendation required*	
Bobolink	*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*	Vulnerable	07-Oct-10	Vulnerable
Bank Swallow	*Riparia riparia riparia*	Not at Risk	*No recommendation required*	
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	*Sphyrapicus varius*	Data Deficient	*No recommendation required*	
Vreeland's Striped Coralroot	*Corallorhiza striata* var. *vreelandii*	Endangered	07-Oct-10	Endangered
Gray-cheeked Thrush (Newfoundland subspecies)	*Catharus minimus minimus*	Threatened	07-Oct-10	Threatened
Gray-cheeked Thrush (Northern subspecies)	*Catharus minimus aliciae*	Not at Risk	*No recommendation required*	
Wooly Arnica	*Arnica angustifolia* subsp. *tomentosa*	Endangered	22-Oct-12	Endangered
Griscom's Arnica	*Arnica griscomii* subsp. *griscomii*	Endangered	22-Oct-12	Endangered
Northern Twayblade	*Listera borealis*	Endangered	25-Sep-13	Endangered
Mountain Bladder Fern (Newfoundland Designatable Unit)	*Cystopteris montana*	Endangered	25-Sep-13	Endangered
Red Pine	*Pinus resinosa*	Threatened	6-Oct-16	**No Decision**
Mummichog	*Fundulus heteroclitus macrolepidotus*	Vulnerable	6-Oct-16	**No Decision**
Low Northern Rockcress (re-assessment)	*Braya humilis(*formerly *Neotorularia humilis*)	Confirmed Endangered	Oct-16	Endangered status confirmed
Bank Swallow (review of COSEWIC report)	*Riparia riparia*	Support COSEWIC recommendation of Threatened	15-July-2019	**No Decision**
Northern Bog Aster (re-assessment)	*Symphyotrichum boreale*	Confirmed Endangered	16-January-2020	Endangered status confirmed
Rattlesnakeroot (re-assessment)	*Prenanthes racemosa*	Confirmed Endangered	16-January-2020	Endangered status confirmed
Crowded Wormseed Mustard (re-assessment)	*Erysimum inconspicuum* var. *coarctatum*	Confirmed Endangered	16-January-2020	Endangered status confirmed

Appendix 3: Chronology of Assessments by the Species Status Advisory Committee (continued, page 3 of 3)

Common Name	Scientific Name	SSAC Assessment	Date of Recommendation:	Designated Status or Reason Not Designated:
Bodin's Milkvetch (re-assessment)	*Astragalus bodinii*	Confirmed Threatened	16-January-2020	Threatened status confirmed
Cutleaf Fleabane (re-assessment)	*Erigeron compositus*	Confirmed Endangered	16-January-2020[+]	Endangered status confirmed
MacKenzie's Sweetvetch (re-assessment)	*Hedysarum boreale* subsp. *mackenzii*	Threatened	16-January-2020	**Currently listed as Endangered; downlisting recommended**
Mountain Fern (re-assessment)	*Thelypteris quelpaertensis*	Vulnerable	16-January-2020[+]	Vulnerable status confirmed
Alaska Rein Orchid (re-assessment)	*Platanthera foetida*	Endangered	16-January-2020	Endangered status confirmed

The Lieutenant-Governor in Council shall within 90 days of the minister receiving a written recommendation from SSAC to designate a species, give the minister approval to do one of the following: (a) designate the species under section 7 in the recommended or an equivalent category; (b) designate the species under section 7 in a different category and release to the public the reason for using a different category; or (c) make no designation and release to the public the reason there will be no designation. Section 8 of the Endangered Species Act.