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# Canada and U.S. Save Shared Species at Risk



**Summering in Canada's Northwest Territories and wintering in southern Texas, the whooping crane has been the subject of binational conservation efforts for thirty years.**

USFWS photo

Among the many challenges facing wildlife managers in North America is the fact that political and biogeographical boundaries rarely coincide. For example, the border separating the United States and Canada intersects nine major ecological regions, including Arctic tundra, many forest types, several mountain ranges, two coastal plains, the vast interior plains, and the Great Lakes. These regions feature a great diversity of plants and animals, many of which either migrate or range across the borders between the two countries. Some of these shared species are at risk and need urgent attention in both countries to save them from extinction.

Many North American species that are widely distributed in the continental United States extend only a short distance into Canada or migrate seasonally from Canadian breeding areas to spend the winter farther south. All of the 25 bird species considered threatened or endangered in Canada also occur in the United States. Of the 161 species of animals and plants on Canada's national threatened and endangered lists, about 70 percent are also found in the United States.

According to a review of Federal and State listed species in the U.S., there are more than 800 endangered, threatened, or rare species that occur in both nations. Some species considered at risk in the U.S. are found in sizable numbers in Canada, such as the woodland caribou (*Rangifer tarandus caribou*), wolf (*Canis lupus*), grizzly (*Ursus arctos*), and lynx (*Lynx canadensis*). Other species are considered at risk in Canada but are found more commonly in the U.S., such as the sage grouse

(*Centrocercus urophasianus*), northern bobwhite (*Colinus virginianus*), burrowing owl (*Speotyto cunicularia*), eastern Massasauga rattlesnake (*Sistrurus catenatus catenatus*), and spiny softshell turtle (*Apalone spinifera*).

Both nations currently consider such shared species as the right and bowhead whales (*Balaena glacialis* and *B. mysticetus*), whooping crane (*Grus americana*), Eskimo curlew (*Numenius borealis*), Kirtland's warbler (*Dendroica kirtlandii*), leatherback turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*), and Furbish lousewort (*Pedicularis furbishiae*) as endangered. A number of other species are considered threatened in one country and either threatened or endangered in the other, including the sea otter (*Enhydra lutris nereis*), humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*), marbled murrelet (*Brachyramphus marmoratus*), northern spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis caurina*), roseate tern (*Sterna dougallii dougallii*), western prairie white fringed orchid (*Plantanthera praeclara*), and golden paintbrush (*Castilleja levisecta*). Several additional species are endangered in one country and extirpated in the other, like the black-footed ferret (*Mustela nigripes*), Atlantic gray whale (*Eschrichtius robustus*), and blackfin cisco (*Coregonus nigripinnis*).

Although the benefit of close cooperation in the management of shared species has long been recognized by both countries, it has traditionally been directed at species of high economic value, such as migratory game and fisheries. The whooping crane and several other endangered species with high public profiles have

been the subject of joint conservation efforts, but they were few and were handled as *ad hoc* projects. Attention is now broadening to consider all species, especially those believed to be headed for extinction. The American and Canadian governments have created a formal agreement to cooperate in identifying and, where feasible, recovering shared wildlife at risk.

In April 1997, Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior Bruce Babbitt and former Minister of Canada's Department of the Environment Sergio Marchi signed a document entitled "Framework for Cooperation Between the U.S. Department of the Interior and Environment Canada in the Protection and Recovery of Wild Species at Risk." The framework supports exchanging technical expertise; identifying species that would benefit from bilateral attention; implementing joint recovery plans; recruiting partnerships between State, Provincial, and private agencies and individuals; and creating greater public awareness.

Perhaps the agreement's most important achievement, however, will be to encourage more inclusive and flexible cooperative arrangements. For example, any interested party, whether government or private, may seek the assistance of the two Federal wildlife agencies in establishing cooperative programs with its counterpart in the other country. Moreover, action may be directed at any shared species, regardless of jurisdiction, including species considered at risk in only one of the two countries. The burrowing owl, which has become increasingly endangered in Canada but is not considered at risk in the U.S., is a good example. In late 1998, a symposium was held in Utah to examine the owls' overall status and to seek more information on the poor survival of owls that nest in Canada and winter in the southern U.S. and northern Mexico.

To determine which other species need cooperative efforts, or in some cases additional effort, personnel from

the Canadian and U.S. wildlife services have been assembling three lists of species of mutual concern. One comprises wildlife and plants listed in both Canada and the U.S., and another includes species listed only in one country but whose range historically included both countries. The third list is made up of species of special concern that are experiencing rapid population declines or require more studies to determine their status. By pursuing the needs revealed by these lists, the working group hopes to encourage communication and cooperative recovery efforts. These results will also be shared with the working groups that are coordinating recovery efforts for species shared by the three countries.

Interagency meetings have already led to closer working relationships at the headquarters level, and this is expected to benefit regional and local offices as well. Each country's endangered species management procedures, from listing to consultation to recovery to outreach efforts, will progress from the strengths of the other as we work together to identify and save species at risk that occur on both sides of the world's longest national border.

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Common Name	Scientific Name	National Status, Canada [COSEWIC]	Federal Status, US [FWS]
<i>Mammal</i>			
Bear, grizzly	<i>Ursus arctos</i>	V	T
Caribou, woodland	<i>Rangifer tarandus caribou</i>	T	E
Ferret, black-footed	<i>Mustela nigripes</i>	EX	E
Otter, southern sea	<i>Enhydra lutris nereis</i>	T	T
Whale, blue	<i>Balaenoptera musculus</i>	V	E
Whale, bowhead (E. & W. Arctic pop.)	<i>Balaena mysticetus</i>	E	E
Whale, finback	<i>Balaenoptera physalus</i>	V	E
Whale, gray (Atlantic pop.)	<i>Eschrichtius robustus</i>	EX	E
Whale, humpback (W. N. Atlantic pop.)	<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>	V	E
Whale, humpback (N. Pacific pop.)	<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>	T	E
Whale, right	<i>Balaena glacialis (incl. australis)</i>	E	E
<i>Bird</i>			
Crane, whooping	<i>Grus americana</i>	E	E
Curlew, Eskimo	<i>Numenius borealis</i>	E	E
Falcon, American peregrine	<i>Falco peregrinus anatum</i>	T	E
Murrelet, marbled	<i>Brachyramphus marmoratus marmoratus</i>	T	T
Owl, northern spotted	<i>Strix occidentalis caurina</i>	E	T
Plover, piping	<i>Charadrius melodus</i>	E	E, T
Tern, roseate	<i>Sterna dougallii dougallii</i>	E	E, T
Warbler, Kirtland's	<i>Dendroica kirtlandii</i>	E	E
<i>Reptile</i>			
Turtle, leatherback sea	<i>Dermochelys coriacea</i>	E	E
<i>Clam/Mussel</i>			
Riffleshell, northern	<i>Epioblasma torulosa rangiana</i>	E	E
Wedgemussel, dwarf	<i>Alasmidonta heterodon</i>	EX	E
<i>Fish</i>			
Cisco, blackfin	<i>Coregonus nigripinnis</i>	T	EX
Sturgeon, shortnose	<i>Acipenser brevirostrum</i>	V	E
Sturgeon, white (Kootenai River pop.)	<i>Acipenser transmontanus</i>	V	E
<i>Insect</i>			
Butterfly, Karner blue	<i>Lyciaides melissa samuelis</i>	EX	E
<i>Plant</i>			
Lousewort, Furbish's	<i>Pedicularis furbishiae</i>	E	E
Orchid, eastern prairie white fringed	<i>Platanthera leucophaea</i>	V	T
Orchid, western prairie white fringed	<i>Platanthera praeclara</i>	E	T
Paintbrush, golden	<i>Castilleja levisecta</i>	T	T
Pogonia, small whorled	<i>Isotria medeoloides</i>	E	T
Thistle, Pitcher's or dune	<i>Cirsium pitcheri</i>	E	T

Codes: **EX**= Extinct or Extirpated, **E**= Endangered, **T**=Threatened, **V**=Vulnerable, **C**= Candidate  
Sources: U.S. List (50 CFR 17.11 17.12), COSEWIC list (1999), and information from The Nature Conservancy

**(Above) Some wildlife and plants listed in both Canada and the U.S. whose ranges historically included both countries.**