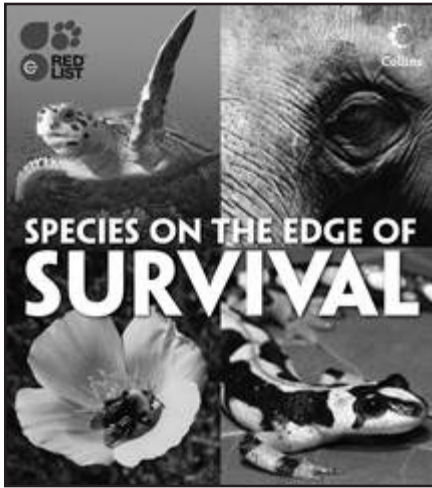

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SPECIES ON THE EDGE OF SURVIVAL

International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List. 2011. Harper-Collins, UK. \$24.99 CDN. Soft cover. ISBN-13: 978-0007419142. 400 pp. 20.8 × 18.5 cm



Species on the Edge of Survival is a unique production by IUCN researchers. This spectacular volume is a sheer delight for wildlife lovers, enthusiasts, and book collectors. The publication captures 365 wildlife species within its covers and is enriched by reader-friendly information and fabulous colored plates of mammals, birds, fishes, reptiles, invertebrates, plants, fungi and lichens.

Of the 365 species presented, eight are found in Canada and are in need of some focused conservation measures to help them survive from threats of extinction. It is encouraging to note these rare Canadian members in a global showcase of diverse life forms. Indeed, this volume is a priceless collection of wild species that require care and attention for their continued survival. Truly spectacular is the presentation style of the volume.

Each species has been identified by its English and scientific name, geographic distribution, possible threats it faces in its natural habitat, and an updated conservation status.

The volume highlights or mentions eight Canadian species. Although none of these species is from the prairies, this book is still of significant interest to all Canadians. Following is a brief description of these eight species.

1. **Red wolf** (*Canis rufus*), p. 89: Classified as *Critically Endangered* according to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™. Canada is believed to encompass the northernmost range of the historical population, and the red wolf range and comeback in the United States are mainly highlighted. The species was believed to be extinct in the wild in the 1980s. Indiscriminate shooting, trapping, and hybridization with coyotes have accounted for the historical loss of the species. Although encouraging stories of its comeback to nature reserves in North Carolina are highlighted, no information on the Canadian population is provided, most probably due to lack of reliable scientific data.

2. **Barndoor skate** (*Dipturus laevis* Mitchill, 1818), p. 149: Classified as *Endangered* according to the IUCN Red List, this species has been reported along the Atlantic coast of Canada and the USA. Unrestricted commercial fishing has been the major factor affecting the once abundant natural populations of

this skate. Some conservation efforts and legal battles are currently being pursued.

3. **Boreal felt lichen** (*Erioderma pedicellatum* (Hue) P. M. Jørg.), p. 171: Classified as *Critically Endangered* according to the IUCN Red List. Although once widely distributed in its circumpolar habitat, this species is now restricted to only two isolated populations in Canada (Newfoundland and Nova Scotia) and one in Alaska (US). The rapid decline of the lichen populations has been attributed to habit loss due to extensive logging practices and industrial air pollution. Being a highly sensitive species to any modification of its natural habitat, around 80% population loss has been documented to date. Conservation efforts are in progress to prevent further depletion of the population in the boreal forest zones.

4. **North Atlantic right whale** (*Eubalaena glacialis* Müller, 1776), p. 172: Classified as *Endangered* according to the IUCN Red List. The wild population was significantly impacted by the turn of the 20th century due to over exploitation and extensive harvest. Marine pollution, fishing practices, and accidents with marine and fishing vehicles have been documented as other causes of decline. Efforts are underway in both the USA and Canada to protect and conserve this species, which is reported to be one of the rarest among larger whales.

5. **Lined seahorse** (*Hippocampus erectus* Perry, 1810), p. 208: Classified as *Vulnerable* according to the IUCN Red List, this species is reported to be present from Nova Scotia across the east coast of the US and Mexico down to as far south as Brazil in South America. Illegal harvesting and over-exploitation are the main factors contributing to the rapid decline of wild populations. Habitat loss and the illegal

trade in aquarium specimens have greatly contributed towards loss of this species in several parts of its range. Although some conservation programs have been implemented, the loss of species is still happening at an alarming rate.

6. **Porbeagle** (*Lamna nasus* Bonnatte, 1788), p. 220: Classified as *Vulnerable* according to the IUCN Red List. This shark has been declining globally as well as in Canadian waters due to non-sustainable fishing practices and overexploitation. Low reproductive rates have further contributed to serious declines in global populations. Conservation efforts have been implemented in the US and Canada; however, due to lack of coordination at an international level, the species is seriously threatened by further loss of natural wild populations all over the planet.

7. **Vancouver Island marmot** (*Marmota vancouverensis* Swarth, 1911), p. 243: Classified as *Critically Endangered* according to the IUCN Red List, this is one of the rarest mammals in North America, endemic to Vancouver Island. This species is greatly threatened by loss and fragmentation of its habitat due to logging and clearing of forests. Increased predation by several species as a result of human-induced alteration of the natural habitat has been another causal factor for its rapid decline. Although it is a legally protected species and a captive breeding program has been implemented in Canada, limited information is available regarding its population dynamics and ecology.

8. **Reindeer/Caribou** (*Rangifer tarandus* Linnaeus, 1758), p. 326: Classified as *Least Concern* according to the IUCN Red List, this species has a circumpolar distribution including the continents of Europe and North America. It is more threatened in its European habitat compared to the North American

range due to a multitude of factors from habitat loss and environmental pollution to extensive poaching. Mostly conservation challenges and efforts from the European perspective are highlighted.

Overall, this book is an inspiring volume highlighting a wide spectrum of important factors accounting for global loss of wildlife species, including excellent examples from Canada. The factors listed for global loss of wildlife include habitat loss, habitat fragmentation, climate change, environmental pollution, diseases, human encroachment, forest fires, poaching, bush meat and

other forms of illegal wildlife trade, human population explosion, accidental and intentional introduction of exotic species, and many more. The design and presentation are spectacular, and the message presented to the readers is engaging and powerful.

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The Buck

The car slowly edged around a curve
And began its descent to the valley floor.

I glanced to the hills on my left
And for a moment our eyes locked.

I braked the car.
I was captured by the eyes
Of a buck standing like a statue while his big eyes and minemet.
We stared at each other in wonder.

He was magnificent!
The muscular, copper body glistened in the sun.
His head held high.

May God/Nature keep him safe.

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