

## Species Status Assessment Backgrounder

- The *Species at Risk (NWT) Act* provides a process to identify, protect and recover species at risk in the NWT. The Act applies to any wild animal, plant or other species managed by the Government of the Northwest Territories. It does not apply to fish, marine mammals or migratory birds. It applies everywhere in the NWT, on both public and private lands, including private lands owned under a land claims agreement.
- The Species at Risk Committee (SARC), established by the *Species at Risk (NWT) Act*, is an independent committee of up to 15 experts responsible for assessing the biological status of species at risk in the NWT.
- Species status assessment will be done at the territorial level, and the results may be different from assessments done at the national level. Assessments will be based on species status reports that include the best available traditional, community and scientific knowledge of the species.
- Status assessments are scheduled to be done on 25 species between 2012 and 2017.
- Species were ranked in order of priority for assessment using a checklist of the following six criteria:
  - **Uniqueness** – How distinct or special it is; species are given higher priority than subspecies and subspecies are given higher priority than distinct populations.

- **Trends** – A species whose numbers, or amount of habitat, are showing a decline is a higher priority than a species with stable or increasing populations or habitat.
- **Community concern** – Species with a high level of community concern in the NWT are given a high priority.
- **Rarity** – A species with one small population in the NWT is higher priority than a species that is abundant.
- **Threats** – A species with threats affecting more than half the population is a higher priority than a species with threats of minor or no impact.
- **Percentage in NWT** – A species found only in the NWT is a higher priority than a species that is widespread.

### **Assessment Categories**

SARC recommends each species assessed be placed in one of the following status categories:

- **Extinct** – no longer exists anywhere;
- **Extirpated** – no longer exists in the wild in the NWT;
- **Endangered** – facing imminent extirpation or extinction;
- **Threatened** – likely to become endangered if nothing is done;
- **Special Concern** – may become endangered or threatened because of threats and biological factors;
- **Not at Risk** – not currently at risk of extinction; or
- **Data Deficient** – not enough information to determine status.