



PROPOSAL FOR DECISION - SUBMISSION TO THE NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD

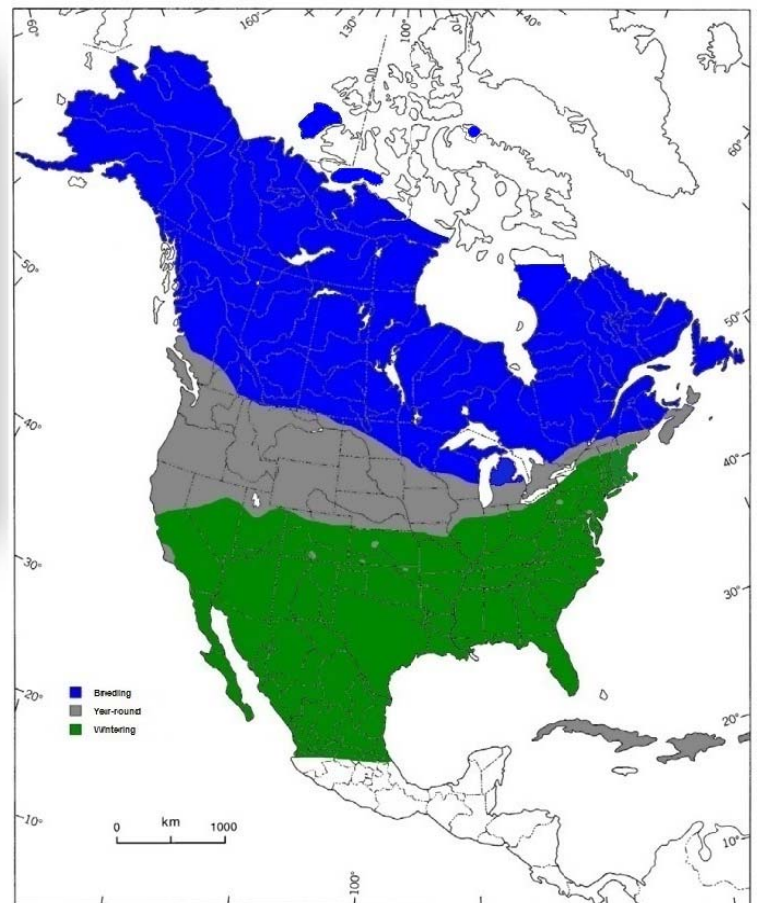
Information:

Decision: X

Issue: Request for decision of approval of the *Management Plan for Short-eared owl in Canada* under the federal *Species at Risk Act*



Short-eared Owl –
Species of Special Concern



Distribution of the Short-eared Owl in North America
Blue: Breeding; Grey: Year round; Green: Wintering

Background:

- The Short-eared Owl is a medium-sized owl that breeds in all provinces and territories in Canada and is common along the Arctic coast
- The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) assessed the Short-eared Owl as a species of Special Concern in April 2008. It was listed as Special Concern on Schedule 1 of the federal *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) in 2012. A species of Special Concern is sensitive to changes in its environment but is not currently in danger of becoming extinct. The Short-eared Owl was listed as Special Concern because the species has suffered a continuing population decline over the past 40 years, including a loss of 23% between 1996 and 2006. The major threat to the species is habitat loss and degradation on its wintering grounds. Habitat loss and degradation on the breeding grounds in southern Canada and the use of pesticides are also threats.
- As required under the federal *Species at Risk Act* (SARA), a management plan must be developed for species listed as Special of Concern.
- The management plan is a plan that sets the goals and objectives for maintaining sustainable population levels for Short-eared Owl. A summary of the management plan is attached.
- Community consultations on the draft management plan were conducted in September-October 2014. Consultation packages were sent by email and mail to ten communities within the range of the species. The packages included: a letter, draft management plan, plain language summary of the draft, narrated PowerPoint presentation, and questionnaire/response. The communities we sent packages to are: Arviat, Baker Lake, Bathurst Inlet, Cambridge Bay, Chesterfield Inlet, Kugluktuk, Rankin Inlet, Sanikiluaq, Umingmaktok and Whale Cove.
- A reminder email requesting input was sent on October 28, 2014.
- Aqigiq (Chesterfield Inlet) HTO has stated that it is indifferent to the proposed management plan as they felt that the species is not endangered. Arviat HTO has stated that they are not concerned and Sanikiluaq HTO that they have no comments as they do not see the Short-eared Owl in their area.
- Between October 28 and 31, 2014, phone calls were made to each organization asking if they had considered the information and if their organization had any comments on the recovery document. Baker Lake, Bathurst Inlet, Cambridge Bay, Kugluktuk, Rankin Inlet, Umingmaktok and Whale Cove were then contacted by phone. CWS was not been able to get a response from these 7 HTOs.
- The second jurisdictional review on the Species at Risk Public Registry and the request to support posting from the Government of Nunavut were done between January-February 2015. Environment Canada provided the draft recovery document to the NWMB in January 2015 for this second jurisdictional review. Comments from NWMB were received on February 20, 2015, and were incorporated into the draft.
- The proposed recovery document was posted on the Species at Risk Registry in February 2016 for the 60-day public comment period, which ended on April 23, 2016. ECCC considered the comments received during this 60-day public comment period and revised the document accordingly.

Next Steps:

- Environment and Climate Change Canada is now prepared to post the recovery document on the Species at Risk Registry as final.
- Environment and Climate Change Canada is providing the recovery document to the NWMB for final approval decision as per the NLCA s. 5.2.34.

Request to the Board:

That the NWMB considers whether or not they approve the final *Management Plan for Short-eared owl in Canada* under the federal *Species at Risk Act* as per the NLCA s. 5.2.34.

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The *Species at Risk Act* and You

PROPOSED FINAL MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE SHORT-EARED OWL IN CANADA



© Steve Garvie (Wikimedia Commons)
Short-eared Owl

This is a summary of the information provided in the proposed final management plan for Short-eared Owl. Short-eared Owl was listed as a species of special concern under the *Species at Risk Act* in 2012.

The management plan is a plan that sets the goals and objectives for maintaining sustainable population levels for Short-eared Owl, a species that is sensitive to changes in its environment but is not currently in danger of becoming extinct.

This summary is based on the information in the full English version of the Short-eared Owl management plan.

The original English copy of the management plan has been provided for reference.

Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) Assessment and Species Status Information (Pages 6-7)

These pages provide the COSEWIC assessment table which is included here. It describes why COSEWIC has assessed the Short-eared Owl as a species of Special Concern, where it occurs in Canada, and the history of the species status over the years.

This section also provides information on the status of the species throughout Canada, how it is protected in the Provinces and Territories and the status given to the bird by other conservation programs such as NatureServe.

Natureserve has not assessed the conservation status of Short-eared Owl in Nunavut.

Date of Assessment: April 2008

Common Name (population): Short-eared Owl

Scientific Name: *Asio flammeus*

COSEWIC Status: Special concern

Reason for Designation: This owl has suffered a continuing population decline over the past 40 years, including a loss of 23% in the last decade alone*. Habitat loss and degradation on its wintering grounds are most likely the major threat, while continuing habitat loss and degradation on its breeding grounds in southern Canada and pesticide use are secondary threats. This species nearly meets the criteria for Threatened status.

Canadian Occurrence: Yukon Territory, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador

COSEWIC Status History: Designated Special Concern in April 1994 and April 2008.

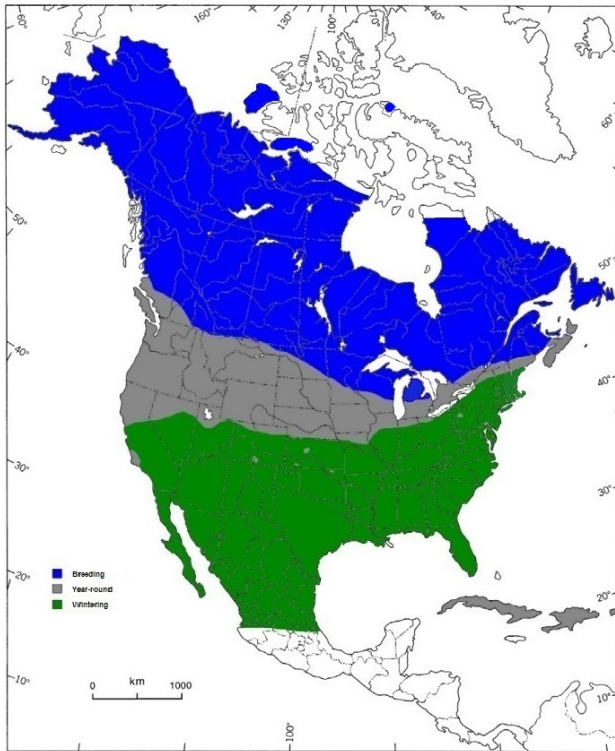
* Calculated for the 1996-2006 period. The management plan contains updated information on the most recent decade of data available (2002-2012), analyzed using a more precise method than that used in COSEWIC (2008).

Information about Short-eared Owl (pages 8-13)

This section of the proposed management plan for Short-eared Owl provides some information such as what they look like, where they live, and what they need to survive.

- Short-eared owls are a medium-sized owl approximately 34 to 42 cm in length.
- Have a large round head with small tufts of feathers that look like ears

- Have long wings and short tail
- Adults have a brown back and creamy-buff coloured chest with brown streaks that provide camouflage
- Males and females are similar in appearance but females are slightly larger and darker in colour
- Fly in an irregular pattern which resembles the flight of a moth
- Most likely to be seen when they are flying at dawn and dusk
- In Canada they are found in every province and territory (see Figure 1); most common in the prairie provinces and along the arctic coast.
- The Canadian breeding population is estimated at 300,000
- There have been recent observations north of the known breeding range in the NWT and Nunavut. This may be the result of increased survey efforts or a possible range expansion
- Surveys indicate that Short-eared Owls population levels in Canada were in decline from the 1960s/1970s until 2002 and stabilized between 2002 and 2012. There is a lot of uncertainty in the population numbers and trends. There is little data about Short-eared owls in Nunavut.
- Meadow Vole is one of the main prey species. When meadow voles are abundant, Short-eared Owls lay more eggs.



This is Figure 1 from the proposed final management plan. It shows areas where Short-eared Owls breed (blue), spend the whole year (grey) and winter (green) in North America.

Threats to Short-eared Owl (pages 13-19)

This section of the proposed management plan describes the things that might cause Short-eared Owl populations to drop.

Threats to Short-eared Owl can affect habitat, but can also affect individuals, nests and eggs. Human activities that remove or fragment large expanses of habitat are the main reason for declines in Short-eared Owl populations.

The main threats in the breeding region for migratory Short-eared Owls are:

- **Agriculture** – loss of habitat from changing natural habitats to farmland. Pesticides used to control crop pests may affect Short-eared Owls and their prey.
- **Livestock farming and ranching** – overgrazing can reduce the height and density of grasses which can limit the number of the small mammals that Short-eared Owls prey upon.
- **Energy production and Mining** – can cause habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation in the Short-eared Owl's range.

Hunting in the northern part of the range is likely not a threat to Short-eared Owl.

Climate change may become a threat to Short-eared Owls through changes in habitat, extreme weather events, the abundance of prey and predators. Habitats in northern regions are likely to sustain the most significant impacts of climate change. Increased shrub cover could decrease suitable habitat for Short-eared owls, while warming temperatures could allow the range to expand further north.

Management Objectives (pages 19-20)

The management objectives for the Short-eared Owl in Canada are:

- In the short term: Stabilize or increase the population trend over the 2017-2027 period and maintain the area of occupancy at 1,500,000 km²
- In the long term: Ensure a positive 10-year population trend starting in 2027, while promoting an increase in the area of occupancy, including the gradual recolonization of areas in the southern portion of the Canadian range.

Broad Strategies and Conservation Measures (pages 20-27)

A number of actions have already been completed or are underway in an effort to meet the management objectives, including: provincial management plans and recovery teams, stewardship and habitat conservation programs, development of industry guidelines, policy development on wetlands zoning and pesticide use, monitoring programs, conservation workshops, and brochures about Short-eared Owls to create public awareness.

The broad strategies of the management plan are:

- Conservation and management of the species and its habitats across the breeding, migration and wintering ranges;
- Conducting surveys, monitoring and research on the species, its habitats and threats across the breeding, migration and wintering ranges; and
- Promoting awareness and partnerships with regard to conservation priorities.

There are a number of conservation measures identified in the management plan ranging from high to low priority. The high priority conservation measures include:

- Implement conservation priorities to conserve and manage large tracts of open habitats like grasslands and wetlands
- Standardize the ways that Short-eared owls are monitored and studied
- Gather Indigenous traditional ecological knowledge

Measuring Progress (page 28)

Success of the management objectives will be evaluated every five years to determine if:

- In the short term: the population trend over the 2017-2027 period is stabilized or increased and the area of occupancy is maintained at 1,500,000 km².
- In the long term: a positive 10-year population trend is reached starting in 2027 and the area of occupancy is increased, including the gradual recolonization of areas in the southern portion of the Canadian range.

For more information, please contact us directly at:

Canadian Wildlife Service – Northern Region
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Yellowknife NT X1A 2P7

You can also visit the following websites for more information:
SARA Public Registry (www.sararegistry.gc.ca)

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