

POTENTIAL LISTING OF THORNY SKATE UNDER THE SPECIES AT RISK ACT (SARA)

Environment Climate Change Canada and
Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Nunavut Wildlife Management Board meeting

June 2024

SARA Listing Process

- The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) provides species assessments to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change (MECC).
- The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (MFO) is the competent minister for aquatic species* and determines the extent of public consultations necessary to inform the listing decision.
- MFO then conducts consultations and uses the results to inform the listing advice for the species.
- MECC shares the proposed listing recommendation with the relevant Wildlife Management Boards and requests their approval.
- MECC then recommends to the Governor in Council to either list the species under Schedule 1 of SARA, not list the species under Schedule 1, or refer the species back to COSEWIC for further consideration or information.

*Except on lands or in waters administered by Parks Canada.

Species Assessment Overview

- Thorny Skate was assessed by COSEWIC in 2012 as **Special Concern**.
- Special Concern status attributed to population declines and range contractions within the southern part of their range.
- In contrast, the abundance of individuals in the northern part of their range has been increasing.
- Thorny Skate can be found in Nunavut, Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and the Atlantic, and Arctic oceans.

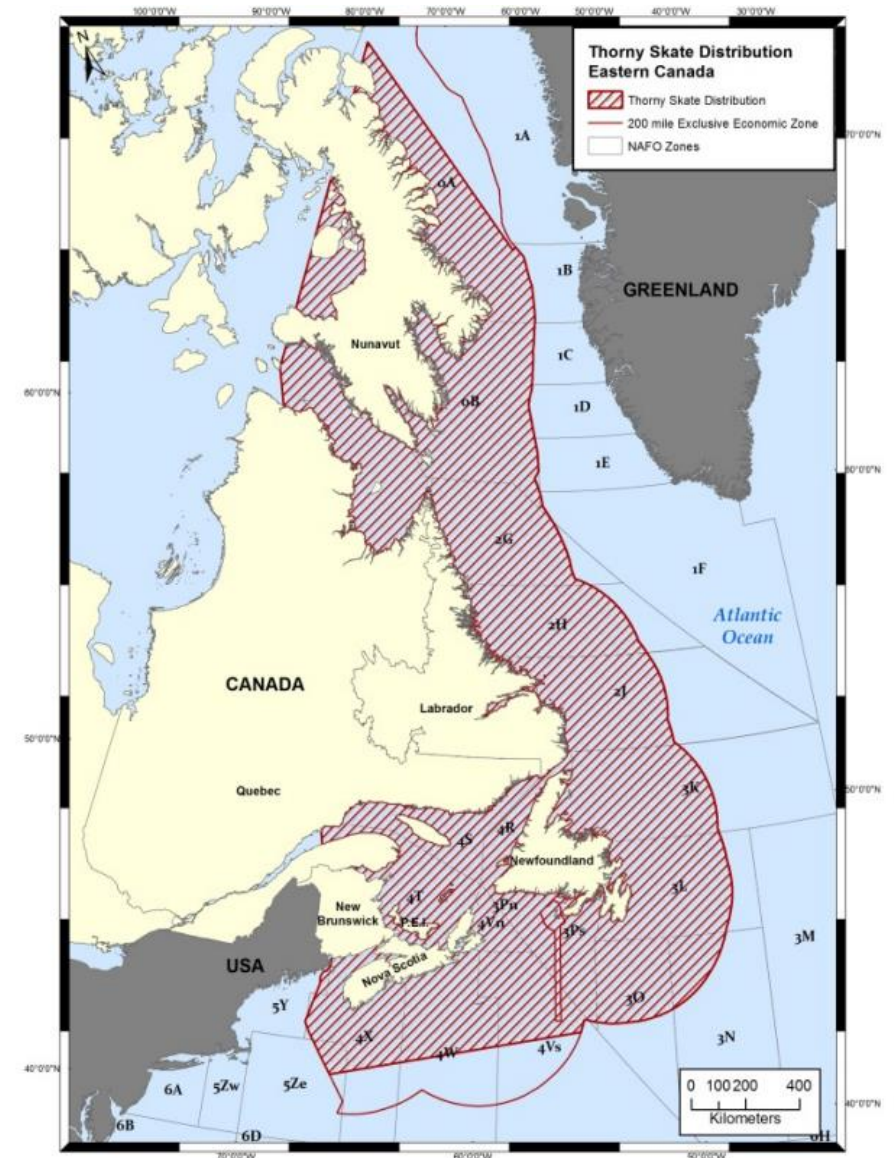


Figure 1. Distribution of Thorny Skate in Canada (COSEWIC. 2012. COSEWIC assessment and status report on the Thorny Skate *Amblyraja radiata* in Canada. Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada. Ottawa. ix + 75 pp. (www.registrelep-sararegistry.gc.ca/default_e.cfm)).

Thorny Skate Biology and Threats

Biology:

- Large bottom dwelling skate (found in a wide variety of depths (18-1200m)) distributed continuously from Baffin Bay south to Georges Bank, including the Gulf of St Lawrence
- Slow growing, late maturing species, reaching maturity at 11 years with a lifespan of 16-20 years

Threats & Limiting Factors:

- Mortality in both directed and bycatch fisheries is likely important but has not been directly linked to declines
- Predation by gastropods, marine fish, and marine mammals is likely



Figure 2. Specimens of mature and juvenile female Thorny Skates. (COSEWIC. 2012. COSEWIC assessment and status report on the Thorny Skate *Amblyraja radiata* in Canada. Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada. Ottawa. ix + 75 pp. (www.registrelep-sararegistry.gc.ca/default_e.cfm))

Engagement and Consultation Summary

- Consultation Efforts:
 - Consultations took place in 2015
 - Notices published in English, French and Inuktitut in *Nunatsiaq News*
 - Consultation products were sent to:
 - 7 Hunters and Trappers Organizations
 - Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board
 - Nunavut Inuit Wildlife Secretariat
 - Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.
 - 5 Fishing industry groups
 - Government of Nunavut, Division of Fisheries and Sealing
- Consultation check-ins were completed in 2023



Figure 3. Illustration of a mature Thorny Skate (DFO).

Engagement and Consultation Summary

- Consultation results:
 - Government of Nunavut responded stating that they do not support listing
 - No other comments were received during consultations from groups within the territory of Nunavut
 - No comments were received during the consultation check-ins from within the territory of Nunavut

Proposed Listing Recommendation

- On the advice of the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change is considering recommending that the species be listed as Special Concern under Schedule 1 of SARA.
- If Thorny Skate were to be listed as Special Concern, SARA prohibitions would not come into effect.
- Listing would require the development of a SARA Management Plan within 3 years.

Comments and Questions