

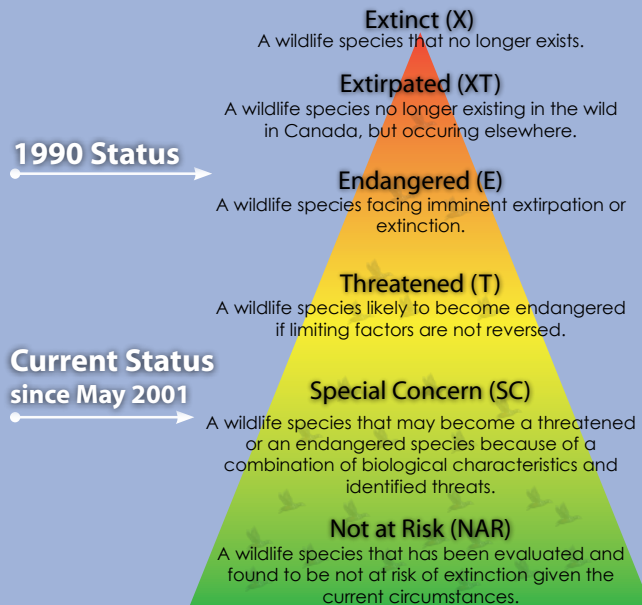
What is COSEWIC?

Committee on the Status of Endangered
Wildlife in Canada

An independent committee of wildlife experts and scientists from federal, provincial and territorial governments, universities, and non-government organizations, COSEWIC uses a scientific process to assess the risk of extinction for wildlife species. It meets annually to review status reports on species suspected of being at risk and provides assessments to government and the public.

What is the *Species at Risk Act*?

The *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) was created to prevent wildlife species from becoming extinct. The Act protects species at risk and their critical habitats. SARA also contains provisions to help manage species of special concern to prevent them from becoming endangered or extinct.



Community Members

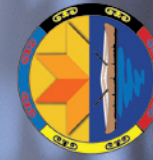
Have you seen the Harlequin duck in this area or know any stories about the harlequin? If so, please call us or send us an email at the information below.

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The Government of Canada
Aboriginal Fund for Species at Risk



Gespe'gewag Migmaq Resource Council
Mawi apoqanmatufinej waqammu'g ula gm'iginu.
ISO 9001:2000 certified

Listuguj Eel River Bar Pabineau



Harlequin Duck

Histrionicus histrionicus

Quick Facts

- the Harlequin is a medium-sized diving duck (33-46cm);
- males are larger than females;
- sounds are best described as squeaks “ek-ek-ek”;
- nicknamed the sea mouse.

Description

The Harlequin Duck is a small sea duck. The male has a slate blue body accented with white and black markings and chestnut flanks. Females are a dull brown with three white spots on the sides of their heads.

Harlequins breed on turbulent, upland rivers and streams and winter along rugged coastlines. In spring they congregate at river mouths and estuaries, waiting for the rivers to thaw. Except when breeding, Harlequins are gregarious, feeding, molting and wintering on traditional grounds in flocks.

Its life cycle is similar to that of the Atlantic salmon. They both gather at estuaries and river mouths and breed among turbulent streams. In Autumn they go to sea where they will stay until summer.

Distribution

The eastern population of the Harlequin Duck breeds in northern Quebec, Labrador, Newfoundland's Great Northern Peninsula, southeastern Newfoundland, and the

eastern tip of the Gaspé Peninsula. In all likelihood Harlequin Ducks are also breeding on Baffin Island, Nunavut and the northern extremes of New Brunswick.

Harlequins winter along the rugged coasts of southern Newfoundland, the Atlantic Coast of Nova Scotia, in the Bay of Fundy off New Brunswick, the Gulf of Maine to as far south as the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay.

Threats

The eastern population of the Harlequin Duck was listed as endangered by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) in 1990 because its numbers have declined to a point below minimum viable population size. However, in the spring of 2001, Harlequin Ducks were downlisted to Species of Special Concern as COSEWIC viewed the population increase and present positive population trend as sufficient to take them off the endangered list.

Nonetheless, their habit of staging, molting, and wintering in flocks in traditional areas leaves the species vulnerable to human disturbance, and oil pollution.

Its breeding habitat is threatened by a variety of disturbances including hydroelectric development, forestry, insect control programs, low-level military flying, resource development and increased access by humans. Illegal hunting, whether accidental - females and immature Harlequins are difficult to differentiate from some legally hunted species - or deliberate, takes its toll on a species that has a naturally low reproductive rate.

Distinctive Markings

A white ear spot and a white patch in front of the eyes for both males and females.



Drake (male)

Duck (female)

source: Environment Canada