

***EMBARGOED until Noon EST, 27 September 2005***

**Contacts:** Rob Riordan, NatureServe / 703-258-4552 / e-mail: [rob\\_riordan@natureserve.org](mailto:rob_riordan@natureserve.org)

Benoit L'Allier, Ministère des Ressources naturelles et de la Faune / Ministry of Natural Resources and Wildlife / 418-521-3845, x7093 / e-mail: [benoit.lallier@fapaq.gouv.qc.ca](mailto:benoit.lallier@fapaq.gouv.qc.ca)

Bruce Stein, NatureServe / 703-908-1830 / e-mail: [bruce\\_stein@natureserve.org](mailto:bruce_stein@natureserve.org)

---

## **Canadian Species Faring Well in Global Context, New Scientific Analysis Shows *But More Than 360 Plants and Animals are of Global Conservation Concern***

*Ottawa, Ontario* — Canada still has the opportunity to protect nearly its entire diversity of native plant and animal species intact, according to a new report that provides the first-ever analysis of the conservation status of these species in a global context. The report examines 5,685 native species, including plants and the best-known groups of animals, and finds that 362, or 6.4%, are of global conservation concern. 68 of these species are endemic to Canada, meaning they are found in no other country.

The report, *Our Home and Native Land: Canadian Species of Global Conservation Concern*, was produced by NatureServe Canada, a non-profit conservation group that works with provincial governments to provide scientific data and expertise about species and ecosystems. By providing a comprehensive examination of Canadian species in a global context, the new analysis complements the local and national perspectives used in other important studies and listing processes carried out by agencies of provincial and federal government.

“The good news here is that more than 90% of our species are secure and at no imminent risk of extinction,” said biologist Syd Cannings, director of NatureServe Yukon and the report’s lead author. “But it’s also important to remember that more than 300 plants and animals are of global conservation concern, and many of these live precisely in the areas most affected by human activity. In these places, people and wildlife are sharing habitat. These species need immediate and ongoing conservation attention.”

The majority of the species of global concern are flowering plants (222 species). Because plants represent more than 70% of the species assessed, however, their risk rate is actually slightly lower than the average, at about 6%. The two groups with the highest proportion of species of global concern are freshwater mussels (10 species, or 17.9%) and freshwater fish (31 species, or 14.2%). Both of these groups depend on freshwater habitats (lakes, streams, and rivers), and have suffered from human impacts to these waters, including pollution, dams, and introduced non-native species.

-- MORE --

“This is Canada’s global responsibility,” said John Riley, Chief Science Officer of the Nature Conservancy of Canada. “We have to think globally—about risks to our biodiversity—so we can act locally to conserve these species and ecosystems. This is what *Our Home and Native Land* contributes to our toolkit for going forward.”

“Every Canadian must have sung these words countless times ... ‘O, Canada, our home and native land ... we stand on guard for thee.’ In what sense, I wonder, do we really mean it? We are allowing both our human heritage and our natural heritage to disappear at an alarming rate in our own lifetimes,” said the noted conservationist and artist Robert Bateman. “This report on *Canadian Species of Global Conservation Concern* is a timely wake-up call. We urgently need political will, and to pay attention as well as pay for the measures needed to pass on to our children a nation at least as rich and varied as was left to us by our parents.”

A comparison of the study’s findings with a similar NatureServe analysis of the United States shows that Canadian species are faring much better overall. The U.S. study found that nearly one-third of that country’s species are of global concern, and more than 500 are already extinct or missing. In contrast, only 32 Canadian species are or may be extinct. In part, this reflects Canada’s northerly location, which leads to a comparatively low total diversity of species; in addition, many Canadian plants and animals have the major part of their range in countries to the south. However, it also reflects the vast areas of Canada that remain little-populated and mostly in their natural state.

Notwithstanding those positive findings, however, many species that remain globally secure are in fact declining nationally or regionally, and thus are important conservation priorities at local, provincial, and federal levels. Immediate conservation action is called for now in order to sustain the habitats of these species *before* they become globally threatened.

*Our Home and Native Land* is based primarily on data from NatureServe and its network of member programs across North America. NatureServe Canada represents a network of eight conservation data centres (CDCs) operating in each of the provinces and the Yukon. Scientists at each CDC collect and analyze scientific data about imperiled species and ecosystems in their jurisdiction in support of natural resource decision-making, research, and education. The global conservation status ranks used in the analysis are based on a set of biological factors including number of occurrences, population size, habitat condition, severity of threats, and short-term and long-term population trends.

“We couldn’t accomplish an analysis like this without the information and support we receive from partners in so many sectors,” said Jim Mackenzie, coordinator of the Ontario Natural Heritage Information Centre and current chair of the NatureServe Canada Board of Directors. “That includes federal agencies such as Parks Canada and the Canadian Wildlife Service, provincial governments, universities, local conservation groups, and even amateur naturalists who contribute their own knowledge to our database.”

The 40-page report, which includes numerous color photographs and figures, is available to the public in English and French online at [www.natureserve-canada.ca](http://www.natureserve-canada.ca). Data for individual species can be viewed on the NatureServe Explorer website ([www.natureserve.org/explorer](http://www.natureserve.org/explorer)).

###

**NatureServe Canada** is a non-profit conservation group that contributes to the conservation of Canada's biodiversity by providing scientific data and expertise about species and ecosystems of conservation concern to support decision making, research, and education. Visit us online at [www.natureserve-canada.ca](http://www.natureserve-canada.ca).