

September 27, 2010

The Honourable Gordon Campbell  
Premier of British Columbia  
PO Box 9041, Station Provincial Government  
Victoria, BC V8W 9E1

Dear Premier Campbell,

We write to ask that your government put in place effective legislation to improve the protection of species at risk in British Columbia, specifically legislation complementary to the Federal Species at Risk Act (SARA). We are senior scientists that work in relevant fields with knowledge both of the state of species decline in the province and of the potential to mitigate that decline if suitable policies are put in place. We are aware that your government has recently struck a nontechnical task force to investigate how such legislation might look. While we are pleased that things have begun to move forward, we write to emphasize that the final legislation must be firmly grounded on sound science in order to achieve the goal of protecting species at risk.

As your government knows, British Columbia is home to more plant and animal species than any other province in Canada. The province is the also the last holdout for many large mammals that once roamed much of North America. Alarmingly, over 40% of the 3808 species assessed by the province are of conservation concern in B.C.(1); over 80% per cent of these 1640 imperiled species are at risk because of habitat loss and degradation (2). Unfortunately, British Columbia currently lacks effective legal tools to protect and recover species at risk (3).

Our province has committed both internationally and nationally to protect biodiversity in the province. British Columbia actively participated in the negotiations for the United Nations' Convention on Biological Diversity (the CBD), and supported Canada's ratification of it (4). Progress on the goals of the CBD will be evaluated this year (5). The CBD requires each country that ratifies it to "establish a system of protected areas or areas where special measures need to be taken to conserve biological diversity", to "promote the protection of ecosystems, natural habitats and the maintenance of viable populations of species in natural surroundings", and to "develop or maintain necessary legislation and/or other regulatory provisions for the protection of threatened species and populations" (6). British Columbia accepted these commitments and responsibilities when it supported Canada's ratification of the CBD. In order to help implement the CBD in Canada, the federal, provincial and territorial governments, including the B.C. government, signed the National Accord for the Protection of Species at Risk in 1996. Each signatory agreed to "establish complementary legislation and programs that provide for effective protection of species at risk throughout Canada" (7).

The province has made progress in conservation by establishing new parks and protected areas in recent years, but species at risk remain threatened outside of formally designated conservation areas. Their imperilment is due, in the main, to the absence of effective legislation for their protection and recovery. To fulfill its commitment to protecting species at risk, we call on the B.C. Government to enact meaningful legislation to complement SARA. At a minimum, such an Act would include science-based identification of imperiled species and science-based actions including habitat protection provisions for recovery of those species afforded legal protection. It should also explicitly recognize the importance of ongoing and accelerating climate change, which may necessitate planning for the protection of those peripheral populations whose survival is crucial to their species' future. A forward-looking Act would also include provisions for integrated management and protection of the functionality of ecosystems.

Many of us, and many of our colleagues, would be happy to contribute necessary technical expertise to ongoing discussions.

Sincerely,

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## References

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2. B.C. Ministry of Environment. 2007. Environmental Trends in British Columbia:2007. State of Environment Reporting. Victoria, B.C. Accessed October 2009 at [www.env.gov.bc.ca/soe/et07/EnvironmentalTrendsBC\\_2007.pdf](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/soe/et07/EnvironmentalTrendsBC_2007.pdf).
3. Wood, P.M. and L. Flahr. 2004. Taking Endangered Species Seriously? British Columbia's Species-at-Risk Policies Canadian Public Policy / Analyse de Politiques 30: 381-399.
4. Government of British Columbia 1996. As noted in Initiatives for the Conservation of Biological Diversity in British Columbia, at [www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/documents/techpub/rn321.pdf](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/documents/techpub/rn321.pdf), at page 1; and in Biodiversity in British Columbia, Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, and Ministry of Forests, undated, at [www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/documents/env.biod.pdf](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/documents/env.biod.pdf)
5. Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) [www.cbd.int](http://www.cbd.int)
6. CBD, Article 8(a), 8(d) and 8(k).
7. Species at Risk Public Registry 2009. National Accord for the Protection of Species at Risk, at [www.sararegistry.gc.ca/approach/strategy/default\\_e.cfm#2](http://www.sararegistry.gc.ca/approach/strategy/default_e.cfm#2).