

## What is a Species at Risk? and Terms that Describe Them

**Species at Risk-** is any naturally-occurring type of plant or animal in danger of extinction or of disappearing from the province. Most of these types of animals and plants are facing problems caused by human activities. We notice these species and call them a Species at Risk when they start to get less and less in number. Scientists and the Provincial and Federal Governments use terms such as *Special Concern, Threatened, Endangered, Extirpated and Extinct* to describe the category that best fits the condition of each species and their numbers in our province and country.

**Special Concern-** describes those species that may become threatened or endangered because they have threats facing their habitat or themselves.

**Threatened-** a species is called this if it lives in the wild in Ontario, is not endangered, but is likely to become endangered if steps are not taken to stop the things that threaten it.

**Endangered-** a species is called this if it lives in the wild in Ontario but is very close to becoming extinct or extirpated. We need to act to help things that are in this category before we lose them, maybe forever.

**Extirpated-** a species is called this if it lives somewhere in the world, and it at one time lived in the wild in Ontario, but no longer lives in Ontario. Extirpation is the last stage or category before an organism becomes extinct, and humans need to protect it to prevent this from happening.

**Extinct-** A species is called extinct if it no longer lives anywhere in the world.

*Plants and animals face many hardships in their lives. Normally these hardships include predators, disease, finding enough food and water, obtaining shelter, avoiding fires or floods and other natural disasters. Unfortunately humans contribute greatly to the hardships facing ecosystems and the organisms in them. We take away the habitat these organisms need to survive, we destroy entire ecosystems so that we can remove something from them or change the land, and we pollute the environment causing harm to many organisms and even ourselves. This makes it very hard for organisms that are Species at Risk to make a comeback without our help.*