

Species at Risk & Local Government: A Primer for British Columbia

Advanced Search Search Criteria

Taxonomic Group	Reptiles
Jurisdiction	All
COSEWIC	All
BC Status	All
BC Wildlife Act	All
Identified Wildlife	All
SARA	All
Management Category	All
Habitat	All
Regional District	Capital Regional District: All Districts and Municipalities
Forest District	All Forest Districts

Search Results

Reptiles

Sharp-tailed Snake

Contia tenuis

BC Status	Red	BC Wildlife Act	None	Identified Wildlife	No
COSEWIC	Endangered	SARA	Schedule 1		

This small snake is found from southern British Columbia to central California. In the Province, it is confirmed from seven sites on southeastern Vancouver Island and the southern Gulf Islands, and was recently reported from near Chase in the southern interior. It inhabits open Douglas fir/arbutus forests, usually on south facing rocky slopes, which likely provide both nesting and hibernation sites. Snakes are most active in spring and fall and probably aestivate during the dry, hot summers and hibernate during the winters. The feed primarily on slugs, but will eat a variety of invertebrates. The patchy distribution of the sharp-tailed snake suggests that it was previously more widespread and may be limited by the relatively cool environmental conditions of the region. Its small range in the province makes it vulnerable to local habitat loss and fragmentation due to human activities.

[More Info...](#)

Leatherback Turtle

Dermochelys coriacea

BC Status	Red	BC Wildlife Act	None	Identified Wildlife	No
COSEWIC	Endangered	SARA	Schedule 1		

Leatherbacks are the largest, widest ranging reptiles in the world, reaching up to 680 kg and swimming up to 15,000 km annually. They are the sole surviving representatives of a form of turtle that originated over 100 million years ago. Their diet is almost exclusively jellyfish. Females nest on tropical and subtropical beaches and juveniles remain in these waters until they reach a large enough size to keep warm in temperate waters by retaining heat generated by their swimming muscles. They are occasionally encountered in British Columbia's inshore waters, although more sightings occur offshore. The major threats are egg harvest and harassment on nesting grounds, accidental capture in fishing gear, collision with boats and the consumption of garbage mistaken as food.

[More Info...](#)

Western PaintedTurtle (Pacific coast population)

Chrysemys picta pop. 1

BC Status	Red	BC Wildlife Act	None	Identified Wildlife	No
COSEWIC	Endangered	SARA	Schedule 1		

This small (25 cm) turtle is found across southern Canada and the United States except Florida and some southwestern states. Two populations of one subspecies occur in British Columbia. The Pacific Coast population (E) is found on Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland from Campbell River and Powell River south, while the [Intermountain - Rocky Mountain population](#) (SC) occurs east of the Coast Mountains. The turtles are found in mud-bottomed lakes, ponds and lowland streams with basking sites and aquatic vegetation. Adults are omnivores, feeding on aquatic plants, carrion, and live prey, while juveniles feed exclusively on small invertebrates. Females dig nests on south facing slopes close to the water in May or June. The young hatch in late summer, but often overwinter in the nest. Adults overwinter underwater, buried in mud sediments. Painted turtles are believed to reach 50 years of age. Significant population declines have occurred on southern Vancouver Island, and in the Fraser, Okanagan, and Similkameen Valleys. The main threats are habitat loss and fragmentation due to agricultural and urban development, roadkill, increased nest predation, and injuries from angling gear.

[More Info...](#)

Extinct or Extirpated

Reptiles

Pacific Gophersnake

Pituophis catenifer catenifer

BC Status	Red - Extirpated	BC Wildlife Act	None	Identified Wildlife	No
COSEWIC	Extirpated	SARA	Schedule 1		

This subspecies of gophersnake originally occurred from California north to British Columbia, where it was limited to the lower Fraser Valley and adjacent Gulf Islands. It has not been sighted in the province since 1957. Two other subspecies exist in Canada, including the endangered [Great Basin gophersnake](#), which is found in the Province's southern interior.

Gophersnakes suffocate the small mammals, birds and other snakes that they prey on by squeezing them in their coils. The snakes overwinter from September to April in communal hibernacula, often with a number of other species, mate immediately after emerging in the spring and lay 2 to 8 eggs in July. The young hatch in the fall but probably do not feed until the following spring. The loss of native grasslands to urbanization and direct persecution (they are frequently mistaken for rattlesnakes) are likely responsible for the extirpation of this subspecies.

[More Info...](#)

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