



PROPOSAL FOR DECISION - SUBMISSION TO THE NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD

Information:

Decision: X

Issue: Request for decision on the proposed listing of Harris's Sparrow as a species of special concern under the federal *Species at Risk Act*



Photo © R. Ridout



Range of Harris's Sparrow

Background

Description:

- Harris's Sparrow is a large songbird with a distinctive black face and upper throat.
- Breeds only in Canada where it prefers a mix of forest and upland tundra habitat.
- Winters in the United States.

Assessment & Threats:

- The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) assessed Harris's Sparrow as a species of Special Concern in April 2017.
- A species of Special Concern is a wildlife species that may become a threatened or an endangered species because of a combination of biological characteristics and identified threats.
- Relatively little is known about the species, it is one of the least studied songbirds in North America

- Harris's Sparrow populations have shown a long-term decline. The decline is estimated at 59% over the past 35 years, including 16% over the past decade.
- Current population of Harris's Sparrow is estimated to be approximately 2,000,000 mature individuals.
- Threats to Harris's Sparrow in the breeding grounds include:
 - Habitat loss due to deforestation near the northern edge of the range associated with fire, quarries and mine development
 - Climate change may reduce suitable breeding habitat while allowing mammalian predators, such as Red Fox, to spread north
- Threats to Harris's Sparrow in the wintering grounds (U.S.A.) include:
 - Conversion of grassland habitat to agriculture
 - Pesticide use throughout the wintering grounds
 - Predation from cats

Implications of proposed listing:

- If Harris's Sparrow is listed as a species of Special Concern under the federal *Species at Risk Act* a management plan will be written with measures to ensure that the species does not become further at risk.
- Critical Habitat is not identified for species of Special Concern



- As a migratory bird, Harris's Sparrow will continue to receive protection under the Migratory Birds Convention Act.

Consultations on the proposed listing:

- Community consultations on the proposed listing were conducted in January-May 2018. Consultation packages were sent by email and mail to 14 communities within the range of the species in January 2018. The packages included: a letter, a factsheet, a PowerPoint presentation, and a questionnaire in English and Inuktitut. The communities we sent packages to are: Arviat, Baker Lake, Bathurst Inlet, Chesterfield Inlet, Gjoa Haven, Hall Beach, Igloolik, Kugaaruk, Kugluktuk, Nauyasat (Repulse Bay), Rankin Inlet, Taloyoak, Uminmaktok, and Whale Cove.

- Follow-up phone calls were made to Hunter & Trapper Organizations between January and April 2018. A reminder email was sent in May 2018.
- Spence Bay HTO supports the listing of Harris's Sparrow as Special Concern, noting that they see plenty of them (questionnaire attached). No response was received from the other 13 communities.

Next Steps:

The results of consultations across the country including the decision of the NWMB will be analyzed and summarized in a regulatory impact analysis statement. The proposed regulatory impact analysis statement will be posted on Canada Gazette 1 for a public comment period. The Minister will then make a recommendation to Governor in Council that takes into account the COSEWIC assessment, consultations with wildlife management boards authorized for that species by a lands claims agreement (including the NWMB), and the regulatory impact analysis statement. The Governor in Council makes the final decision whether to add the species to the List as a species of special concern, to not list it or to refer it back to COSEWIC for further consideration or information.

Request to the Board:

That the NWMB considers whether or not they approve the proposed listing of Harris's Sparrow as a species of special concern under the federal Species at Risk Act as per the NLCA s. 5.2.34(f) and 5.3.16 -5.3.23.

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