

## CDCs Instrumental in Monitoring Endangered Species

When Canada's Wildlife Ministers signed the *National Accord for the Protection of Species at Risk* in 1996, CDCs across the country were identified as important contributors to the agreement's effectiveness.

The Accord commits federal, territorial and provincial governments to implement complementary legislation, policy and programs for native plants and animals at risk. These species need to be monitored in a consistent manner to identify where detailed assessments should occur. Common monitoring and reporting methodologies are used among the centres so that provincial reports can easily provide national perspectives.

"The Manitoba CDC is well-positioned to assume this role in the province," said Carol Scott, Manitoba CDC manager. "Our zoological and botanical staff maintain the most up-to-date lists of the province's vascular plants, vertebrates and select groups of invertebrates."



*The piping plover (Charadrius melodus) is considered Endangered nationally. The CDC maintains a database on populations of these birds in Manitoba.*

The Manitoba CDC's listings are reviewed annually by CDC staff and outside experts to identify changes in distribution, conservation status and threats to each species.

*The Endangered Species Act* (Manitoba) was passed in 1990. Since then, 23 species have been designated as endangered, threatened or extirpated from the province. Monitoring information on the status of these species, as well as all species of national significance occurring in Manitoba, will be a responsibility of the CDC. Under the accord, information generated by the CDCs and other contributing organizations will be compiled in a national report every five years. ■

## New CDC Web Site – Information Access Easier

**The new Manitoba CDC Web site opens for visitors in February 1999. Information manager François Blouin developed the site to ensure it is both useful and user-friendly.**

"Our goal was to allow Web site visitors to generate on-the-fly information about the province's plants and animals," Blouin said. "We incorporated staff suggestions as well as client suggestions to ensure that people are able to find the general information they are looking for."

Visitors can query the CDC's database through the Web site to gain information on the conservation status and life history of a species. Additional information, such as range maps, pictures and references, is available for selected species through a field guide. Users can also search Manitoba's ecological regions for species of special concern and link back to the species information and field guide sections.

"We are confident that people will find the CDC Web site useful—whether for school projects or environmental planning—because we've provided

access to the information most commonly requested," Blouin said. The CDC's newsletter Bionet is posted at the site and additional listings such as species listed under *The Endangered Species Act* (Manitoba) and those listed nationally as at risk by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada are also available for viewing and printing.

Specific information not available through the Web site can be requested on-line. In February, visit the site at [www.gov.mb.ca/natres/cdc](http://www.gov.mb.ca/natres/cdc). ■

### The Manitoba Conservation Data Centre was initiated by:

- Manitoba Museum
- The Nature Conservancy of Canada
- Manitoba Natural Resources
- The Nature Conservancy (United States)

Manitoba  
Natural Resources  
Hon. J. Glen Cummings  
Minister



### Grassland Bird Update

The compilation of 1998 field survey data has now been completed by Ken De Smet, endangered species biologist with Manitoba Natural Resources, for grassland bird species at risk. The CDC will be updating the databank to reflect the following 1998 sightings. The Committee On the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada rankings associated with each bird have already been incorporated into the CDC's database.

**Burrowing Owl, Endangered:** One nesting pair was confirmed near a Goodlands site where burrowing owls had been reported before. At least four young were raised. Five additional sightings of burrowing owls were confirmed in south-western Manitoba, however no other successful nesting pairs were identified. No nesting pairs were recorded in 1997.

**Loggerhead Shrike, western subspecies Threatened, eastern subspecies Endangered:** This year, 166 pairs of loggerhead shrikes were observed, representing the first increase in nesting populations since 1993 when 327 pairs were sighted. Of note were eight pairs identified in southeastern Manitoba, the highest number ever recorded in the area and possibly a remnant population of the eastern subspecies.

**Ferruginous Hawk, Vulnerable:** Provincial populations remained stable with 49 nesting pairs in 1998. The nesting range for the bird has shrunk with over 75 per cent of pairs nesting in the extreme southwestern part of the province in the area surrounding Melita. In 1990, only 50 per cent of the population was found in this area, the remainder was scattered more broadly through western Manitoba. Human made nests have high reoccupancy rates and were used by 84 per cent of this year's nesting pairs. ■

### Mussel Ranking Workshop

On November 17, 1998, eight of Manitoba's premiere mussel experts met with CDC zoologist Jim Duncan to rank the status of the province's freshwater clam species. Clams, or mussels, are invertebrates that have a hard shell and a soft body. Attending the ranking workshop were representatives from the federal government's Freshwater Institute, provincial fisheries staff, private consultants and the universities of Winnipeg and Manitoba. Conservation ranks were assigned to 13 clam species.

"The workshops help us review information to evaluate the conservation

status and location of priority species," Duncan said. "The information we collect from the participants is entered into the CDC's database to increase our ability to provide guidance during the planning stages of proposed development."



**Clams are considered "fish" under The Fisheries Act and are protected from human-related habitat loss.**

Bruno Bruederlin, a fisheries technologist with Manitoba Natural Resources in Brandon, was among those who attended the workshop. He said the CDC's clam workshop was a good opportunity for all involved to exchange information. "It is nice to be there to give your opinion." ■

### Recent Publications

- Goward, T., I.M. Brodo and S.R. Clayden. 1998. *Rare Lichens of Canada: A Review and Provisional Listing*. Unpublished MS Report. Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada, Ottawa, Ontario. 74 pp.
- National Wetlands Working Group. 1997. *The Canadian Wetland Classification System*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. B.G. Warner and C.D. Rubec, Eds. Wetlands Research Centre, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario. 68 pp.
- Turgeon, D.D. et al. 1998. *Common and scientific names of aquatic invertebrates from the United States and Canada: mollusks*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. American Fisheries Society, Special Publication 26, Bethesda, Maryland.
- Zoladeski, C.A., R.J. Delorme, G.M. Wickware, I.G.W. Corms and D.T. Allen. 1998. *Forest Ecosystem Toposequences in Manitoba*. Natural Resources Canada, Canadian Forest Service, Northern Forestry Centre, Edmonton, Alberta. Special Report 12. 63 pp.

**A clarification from the previous issue of BIO<sup>o</sup>NET:  
Of the 300 caves identified in Manitoba, only 18  
are known to overwinter bats.**

## ■ CDC Project Updates

### Endangered Orchid Survey

CDC special projects botanist Elizabeth Punter recently undertook a survey of all known small white lady's-slippers (*Cypripedium candidum*) sites. A member of the orchid family, the plant was listed as Endangered in 1981 by the Committee On the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada because populations in Manitoba and Ontario were greatly reduced and the plant had become extirpated from Saskatchewan. It was also the first plant to be listed as Endangered under *The Endangered Species Act* (Manitoba) thereby providing protection, enhancing its survival and, hopefully, preventing it from becoming extirpated from the province.

Punter's survey collected habitat data, plant community type, associated species and plant populations at each site. She also provided location information for Geographic Information System mapping. Small white lady's-slippers are short and easier to locate when in flower. A late frost during the survey meant that Punter had to be particularly observant for the plant.

"By the time I reached Brandon in the first week of June, frost at the end of May had frozen all the flowers and, in some cases, the upper leaves as well," Punter said. Not only were the flowers gone, but the early frost impacted the plant's ability to produce seed.

In addition to extreme weather conditions, there are a number of threats that challenge the plant's survival. The control of fire in prairie areas is enabling woody vegetation to encroach on the orchid's habitat. The build up of vegetation and detritus inhibits the growth of this shade-intolerant plant. Habitat loss has also contributed to the decline of populations of the small white lady's-slipper. Its preferred mesic and wet prairie habitats are being converted to cropland or altered through increased drainage. With very small populations occurring in very limited areas, the key losses today are due to people digging up the orchids for personal collections or for sale. "At most sites inventoried this year, there were signs that plants had been removed," Punter said. ■

### Narcisse Bioinventory Nears Completion

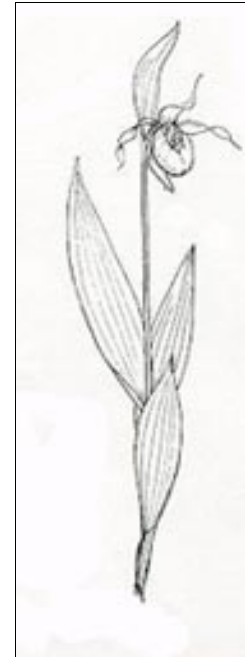
In conjunction with the Habitat and Land Management Section of the Wildlife Branch, the CDC completed field work for a biological inventory of the Narcisse Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and Narcisse Community Pasture. The inventory area totalled more than 174 square kilometres (67 square miles) of aspen parkland habitat in Manitoba's Interlake.

Botanists Tracy Ruta and Marilena Kowalchuk documented the species composition of the area's plant communities and produced a list containing 400 species of vascular

plants. Zoologist Wayne Neily surveyed birds in the area and found a total of 155 species. Observations of other vertebrate species were also made. Moths were collected to assist in a forthcoming publication on the moths of Manitoba.

This bioinventory was jointly funded by the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS), the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA) and the Wildlife Branch of Manitoba Natural Resources (MNR). PFRA will use the data collected at the Community Pasture to develop a pasture management plan.

Early this fall, a small but significant population of small white lady's-slippers was severely damaged during brush removal along a fence line. Manitoba Natural Resources staff restored the site before the onset of cold temperatures. The orchids will be monitored carefully over the next few years for population numbers, plant health, impact on associated native plants, invasion of non-native plants and habitat conditions.



The information gained will aid in assessing the impact of disturbance on small white lady's-slippers and contribute to restoration programs. ■

MNR will use the data collected in the WMA to assist in a wide array of management issues relevant to the area. This is the second year that the CDC has cooperated with CWS and PFRA to survey community pastures in Manitoba. The final report is expected in spring 1999. ■

## ■ Staff & Volunteer Updates

The CDC welcomes the return of former volunteer Tanya Dixon. Dixon worked with the CDC to update the slide library and assist with office duties. She is currently enrolled in Red River College's Geographic Information System (GIS) Technology course and hopes her volunteer work with the CDC's GIS will supplement her education and increase future job prospects. ■

Former CDC volunteer Rosemary Traschel has recently taken the position of Executive Director/Trail Builder with the Manitoba Recreational Trails Association. Her main duty will be overseeing Manitoba's contributions to the TransCanada Trail. When complete, the trail will be 15,000 km long and run through every province and territory. She intends to refer to the staff at the CDC when planning certain sections of the trail. "I would like the CDC to be involved in identifying high risk areas," Traschel said, adding that the seldom used right-of-ways that the trail will follow may provide habitat to some of Manitoba's rare species. ■

## FOCUS ON . . . Element Tracking

The Element Tracking (ET) database contains classification and ranking information for the species and plant communities, referred to as elements, found in Manitoba. Species classification called taxonomy includes the scientific name, common name(s) and synonyms within Manitoba and across the range of the species.

Conservation ranks provided in the ET database are derived from the CDC's Element Ranking database which identifies an element's provincial and global conservation status. The ET also incorporates other ranking designations such as: *The Endangered Species Act* (Manitoba); the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada; the

International Union for the Conservation of Nature; and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species.

The Element Subnational Ranking (ESR) database contains the background information that rationalizes the designation of an element's particular conservation status rank. The database contains current information on a number of ranking factors for each element including: abundance; provincial range; population trends; threats; and where the element is protected. The ESR database also documents element inventory or protection requirements. ■

Volunteer opportunities exist for people with biological training and/or experience with GIS and computer databases.

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