



Ringed Seal (*Pusa hispida*)

[Submit Your Comments Here](#)

Information summary and survey for the consultations on potentially listing **Ringed Seal** on the List of Wildlife Species at Risk as **Special Concern** – Please provide input by **December 22, 2023**.

Consultations

Let your opinion be heard

Canada's *Species at Risk Act (SARA)* provides legal protection for wildlife species at risk to conserve biological diversity. It also acknowledges that all Canadians have a role to play in the conservation of wildlife species.

Before deciding whether Ringed Seal (*Pusa hispida*) will be added to the List of Wildlife Species at Risk, we would like to hear your opinion, comments, and suggestions regarding the possible ecological, cultural, and economic impacts of listing or not listing this species under *SARA*.

Adding a population to the List of Wildlife Species at Risk...

The process of listing a species under Canada's *SARA* consists of several steps: it begins with a status assessment by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) and ends with a Government of Canada decision on whether or not to add a species to the List of Wildlife Species at Risk. Public consultations are also conducted to gather the opinions of Canadians and are an important step in this process.

Facts about Ringed Seal

Ringed Seal is named for the ringed pattern that is visible on their coats. Ringed seals have a lifespan of 25 to 30 years. Adults average about 1.5 meters in length and weigh between 50 to 70 kg. They are the smallest species in the seal family.

Females can give birth to a single pup per year in March or April. Pups are born in a snow lair that protects them from the environment and predators.

Ringed seals live in Arctic waters near ice floes and pack ice. They create a breathing hole in the ice, which lets them use ice habitat in unique ways. During the open-water season, they feed on a wide variety of pelagic and benthic prey, including fish, shrimp and other crustaceans, to build up blubber reserves

Most information on Ringed Seal population size comes from aerial surveys, which are conducted when seals are hauled out on ice to moult. Because these surveys are sporadic and localized, estimates are uncertain and dated. However, species abundance is thought to be high, with an estimated 2.3 million seals in Canada and adjacent waters (West Greenland, Alaska, Russian Federation).



Figure 1. Ringed Seal (Photo credit: William Halliday, Wildlife Conservation Society).



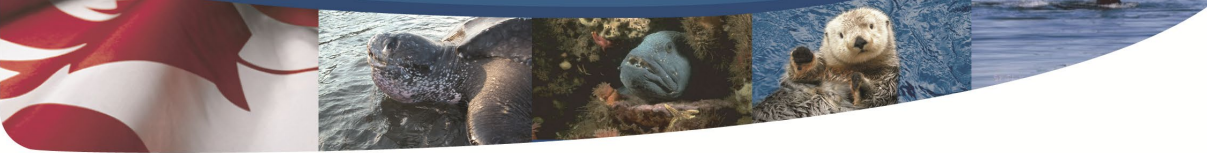


Figure 2. Geographic range of Ringed Seal (*P. hispida hispida* subspecies) in Canadian waters and adjacent areas shown in dark blue. Ringed seal is distributed in Arctic and subarctic Canada, ranging from the Yukon North Slope (and into Alaska and Russia as a contiguous population) in the west and south and east to southern Labrador. Their distribution ranges throughout the Arctic Ocean, north of Canada's Arctic Islands, and into Greenland waters in eastern Baffin Bay and Davis Strait. Ringed seal is also found along the northern coastline of Newfoundland, and sporadic records exist for the other Atlantic provinces. Dotted black line shows limits of Canada's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) (COSEWIC 2019).

Who assigned the Special Concern status to Ringed Seal?

COSEWIC is an independent committee of experts that assesses and designates which wildlife species are in some danger of disappearing from Canada and assigns these species a status. It conducts its assessments based on the best available information including scientific data, local ecological knowledge, and Indigenous traditional knowledge. COSEWIC assessed the Ringed Seal as a species of Special Concern in November 2019.

Why is Ringed Seal at risk?

COSEWIC concluded that threats to Ringed Seal include reductions in the area and duration of sea ice due to climate warming in the Canadian Arctic, with consequent reductions in suitable pupping habitat due to loss of stable ice and a lower spring snow depth. The Canadian population is predicted to decline over the next three generations, and

may become threatened due to extensive and ongoing changes in sea ice and snow cover in a rapidly warming Arctic.

If a species is listed under the *Species at Risk Act*...

If Ringed Seal is added to the List of Wildlife Species at Risk as a species of Special Concern, it will not be subject to prohibitions under SARA; however, Fisheries and Oceans Canada will be required to produce a Management Plan for the species in an effort to ensure that it does not become endangered due to human activity. The Management Plan will include conservation measures for the species and set goals and objectives for maintaining sustainable population levels.

We would like to receive your comments on the potential impacts of adding or not adding the **Ringed Seal**, to the List of Wildlife Species at Risk under *SARA* as Special Concern.

Your comments are important.

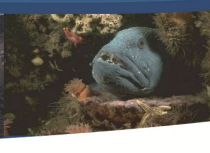
Please [fill out the questionnaire](#): we want to hear from you.

A copy of the 2019 COSEWIC Assessment and Status Report on the Ringed Seal and other information can be found on the *SARA* Registry at [Species at risk public registry - Canada.ca](#).

To submit your responses or to receive further information, please contact

Species at Risk Management Fisheries and Oceans Canada
501 University Crescent Winnipeg, Manitoba R3T 2N6
Email: fwisar@dfo-mpo.gc.ca
Toll-free: 1-866-538-1609





References

COSEWIC. 2019. COSEWIC assessment and status report on the Ringed Seal *Pusa hispida* in Canada. Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada. Ottawa. xii + 82 pp.. (www.sararegistry.gc.ca).

