

Changes to the Way Animal Ranks are Reported (2009)

- 1) A number of native non-breeding birds that previously had not been ranked (SNA), have now had a Conservation Status Rank (S Rank) assigned. These species are also assigned to a BC List. Accidental or Exotic birds remain SNA.

These species had not been previously assessed because they do not have distinct occurrences or regular locations where they can be found. According to the NatureServe standard methodology, a rank could not be assigned for a species that did not have distinct occurrences. However, there have been some changes to the methods and by using threats, trends and range, a rank can be determined. For example, although there are only scarce sightings of Laysan Albatross off the coast of BC, this species has now been assigned a rank.

- 2) Non-breeding animals are now assigned to the Red and Blue lists (BC List) based on their Provincial Conservation Status Rank.

Originally in 1993, species were only placed on the Red or Blue list if they bred in BC. All non-breeders were placed on the Yellow list, regardless of the Conservation Status Rank. This meant that species that were a G1, S1N (e.g., Right Whale) were showing up on the Yellow list as "secure", which, of course made no sense! In 2000, to correct this situation, species that did not breed in the province were also included on the Red or Blue list based on their global ranks. Thus, if a species had a global rank of G1 or G2 it went on the Red list and if it had a global rank of G3 it would be on the Blue list. This helped to capture the globally threatened species and put them on one of the colour coded lists that the province uses to indicate the degree of endangerment.

However, this approach still raised a few issues. First, it was confusing to have different rules for breeders and non-breeders. Also, it could send a mixed message regarding the importance of non-breeding species and about preserving biodiversity within the province if a person was just looking at the colour coded lists. Some species use the province as a migration corridor or over winter in the province, and are therefore important for management purposes or when looking at the biodiversity of the province. For example, non-breeding or migratory birds with the rank of S1N or S2M having a "secure" Global Rank of G5 would have been placed on the Yellow list which implies that it is also "secure" provincially. This made no sense as the provincial ranks of S1N or S2M indicate that these species are imperilled. In 2009, to correct this situation, non-breeders were placed on the Red and Blue lists based on their provincial Conservation Status Rank. Thus, the species with ranks of S1N or S2M in the example above are now placed on the Red list as endangered or threatened.

Summary

The 2009 changes allow a more standard approach and hopefully provide a more consistent message as to the importance of a species within the province.