

# Capsule on Species at Risk

## Quebec's Flora

**Did you know that** plants are the staple diet of several species on the bottom of the food chain?

**Did you know that** 22 species of vascular plants, mosses and lichens have been designated species at risk under the *Species at Risk Act* and that these species are eligible for the submission of a project in the framework of the Aboriginal Fund – Species at Risk (AFSR)?

**Did you know that** 368 species of Quebec's flora are considered at risk under the *Act respecting vulnerable or threatened species* (provincial Act)?

**Did you know that** very few flora related projects have been submitted in the framework of the different funding programs addressing species at risk?

**Did you know that** when we ensure the survival of a species, we also ensure the survival of existing interactions between said species and other species (flora or other) that can be found in its habitat? And that sometimes these interactions are vital to the survival of one or several species?

Species that make up Quebec's flora are not well known opposed to other species, but they are of the utmost importance to First Nations. Nevertheless, they are the basis of life on Earth. They not only feed and shelter several species but they chiefly enable many species to breathe. Moreover, the disappearance of one of these species could deprive humankind of an important medicinal plant. In addition, certain plants may be critical in ensuring the survival of another species in a given habitat. It is the infinite number of interconnections between different species that makes up an ecosystem.

To ensure the sustainability of plant species in Quebec, people have to be made aware of the importance of these species and their habitats. Their sustainability begins with understanding and protecting their habitats. For example, the Anticosti Aster, a species at risk under the federal and provincial Acts, can be found on bare limestone flats or on gravel along the banks of fast moving rivers. Floods and recurring ice conditions eliminate this species' competition, which can be found in the pioneer stage of vegetation (one of the first species to invade a non-vegetated site) (source: Flore du Haut de la Rivière St-Jean). Knowing the components of its habitat makes it easier to identify and protect it. To do so, it is important to develop expertise in First Nation communities and take stock of plant species at risk in the communities and in their territories.

Moreover, knowing the species' physiology and how it reproduces itself are also keys to its conservation. The Wild Leek best illustrates this. Indeed, it reproduces slowly, taking from seven to ten years from seed to production of a flower. Since it is a very popular culinary herb in Quebec, it was harvested to the brink of extinction, and this forced the Quebec government to impose regulations and quotas for conservation purposes. Thus, legislation forbids any form of trade but allows the collection of no more than 50 plants or bulbs annually for personal consumption.

The survival of several plant species depends on the establishment of adequate protected areas systems. Said protected areas must cover enough territory to guarantee the maintenance of a sufficient number of individuals to ensure the survival of the species. For example, in the case of the Wild Leek, it takes a minimum of 1,000 individuals to ensure the survival of a population (source: Ministère du développement durable, Environnement et des Parcs). It is suggested that an inventory of the critical habitats of these species be made to facilitate the establishment of these



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protected areas and to send the inventory to the Centre de données sur le patrimoine naturel du Québec (CDPNQ) (Quebec's natural heritage data centre).

Presently, there are only two Aboriginal Fund – Species at Risk (AFSR) projects addressing plants at risk in Quebec: the Kitigan Zibi project (Butternut) and the Mashteuiasth project (Anticosti Aster). Incidentally, both projects will be presented at the second Workshop on Species at Risk (December 14, 2006) organized by the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Sustainable Development Institute, which will focus on plants at risk in Quebec in order to foster the development of projects addressing these species.

Here are the **22 species** (\*including 2 species in the **mosses and lichens** category) eligible for the submission of a project in the framework of the AFSR:

Endangered	Threatened	Special concern
Forked Three-awned Grass False Hop Sedge Spotted Wintergreen American Ginseng Small-flowered Lipocarpha Butternut Bluntlobe Cliff-fern	White Wood Aster Anticosti Aster Gulf of St. Lawrence Aster American Water-willow Pygmy Pocket Moss* Victorin's Gentiane Van Brunt's Jaccob's-ladder Mountain Holly Fern Green-scaled Willow	Green Dragon Fernald's Milk-vetch Victorin's Water-hemlock Cladonia light* Broad Beech Fern Provancher's Fleabane

**Internet sites consulted:**

Flore du Haut de la Rivière St-Jean

<http://www.naturetrust.nb.ca/fst-john-anticosti-aster.php>

Ministère du Développement durable, Environnement et Parcs

<http://www.mddep.gouv.qc.ca/biodiversite/especes/ail/ail.htm>

