



A CALENDAR WITH A CONSERVATION MESSAGE

Aboriginal People's involvement with species at risk

Turtle (October)
by Gilbert Alex Sark

A calendar is always a useful item. Who could do without one? But would you believe a calendar could also be a valuable tool for environmental education? The March 2007-February 2008 Species at Risk Calendar is just such a case.

The unusual calendar draws attention to twelve species through bright and beautiful artwork by Aboriginal artists and informative profiles of Atlantic species at risk.

The calendar was produced by a federal multi-departmental committee made up of Parks Canada, Environment Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. A 12-member Aboriginal Advisory Group helped guide the project.



Atlantic region

A calendar that begins in March?



Featured species at risk in the calendar

The Species at Risk Calendar was produced specifically for Aboriginal people in Canada's Atlantic region. It was based on the Mi'kmaq lunar cycle, which begins in Stewkesiku (March), the forerunner of spring, and ends in Apuknajit (February), the snow-blinding month. The text reflects the Aboriginal view that everything is linked. As well as standard holidays, each month contained information on significant Aboriginal events, such as National Aboriginal Day, Mi'kmaq Grand Council meetings, and the International Day of the World's Indigenous People. Through interesting details, the significance of Aboriginal culture and history is recognized.

A 12-month message

The Aboriginal flavour of the content, together with the brightly colored species portraits by respected local artists, was designed specifically to grab the attention of the region's Aboriginal people, making them more aware of species at risk. This first edition did the job so well that the Steering Committee has decided to produce a second edition.

Parks Canada's Yves Bossé reports that the idea of the calendar first arose when he and other federal representatives were searching for a means to bring species at risk to local attention. They wanted something with "more longevity than a brochure". What would be a more lasting type of document?



Migration cycle (September)
by Jerry Evans



Parks Canada
Parcs Canada

Canada

Considering the general usefulness of calendars, the group set out to design one that would convey species at risk information in an appealing format. Given the wealth of artistic talent in Atlantic Aboriginal communities, there was plenty of visual material available. The calendar included works by artists such as Arlene Christmas, Virginia McCoy and Edward Augustine, so it is also an effective showcase for local art.

Getting to know Species at Risk

The calendar's beautiful images play a key role in telling the story about the need to protect species and their habitats. As well as introducing the Species at Risk Act, the calendar profiled vulnerable Atlantic species such as the Atlantic salmon, Blanding's turtle, ivory gull and piping plover.

The steering group set an ambitious goal of "one calendar in every Aboriginal home and schools in and around Aboriginal communities in Atlantic Canada," as such some 20,000 calendars were produced and distributed across Atlantic Canada, says Yves Bossé.

Great reviews

After the calendar's release, the steering committee gathered feedback through an opinion survey of the target audiences: Aboriginal communities, schools and government offices. After a year's worth of marking their calendars, the target audiences reported a considerably higher level of knowledge of species at risk. The calendar was also successful in informing the various audiences about significant calendar year. "We took major steps in

Aboriginal events occurring throughout the achieving our goal," says Yves.



Twin Turtles (April)
by Gerald Gloade

Mission accomplished



Icebergs (May) by Lisa Learning

Yves was particularly pleased that the project had involved Aboriginal people in every aspect of its development. Aboriginal people participated as partners during the planning, the distribution and the evaluation of the calendar. "As a cooperative effort to increase the involvement of the Aboriginal people and their awareness, the calendar was a clear success", concludes Yves.

For more information:

Contact Yves Bossé, Aboriginal Initiatives, Atlantic Service Centre,
Tel.: (902) -426-5875 Yves.bosse@pc.gc.ca



Just Across the Sea (June) by Virginia McCoy