

Endangered Species and Spaces

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9.2 Lichens

The most recent inventory of lichens in the province (1987) listed over 1000 species in 205 genera. Even though the numbers are large, it is certain that many more species remain to be added to the provincial checklist. Until more is known about the lichen flora of British Columbia, it will be impossible to decide which species deserve special status as rare or endangered (Goward, 1994). Amongst the greatest threats to lichens is atmospheric pollution, since most lichens receive their mineral requirements directly from the air. Atmospheric impurities become concentrated beyond the tolerance of many species. Even more significant is the effects of logging, which is unquestionably the largest single threat to lichens in British Columbia - since 60-70% of the province's rare lichens probably occur in forested ecosystems (Goward, 1994).

Although there is little information on lichens specific to the Columbia Basin, it is safe to assume that little if any consideration is given to them in land use planning and decision-making. To date, no attempt has been made to accord conservation status to lichens anywhere in Canada. First and foremost is the need to conduct inventories of lichen populations. Results need to be incorporated into planning processes, and selection of future or expanded protected areas should include the requirements of lichen conservation.

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