

The subsequent response of the federal and provincial agencies to the results of these studies was positive, indicating that the Proponent had made efforts to collect the data utilizing appropriate methodologies.

Regarding concerns expressed by First Nation members that migratory birds, most notably waterfowl, now follow along the existing transmission line and not the coast, the Proponent has indicated that this pattern of behaviour, if properly characterized, is already in place, and would not be expected to change appreciably with the twinning of the existing transmission line south from Kashechewan. Moreover, if the observed trend represents a substantial deviation from previous waterfowl behaviour patterns, this is all the more reason to twin the existing line, and not to develop a new transmission line corridor some distance away from the existing line.

#### **6.6.2.3.6 RA Conclusions**

The RAs have concluded that there will not be any likely significant adverse environmental effects on migratory birds. The RAs have included a follow-up program related to migratory birds as outlined in Chapter 8.

### **6.7 Species at Risk - COSEWIC, SARA and COSSARO Species**

The known "species at risk" within the project study area are the woodland caribou (boreal population), wolverine, the short-eared owl, and the yellow rail, in the case of COSEWIC (Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada, May 2003) species; together with bald eagles in the case of COSSARO (Committee on the Status of Species at Risk in Ontario) species. No fish, reptile, amphibian, mollusc, lepidopteran, plant, lichen or moss species at risk have been identified in the project study area.

Woodland caribou are comparatively common, but widely spaced in the Victor site area, typically occurring singly or in small groups. Recent surveys in the winter of 2004/2005 suggest a preliminary caribou density in the region in the order of 1 animal per 20 km<sup>2</sup>. This density is about twice that of historical estimates, and remains to be confirmed through further study. The principal caribou concentration area appears to be to the west of the Victor site in more complex terrain. Potential adverse effects to this species were addressed in Section 6.6.2.1 and were considered not significant.

Wolverines occur at very low densities in Ontario, and are confined mainly to the northwestern portion of the Province, near the Manitoba border, and as such are unlikely to be present in the Victor site area. TEK studies indicated that wolverines once occurred in the Attawapiskat area, but no longer appear to occur. The likelihood of project related adverse effects to wolverine populations is therefore extremely low.

The short-eared owl prefers open country, where it nests in bogs and marshes (Cadman et al. 1987), and also presumably fens. It is more likely to be found closer to James Bay, than further inland. One short-eared owl was sighted in fen terrain just north of the Attawapiskat River, near where the Lawashi Channel splits off from the Attawapiskat River, approximately 55 km east of the Victor site. Short-eared owls are opportunistic predators, constructing rudimentary nests in

open terrain, mainly in response to fluctuating vole populations. They commonly occur around airports, and similar areas, where short grass habitats are maintained. The construction of winter road and transmission line corridors would not be likely to adversely affect habitat use by this species.

The yellow rail is more likely to be confined to coastal marsh areas bordering James Bay (Cadman et al. 1987). No yellow rails were noted during avian surveys associated with the VDP, including areas along the proposed new transmission line route and existing coastal winter road. Significant project related adverse effects to this species are unlikely.

Bald eagles are fairly common in the region, and were observed fairly regularly along the Attawapiskat River and Nayshkootayaow River. COSEWIC lists the bald eagle as a species that is "not at risk". The Proponent has committed to maintaining a 200 m buffer away from creeks and rivers, where bald eagle nests are most likely to occur, and to clearing any substantive areas of trees during the non-nesting period. The Proponent has also committed to conducting further stick nest surveys in any areas of substantive forest that are proposed for clearing. Thus far, stick nest surveys at the Victor site have not identified any bald eagle nests in the immediate Victor area. With the mitigation measures proposed, adverse effects to bald eagles are unlikely to occur.

#### **6.7.1 Significance**

Wolverine and yellow rails are unlikely to occur within the project development areas, such that Level 1 ratings are assigned for ecological context and magnitude/geographic extent for these two species. Short-eared owls could potentially occur along the winter roads and within transmission line areas, mainly near the coast; however habitats and prey utilized by this species would not be adversely affected, also yielding Level 1 ratings for ecological context and magnitude/geographic extent.

Caribou are known to occur throughout the region. However, as described in Section 6.6.2.1.3, the magnitude/geographic extent of the area of potential disturbance is small in relation to the availability of habitat to caribou (Level 1 rating for ecological context and magnitude/geographic extent), and within the context of the broad movements that individual caribou are capable of making (up to several 10s of kilometres within a few days based on initial satellite readings). Effects were therefore considered to be not significant.

Bald eagles regularly occur as described above, but nesting areas used by this species would not be disturbed, and fisheries resources upon which the eagles are dependant for food will not be affected, yielding Level 1 ratings for ecological context and magnitude/geographic extent.

Based on the above, potential adverse effects to species at risk are not considered to be significant.