

Editorial

This issue of **Davidsonia** contains the first paper on the non-seed plant flora of the UBC Botanical Garden. Botanical gardens take great pains to maintain accurate records of their cultivated seed plant collections. Surprisingly few document the non-cultivated and non-flowering flora and microbiota that live within the protection of the garden's boundaries. On the Canadian west coast, we take for granted the lush greenery of the rain forest ferns, mosses and liverworts. I was much saddened to read the November 2001 report that the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) had added the moss, *Fissidens pauperculus* (poor pocket moss), to the 'Endangered' list for BC and *Bartramia halleriana* (Haller's apple moss) to the list of 'Threatened' species in both British Columbia and Alberta. I also am surprised that apparently only three mosses have been examined by COSEWIC, although there are many that are known only from single locations and some are now subject to more detailed study.

Canada struggled for more than a decade to develop endangered species legislation. The passage of the Species at Risk Act through the House of Commons in June is a long overdue step towards providing some meaningful protection for species whose existence in Canada is increasingly uncertain. The legislation must be passed by the Senate and receive Royal Assent before it becomes law.

I am sure that all botanical gardens will welcome the new legislation because it ensures that habitat protection is mandatory on federal property and because the endangered species list is at least partly controlled by the expert opinions that are essential to all conservation issues. However, there are still flaws that should concern us all. First, the law only applies to federal lands. Protection for private and provincial park lands remains unclear, especially when special-interest lobbies can exert back-room control through financial support of politicians. As each day seems to bring news about conflicts of interest, we all must be alert to ensure that the national heritage is not compromised by poor and ineffective enforcement. Second, the pool of science

expertise is not only in universities but also in government departments. Political interference through selective editing of government expert reports is on the rise, certainly in British Columbia. The whole community must be alert to falsification of research reports by non-experts who make selective presentations to decision-makers at all levels of government.

The Canadian government is to be congratulated on taking some first steps, but we must watch the next COSEWIC reports to see if the law is working.