



Ducks Unlimited Canada
CANADA'S CONSERVATION COMPANY

Spring Habitat Conditions in Canada

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Following dry early spring weather, conditions in British Columbia range from fair to poor in the Interior to good on the coast. Conditions in the prairies remain unchanged from the last several reports and range from fair to poor in Alberta and Saskatchewan to very good in Manitoba. Central and northern Alberta are experiencing the best conditions that they have in years and waterfowl recruitment is expected to be good in this area. Conditions in the Western Boreal forest are largely good to very good. The outlook for southeastern Ontario has dramatically improved, and conditions across eastern Canada are now good to very good. Waterfowl surveys will be conducted in many regions of the country over the next several weeks and the preliminary survey results will be included in the June report.

With the exception of the coast, spring conditions are generally below average in **British Columbia** due to below average snow accumulations and relatively dry spring weather. Habitat is rated good on the coast, where wetlands are at maximum water capacity. The majority of waterfowl species have migrated northward from this region, and several species (ie. Canada Geese, pintail, gadwall, wood duck, and mallard) have been observed nesting and brooding young. Habitat conditions in the Interior range from good to fair in the central Interior, to fair to poor in most of the Southern Interior, Southeast, and Lower Fraser River areas. April precipitation was generally very low in the Interior, and water conditions will again become a major concern later in the summer unless precipitation increases. Breeding throughout the Interior appears to be a week or two earlier than normal, due to the early onset of spring, and most migrants have moved through. In the Peace, snow levels were near normal, however, prospects are only rated good to fair due to below average spring precipitation. Conditions in the far northeast are also rated good to fair.

Habitat conditions are good to very good in central and northern **Alberta** and are the best that they have been in many years in this region. Favorable conditions are the result of a fortunate coincidence of a good frost seal, average snow pack and an early, sudden runoff period. For the northern region, and especially the central region, this marks a hopeful end to an extended drought that has dominated the region for the last several years. Southern areas are rated fair to poor and will be completely dependent on rainfall to improve conditions. Casual observations of duck numbers and species richness combined with widespread favorable habitat conditions suggests high recruitment potential from central and northern regions of Alberta this year. Locally hatched Canada Geese have already been reported.

Overall, there are above average conditions in the northwest portion of **Saskatchewan**, with good wetland conditions prevailing in the west central region. As you move south and east, conditions begin to dry out and wetland conditions are fair, average or poor. Specifically, the Thickwood Hills and the areas around Cut Knife, Kerrobert and the Bear Hills are the best they have been in 20 years. The Allan Hills and Missouri Coteau have good to fair wetland conditions. In the southeast, runoff was good, but wetlands are beginning to dry with the recent lack of precipitation. Good numbers of pintails and mallards have been showing up in the province as well as redhead, scaup, shovelers, and gadwalls. Most of the geese have pushed through the province with a few flocks of snows and Canada Geese being noted. Staff have found duck nests but no broods have been seen to date.

Waterfowl returned to good pairing and breeding conditions in southern **Manitoba**. Habitat conditions are rated very good to excellent in the region with the exception of the extreme southwest corner of the province, where conditions are good. The lack of precipitation following runoff has been interrupted with a recent system that has replenished deteriorating temporary and permanent wetlands. Temperatures and wetland conditions were optimal in late April and birds initiated nests as scheduled. Large numbers of pintail pairs have been observed this year in the area south of Brandon, and good numbers of redheads have been observed north of Brandon. Gadwall have been scarce in the southwest so far.

In the **Western Boreal Forest**, spring habitat conditions are consistent with the April report and are rated good to very good in most of the region. The 3-month forecast for the Northwest Territories and Yukon is for below average precipitation, and average to above average temperatures; northeastern British Columbia is to experience average precipitation and above average temperatures; northern Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba are to receive below average precipitation and average to below average temperatures. Boreal field staff have yet to survey waterfowl breeding efforts, but the breeding effort is expected to be average to above average for the region.

Habitat conditions continue to improve across southern **Ontario**. Frequent spring rain events have revitalized the wetland base and conditions are now generally good throughout this region. Mild early temperatures ensured a typical initiation of the breeding season and limited flooding from spring precipitation should bode well for early-season production. Early breeding effort appears to be slightly above average, with Canada goose broods beginning to appear in the extreme southwest. Habitat conditions through the northern parts of the province including the Clay Belt continue to be good. Colder than normal temperatures prevailed throughout Ontario during late April, although breeding chronology in the northern regions is not expected to be greatly affected.

In spite of below average snow accumulations this past winter, habitat conditions in **Quebec** range from good to very good due to abundant spring rains. Spring arrived a little early in the province this year and the breeding effort of early nesting species

appears to be good. Some mallard broods have been already observed in the western part of the province.

Wetlands are at full supply in the **Maritimes** and habitat conditions are rated very good. The advance of spring conditions has been slightly ahead of normal with above average temperatures. Fair numbers of migrants are passing through the region, although it appears that waterfowl numbers have been lower than average along the floodplain of the St. John River. There are good numbers of Canada Geese and black ducks in the coastal wetlands.

