



Ducks Unlimited Canada  
CANADA'S CONSERVATION COMPANY

## Spring Habitat Conditions in Canada

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*Spring has arrived in most of the country and migration is in full swing in southern Canada. Habitat conditions are generally good for returning waterfowl. Conditions are particularly good in Manitoba, central Saskatchewan, northern Ontario and coastal regions. Additional precipitation is needed in western parts of the Western Boreal Forest, northern British Columbia, southern Saskatchewan and southwestern Ontario.*

Coastal **British Columbia** had normal snowpack this past winter and runoff is predicted to be above normal in the region. Snow geese were observed in the coastal region in very high numbers this year, and along with other waterfowl, they are now leaving the area. Forage fields in the Fraser Delta were heavily utilized and there will likely be some reseeded and high levels of compensation. Total snow accumulation was below average in the central Interior this past winter and there has been little recent precipitation; however, habitat conditions are mitigated somewhat by the good conditions experienced last fall. Migration is now in full swing in the central Interior and high elevation lakes should be opening soon. In the southern Interior, the snowpack was average this winter, but wetland water levels are still low due to the lag effects of several years of drought. In the Peace and far northeast, spring was late in arriving. The below-average cumulative snowpack, mild winter temperatures and poor frost seal resulted in a steady melt throughout the winter and a lack of spring runoff. Early migrants including Canada geese, wigeon, green-winged teal and mallard have now arrived in the Peace and far northeast.

In **Alberta**, fall precipitation totals were generally average to above average and most areas went into winter with a fair to good frost seal. Winter precipitation totals were generally below normal except for the southern mountains, northeast parkland and southeast prairie. Significant March snowfall in much of southeastern Alberta vastly increased runoff potential. Spring snowmelt was reasonably rapid and combined with a good frost seal to produce better than anticipated early spring habitat conditions in most areas. Lloydminster, Hanna and Brooks report particularly good conditions with abundant field water. In the past week, many semi-permanent wetlands have become ice-free and the frost seal is melting. Field water is beginning to disappear. Most areas have received showers over the past two weeks with some locales in the Prairies reporting rainfall amounts of 25-75mm. The March snows somewhat delayed the return of early Canada geese, mallards and northern pintail. However, recent warm conditions have resulted in an influx of migrants and locally breeding waterfowl. Canada geese are now well into nesting and mallard pairs are establishing breeding territories. Other recent sightings have included swans, American wigeon, gadwall, northern shoveler, green-winged teal, redhead and canvasback.

Migration is now in full swing in **Saskatchewan**. Most duck species have returned to the Province along with tens of thousands of snow geese. Temperatures have been above average. The northcentral and northeast regions are experiencing flooding which has caused damage to structures and roads; wetlands are full to overflowing in these areas. Wetlands are also in good shape in the northwest where runoff is now almost complete. There was little runoff in the southern regions this spring and additional precipitation is needed in the southwest. There has been some recent much-needed rain in the Missouri Coteau, which has formed sheetwater in agricultural fields. The southeast recently received a large amount of snow and rain, which should help to improve conditions. Fall seeded crops are doing well and producers are beginning to seed in the southwest.

Temperatures have been below average in southwest **Manitoba**, delaying the spring thaw and migration. The majority of waterfowl species arrived on April 7<sup>th</sup>, approximately one week later than normal. The combination of wet snow in March, recent intermittent rains and good runoff leave southwest Manitoba's wetlands in great shape for spring.

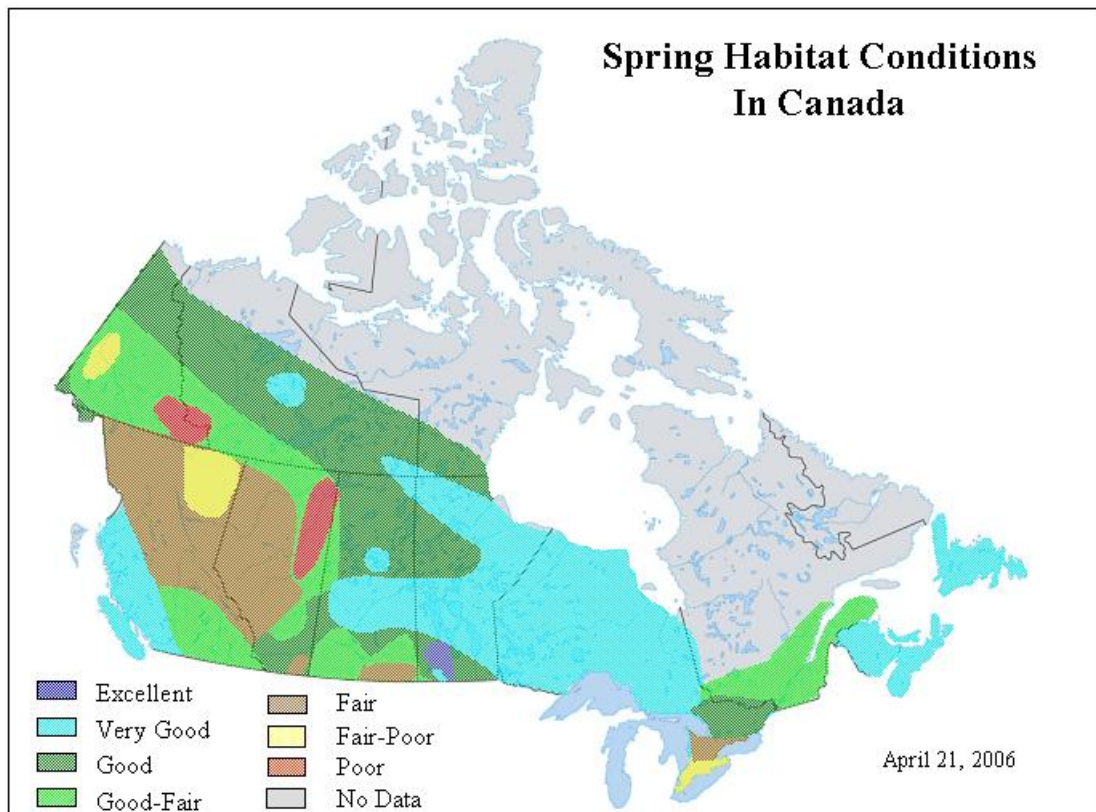
Early migrants including scaup, mallards and wigeon have returned to the boreal transition zone of the **Western Boreal Forest**, where most small wetlands are now open. In the more northern parts of the region, water is just now starting to open up and migrants have yet to return. Northeastern Alberta and areas near Whitehorse and Fort Nelson have been particularly dry for the last few years and there is the potential for drought in these areas this year. The long range forecast calls for above average temperatures in much of the eastern portion of the region and normal temperatures elsewhere with the exception of the northern Northwest Territories, which are to receive below average temperatures. Precipitation is expected to be above normal levels in the eastern portion of the region and below average in western locations where it is most needed.

With the arrival of spring, much of southern **Ontario** continues to be drier than normal. A poor frost seal, below average snowpack, unseasonably warm temperatures and lack of spring precipitation have resulted in early spring habitat conditions that are rated as poor to fair in the southwest with slightly improved conditions farther eastward. Seasonal wetlands are quickly receding and large brood rearing habitats are below full supply. Central Ontario has fared better than the southern part of the Province as very significant snow accumulations were realized during the winter and habitats are generally in good shape for arriving birds. With the extremely mild weather, snow and ice are disappearing ahead of schedule throughout northern Ontario, which continues to have very positive habitat prospects. Most migrants have moved on from traditional staging areas along the lower Great Lakes and early indications are that breeding pair numbers appear to be average.

Spring arrived early in **Quebec**. Precipitation has been below average in all regions and temperatures have been above normal. Snow accumulation was average this past winter but due to a poor frost seal, wetland habitat conditions are now good to fair in all regions. Many duck pairs have been observed around St. Pierre Lake and the St. Lawrence Rivers,

especially mallard, pintail and redhead. Water levels in the St. Lawrence River remain high.

Spring arrived early in **Atlantic Canada**, with low snow accumulations and above average temperatures creating very good habitat conditions for waterfowl. Water levels in some parts of the region are lower than normal due to lack of winter snow cover, although the month of April is making up for this with a wet forecast from the middle to the end of the month. Canada geese and black duck numbers are very strong over most of the Atlantic region. Returning waterfowl numbers in the entire region are high and with current and long-range forecasts remaining wet and warm, this will provide perfect conditions for pairing and nesting activities.



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