



Ducks Unlimited Canada
CANADA'S CONSERVATION COMPANY

Early Winter Habitat Conditions in Canada

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In British Columbia conditions have improved slightly in the coastal region and in the far northeast and Peace regions. Snow has been abundant in Alberta and the parklands of Saskatchewan in the past month, but conditions in these regions vary. Spring conditions in the Saskatchewan prairies and southwestern Manitoba will be dependent on the snow received over the remainder of the winter and in spring 2007. Conditions are generally good in the Western Boreal Forest. In eastern Canada the weather has been mild and there is little accumulated snow. Habitat conditions in the east are rated very good despite the fall-like weather.

In coastal **British Columbia** the weather has been extreme, precipitation has been high, and snow accumulations are above average. Water levels in the Lower Fraser have returned to normal. On the Fraser Delta, waterfowl returned to the perennial forage fields and remnant crop fields as the snow melted. However, birds have consumed the young cover crops that were up to 3" high that were planted late and did not have a chance to fully establish. The majority of migrant birds have now passed through the region and the remainder of the birds will winter in the lower mainland (total estimate is 1 million migrating and wintering waterfowl). Snow geese have primarily remained out in the foreshore as food is abundant for them there. Wetland conditions in the region have been upgraded from last month's assessment and are now rated excellent.

Weather in the central Interior has been colder than normal, and the low elevation lakes froze early. Snow levels are above average, although some has melted at low elevations due to a recent warm spell. The frost seal is poor though, due to a dry summer and fall. This is expected to improve once the cold weather returns. Habitat conditions remain fair-good.

It has been a very wet winter so far in the southern Interior. Temperatures have been below normal, but snow is now disappearing at lower elevations due to more typical conditions. The frost seal is poor, due to a dry summer and fall but it is expected to improve once the cold weather returns. Habitat conditions remain fair-good. Conditions vary in the southeast Interior, but snow levels are generally a bit above normal and habitat conditions remain good.

Early winter snowfall has been roughly twice the average in the British Columbia Peace region and the snow is deep and heavy. The frost seal remains poor due to a dry summer and fall. However, more than one thaw/freezing cycle is expected before spring, and prospects for runoff are good. Conditions in the Peace region have improved since the last assessment and are now rated fair-good.

November in **Alberta** was typified by cold, snowy weather. Temperatures ranged from -20 to -30°C with high wind chills. All areas received significant snowfalls. In agricultural areas the windy conditions consolidated much of the snow into drifts in ditches, wetlands and brush areas. Early December temperatures have been closer to average.

Frost seal conditions are reported to be fair-good throughout the province as a result of precipitation received in September and October. Snow accumulations are currently above average in the northern aspen parkland, boreal transition zone and Peace parkland with 20 to 30+ cm of snow on the ground. The southern aspen parkland and northern prairie have average accumulations of 10 to 15 cm. Much of the prairie is snow-free and has received slightly below average precipitation for the November – December period. The mountain snow pack is average to slightly above average in the South Saskatchewan River Basin, which bodes well for the southern Alberta irrigation districts.

Early snow conditions are looking promising particularly in the 2006 drought areas of the Peace Parkland. Frost seal conditions are set for a good spring runoff if average to above average precipitation is received for the rest of the winter and spring 2007.

The usual over-wintering waterfowl are present on open water areas associated with power plants, rivers and reservoirs.

So far this winter, the parklands of **Saskatchewan** have had abundant moisture and above average snowfall. In the northwest, northcentral and northeastern parts of the province, there was good moisture during the fall which should have produced a good frost seal and above average snowfall. In most of this area, the amount of snow is 250 to 300% above normal. With the good frost seal and above average snowfall, the Saskatchewan parklands should be in good shape next spring.

Conditions in the prairies have been dry with below average snowfall. The frost seal probably did not form in most of this area due to the low soil moisture. However, conditions are beginning to improve in the south as there have been several significant snowfall events. In areas like the Missouri Coteau, spring run-off will be dependent on the amount of moisture received over the remainder of winter.

Recent temperatures have been above average in southwestern **Manitoba**; this was not the case during much of October and November when temperatures were consistently below average. Accumulated precipitation since fall has largely been average. Two significant snowfalls in the past month added to average snow conditions throughout much of the region. Blowing snow has decreased snow accumulations in more southern areas but snowfall has generally been uniform throughout the region except for the extreme southern and southwest range where there has been slightly less snow. Soil moisture conditions are considered fair in southwestern Manitoba due to a lack of early fall precipitation and the early fall freeze-up. Late October did however bring some rainfall and a noteworthy snowfall that melted and marginally increased soil moisture.

Wetland conditions were good prior to freeze-up, but additional precipitation is required to boost conditions for spring.

Total snow accumulation during November and December for the **Western Boreal Forest** (WBF) has been above average, particularly in the boreal transition zone from British Columbia across to Manitoba, and the area along the 60 latitude between Whitehorse and Yellowknife. The northern Yukon and Northwest Territories (NWT) (Old Crow to Inuvik) have received less than normal precipitation this fall/early winter. The WBF has experienced periods of both below and above average temperatures over the last 2 months.

Reports from weather stations in the Yukon in Whitehorse, Dawson City, and Old Crow show snow accumulations of 22cm, 19cm, and 6cm, respectively. The Yukon is expected to have average temperatures and precipitation over the next three months; isolated locations along the Yukon-Alaska border are to experience above average amounts of precipitation.

In the NWT, Norman Wells reports 21cm of snow build-up, Yellowknife 31cm, Fort Simpson 47cm, and Fort Good Hope 19cm. Below average temperatures are expected in NWT over the next three months. Below average precipitation is forecast in the north half of NWT and average amounts in the south half, except the area around Yellowknife, which anticipates above average amounts of precipitation.

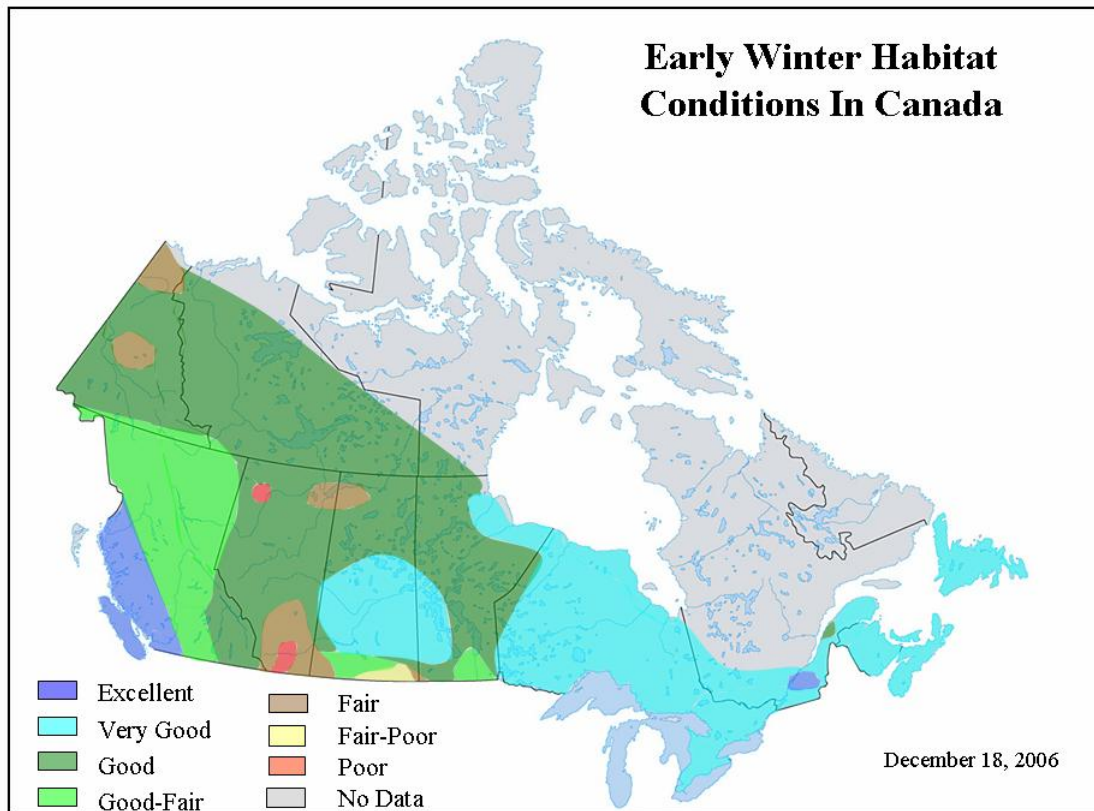
In northeastern British Columbia, Fort Nelson and Fort St. John are reporting 37 and 40cm of snow. Below average temperatures and average precipitation are expected over the next three months in the boreal portions of British Columbia and Alberta.

Reports from weather stations in Edmonton, Fort McMurray, Cold Lake, Lac la Biche, and Grande Prairie Alberta report 21cm, 26cm, 26cm, 9cm, and 42cm respectively. In boreal regions of Saskatchewan and Manitoba snow accumulations are as follows: Prince Albert: 15cm, Buffalo Narrows: 24cm, La Ronge: 25cm, Uranium City: 22cm, The Pas: 35 cm, and Thompson: 31cm. Below average temperatures and precipitation are expected over the next three months in the boreal portions of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

Wetland habitats across **Ontario** continue to be at full supply and are rated as very good despite mild weather that has brought fall-like conditions back to the province. Southern Ontario has no significant frost seal because of the above average temperatures and most of the region is now devoid of any snow. The northern regions of the province received some significant early season snow accumulations; however, much of this snow has also disappeared with the return of warmer temperatures.

November temperatures continued to be above average throughout **Quebec** and total precipitation in November was near normal in all regions. All systems are still completely full of water along the St. Lawrence River. There is little snow accumulation and a frost seal only in northern regions. In southern Quebec mild temperatures and rain have melted accumulated snow.

Habitat conditions in **Atlantic Canada** are very good over the entire region. The region is experiencing temperatures well above normal and has little to no snow accumulation in some areas. Reports from the hunting community have stated varying numbers of waterfowl in each region, with seasons soon ending in some areas. The lack of normal cold temperatures for this time of year has left the majority of wetlands, rivers and lakes ice-free, providing great conditions for waterfowl to remain in the region until the colder weather arrives and ice forms. Weather predictions for the next few weeks are favourable for waterfowl with warm conditions and some small amounts of precipitation.



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