



Ducks Unlimited Canada
CANADA'S CONSERVATION COMPANY

Early Spring Habitat Conditions in Canada

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Snow accumulation improved in many regions of the country during February and temperatures have returned to more seasonal levels in many areas. The outlook for spring conditions across the country now ranges from very good in much of Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan to poor in central Alberta, the southwestern Yukon and the Peace region of British Columbia. Migration appears to be quite early in the Interior of British Columbia where trumpeter swans and Canada geese have already been observed on the move.

In the coastal region of **British Columbia** the record precipitation of January has now slowed, but spring conditions are still expected to be very good. Agriculture in the Fraser Delta is now starting to re-awaken and preliminary reports indicate heavy winter use of perennial forage and cover crops by waterfowl. Snow geese have been late in returning to the Fraser Delta but should be returning any day now; Brant survey numbers were lower than expected. In the central Interior total snowfall is still below average, and has mostly melted at low elevations. Without additional precipitation in the coming months, spring conditions are expected to be below average in the central Interior. In the southern and southeast Interior there has been little recent snowfall, but total snow accumulation is still about average (although mostly melted at lower elevations). Spring conditions in the southern and southeastern Interior are expected to be close to average and fair, respectively. Migration appears to be quite early in the southern and central Interior. Trumpeter swans and Canada geese have already been spotted on the move, and a killdeer was observed in the central Interior, heading north presumably. There have been a few recent snowfalls in the Peace region (there are now about 10 inches of snow on the ground in the south Peace), but this snow does not hold much moisture, and overall snowfall is still below normal at low-mid elevations. Runoff potential in the Peace region is still only fair at best. Snow buntings are starting to move, and resident owls are becoming more visible and vocal in the region.

The **Alberta** winter has been drier and warmer than average. The last week of February saw the appearance of winter with seasonal temperatures and significant snowfalls throughout the Province. For many areas this was the largest single snowfall event since March 2005. A layer of loose, dry snow now covers most areas; Edmonton-Red Deer-Grande Prairie have approximately 23-24 cm; Calgary-Claresholm - 14 cm; Brooks-Medicine Hat - 5 cm; Lloydminster-Cold Lake - 17-21 cm and Fort McMurray - 24 cm. The recent snow has also increased the mountain snowpack, which is good news for irrigation districts. The forecast is for warmer but seasonal temperatures over the next week (March 6-10), which will consolidate the existing snowpack. Additional snow is forecast for later in the week. Based on current snow conditions, poor spring runoff is

anticipated over much of the agricultural zone of Alberta in spite of the fair to good frost seal present in most areas. Significant precipitation over the next two months will be required to recharge and maintain wetland water levels through the spring. The usual overwintering waterfowl are present at open water sites on rivers and power plant cooling ponds.

Overall, habitat conditions improved significantly in **Saskatchewan** this past week when a winter storm produced an average of 8-10 inches of snow in many parts of the Province. Prior to that storm, snow conditions in the westcentral and southeastern regions were below average. Reports from staff indicate that 6-10 inches were received in the westcentral part of the Province; central regions received 8-10 inches; eastcentral - 8-10 inches and the southeast 8-10 inches. Areas that did not get much snow include the Missouri Coteau and the southwest part of the Province. The outlook is good across the parklands for runoff and much improved in the southeast, but late winter snow or spring rain is needed in the Coteau and southwest. Temperatures across the Province have been below average but should be close to normal within the week. Canada geese were observed along the river in Saskatoon in late February but they have moved out of the area with the recent cooler temperatures.

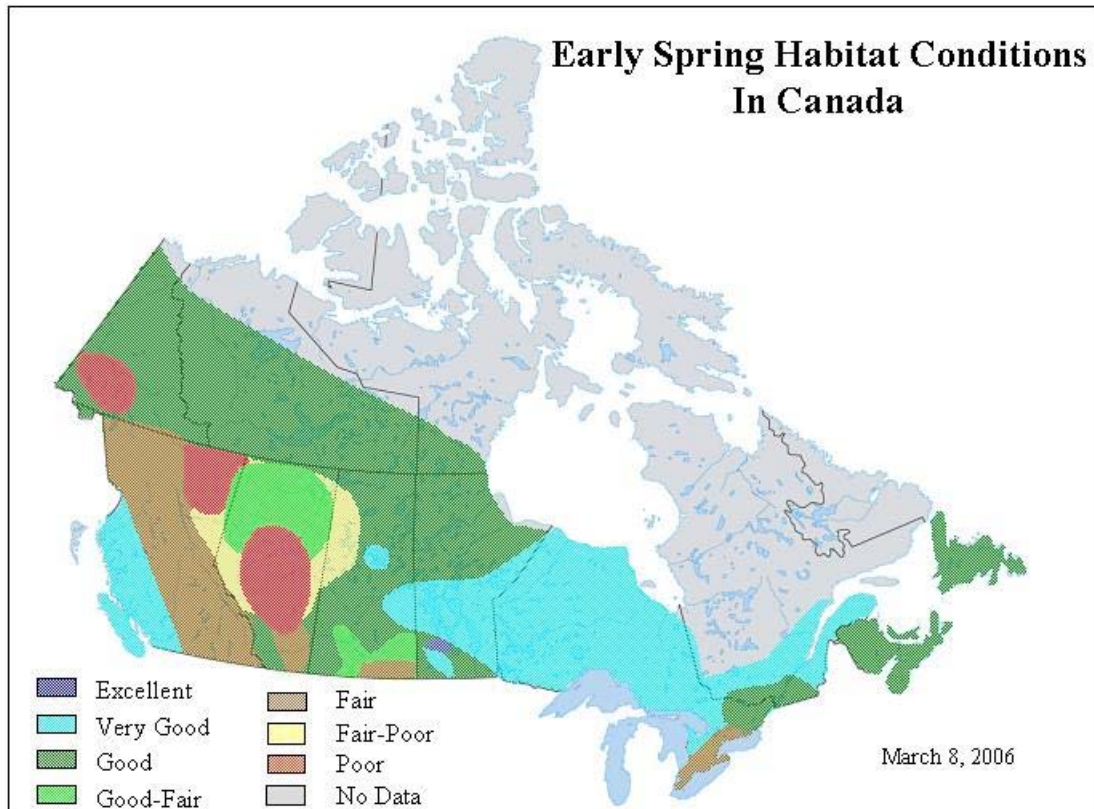
Snow accumulations are generally above average throughout southwestern **Manitoba**. A recent snowstorm delivered 5-6 inches of snow in the area south of Brandon and even larger accumulations north of Brandon with 6-8 inches in the Shoal Lake – Minnedosa area and 10-12 inches near Riding Mountain. A poor frost seal remains throughout southwestern Manitoba caused by early insulating snow pack and unseasonably mild weather. South of Brandon, conditions improve as you travel east of the Saskatchewan border and poorer conditions in the Melita - Killarney region have improved since the last report. Preliminary reports from Manitoba Water Stewardship predict below normal runoff for much of the area south of Brandon. However – due to wet fall moisture conditions, favourable fall wetland levels, remaining snow pack in wooded areas and recent snow accumulations, spring pond conditions are expected to be good in this region. Runoff is expected to be near normal to slightly above normal for much of the area north of Brandon and spring pond conditions here will be favourable, especially in the Shoal Lake - Neepawa region.

Total snow accumulation for most of the **Western Boreal Forest** is near average. However, snow accumulations range from above average in parts of Manitoba and Saskatchewan to below average in northcentral Alberta and parts of the Yukon. Precipitation during early winter was lower than average throughout the region, and a high percentage of the area also experienced above normal seasonal temperatures ($>+5^{\circ}\text{C}$ above normal). During February, snow conditions improved throughout the Western Boreal Forest and temperatures were closer to seasonal. A few specific regions that are at a high-risk for drought are the areas around Trout Lake and Nahanni in the Northwest Territories, the area surrounding Whitehorse, and the area between Cold Lake and Fort McMurray, Alberta. Northern Saskatchewan and Manitoba are experiencing wet conditions, especially the area around La Ronge, Saskatchewan, and the area surrounding Lake Winnipeg and Lake Winnipegosis in Manitoba.

After a lull in January, wintry weather returned in February and has improved habitat conditions throughout much of **Ontario**. Although the snowpack continues to be below normal in southern Ontario and the frost seal is poor, most wetland habitats are near full supply due to the frequent rain events seen throughout the winter and as such, spring habitat prospects are generally fair. Very significant snow accumulations have been realized across most of central Ontario, most notably in the Georgian Bay and Nickel Belt areas, and over to North Bay, which has set the stage for very good spring conditions. Despite some heavy rains in the upper Ottawa Valley region, which caused a slight reduction in the snowpack, habitat conditions are still rated as good. Colder than normal temperatures and additional snowfall continues to maintain a very positive habitat outlook for northern Ontario.

In February, temperatures were above normal in all regions of **Quebec** except the eastern and northern regions, where temperatures were slightly below average. Total precipitation remained above the seasonal average in all regions and especially in the Gaspesie region. The areas around Montreal and Ottawa received a large amount of rain in February. Precipitation has been abundant since the beginning of the year and resulted in an increase in the mean St. Lawrence water level in January. The mean level recorded at Sorel station was 15% higher than average. Levels of accumulated snow are above average in the eastern and northern regions. Large amounts of precipitation in the form of rain contributed to a decrease in snow depth in the other regions. However, there is enough snow on the ground to assure good water supply and projected spring habitat conditions remain good to very good.

Snow accumulations in **Atlantic Canada** have been below normal throughout the entire winter even in northern regions. After a very warm fall and early winter, the temperature has dropped significantly throughout the region. Mid-February has brought colder than normal temperatures, which has formed new ice on most estuaries, bays, and inland wetlands. Areas that are still relatively open are being utilized by concentrated numbers of waterfowl. With spring fast approaching, the lack of a full snow cover will result in good habitat conditions for remaining and returning waterfowl throughout Atlantic Canada.



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