



Ducks Unlimited Canada
CANADA'S CONSERVATION COMPANY

Late Spring Habitat Conditions in Canada

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Habitat conditions have improved in southern Ontario and the southeastern Interior of British Columbia. Conditions in many parts of Alberta are now better than was previously expected. Waterfowl production should be particularly good in southwestern Manitoba, the parklands of Saskatchewan and the southern and eastern regions of Alberta this year.

Habitat conditions continue to be very good in coastal **British Columbia**. April precipitation and temperatures were above average and early summer streamflows are estimated to be above normal. Higher elevation snow conditions are still above normal. In the Interior, the wave of migrants has mostly moved through, and early breeding is now well underway; Canada goose broods have been spotted in all areas, and mallard ducklings will follow soon. In the central Interior, April precipitation was above average around Prince George and below average in the south. The cumulative snowpack and streamflows have been below average in the central Interior, but wetland levels have been buffered somewhat by the wet conditions of last summer and fall. The mountain pine beetle epidemic that is currently impacting millions of hectares of forest may also be increasing water levels – anecdotal evidence suggests that wetlands may be benefiting from the lack of evapotranspiration. In the southern Interior, conditions are variable, but April precipitation was generally above average in the Okanagan and below average in the Thompson; streamflows are normal and below normal, respectively. There is much variability in wetland levels and upland conditions as well, but they generally show the same trend as streamflows, and lower elevation wetlands in the Thompson are considerably drier than they were at this time last year. April precipitation was above average in the southeast Interior and conditions have improved over last month's assessment. Streamflows are average or just below average in the Columbia, but higher temperatures in the Kootenays have led to greater streamflows. In the Peace region, spring precipitation has been well below normal, as was winter snowpack (and runoff), and the outlook is not optimistic for the region. Uplands are greening up due to some recent rains, but wetland levels are still low and early streamflows are below normal. There are still large numbers of migrants in the Peace region, but early nesting is well underway.

In **Alberta**, spring snowmelt was rapid and combined with a good frost seal to create better than anticipated habitat conditions in most areas. Precipitation totals are average to above average in most areas with the exception of Red Deer and Grande Prairie-Peace River, where precipitation was below average to well below average. Most areas of the Province would still benefit from additional precipitation to maintain wetland water levels and stimulate grass growth. Spring conditions in much of the prairie and southern

and eastern parkland are the best they have been in many years. Southern Alberta (Prairie and Prairie-Parkland transition) is rated as good and areas around Brooks and Hanna are particularly good. Central Alberta (Aspen Parkland) is more variable with conditions declining from east to west. East of Edmonton-Camrose-Buffalo Lake-Pine Lake conditions are good to excellent. Reports from the Lloydminster area indicate that conditions are the best they have been in 30 years. The western parkland and northwest boreal transition zone did not fully benefit from the early spring snowfall and rains that areas further east received. The Peace Parkland is also rated as fair. The CWS/USFW air-ground breeding waterfowl surveys are currently underway. Anecdotal reports from the survey crews indicate vastly improved pond and waterfowl numbers from 2005 on many survey transects in southern and eastern Alberta. The good wetland numbers appear to be attracting an increased number of breeding northern pintails to the area. The good spring habitat conditions in much of the agricultural area should stimulate a strong breeding effort from early nesters such as mallard and northern pintail. At this time lone drake and paired mallards are a common sight indicating that a good breeding effort is underway. The first reports of Canada goose broods have been received. Spring seeding is well underway and producers report good soil moisture conditions. Cattle are being moved onto pasture.

Wetland conditions continue to be good to excellent in the parklands and fair to good in the prairies of **Saskatchewan**. Seeding operations have been delayed in the parklands due to the abundant moisture whereas seeding is well underway in the prairies. In the westcentral and northwest portions of the Province, wetland conditions are very good and spring rains have delayed seeding operations. The northcentral and northeast is very wet and wetland conditions are good to excellent with even the temporary and seasonal basins in excellent shape. The Allan Hills, Thickwood Hills, Touchwood Hills and Churchbridge landscapes are all in good to excellent condition. Wetland conditions in the Missouri Coteau are fair to good, as this region has received less precipitation than the parklands. In the southeast, wetland conditions are poor to fair. Bird numbers have been high in the parklands as some of early arrivals likely moved north from the prairies due to the good to the excellent conditions in the parklands. Pair counts in the Allan Hills indicated high numbers of blue-winged teal, mallards and northern shovelers. Northern pintail numbers were also good (approximately 4 pairs per square mile). Nesting is well underway and should continue to build throughout the month. Locally nesting Canada geese have been sitting on nests for some time now and several broods have been observed. Most of the Arctic nesting geese have pushed through.

In southwestern **Manitoba**, the warm temperatures of April have been replaced with unseasonably cool temperatures. Normal temperatures are expected to prevail for the remainder of the month. Precipitation has been occurring at regular intervals since spring runoff. Most areas in the prime waterfowl production zones (Minnedosa, Newdale, Boissevain, Deloraine, Killarney, Belmont) received upwards of 3 inches of precipitation over the past 60 days with Shoal Lake/Russell receiving slightly more precipitation. Conditions are currently very good to excellent across much of this region. Class III and IV wetlands remain inundated as well as many Class II basins. Class I wetlands also remain moist at this time. May pond counts are expected to be up this year and general

observations indicate that there is an abundance of waterfowl throughout the region. Of particular note are the large numbers of pintails in the area south of Brandon. Lone mallard drakes are common at this time as well as small and some larger bachelor groupings. Canada goose broods have been reported. Seeding is slightly behind in most regions with seeding in the Killarney area being most advanced. Winter wheat acres are near the high level of two years ago. The crop wintered well and has responded positively to the warm weather in April, and has natural upland cover.

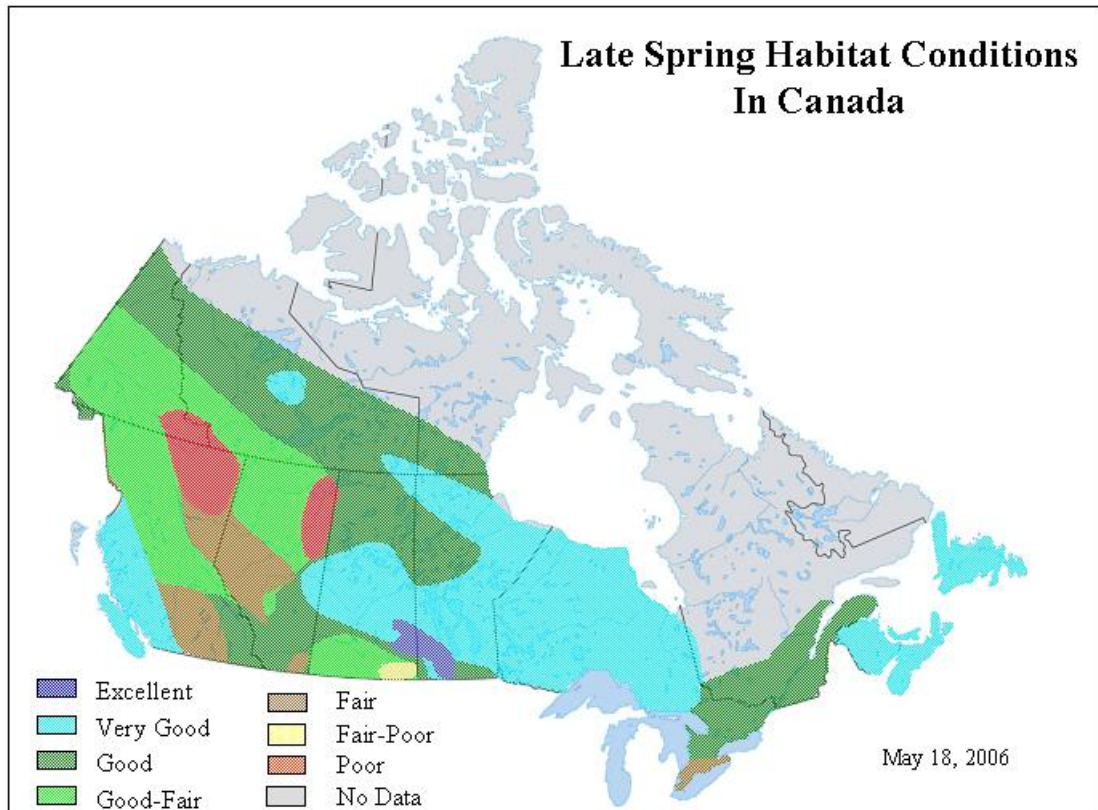
Western Boreal Program staff members have yet to be in the field; as a result, the waterfowl breeding effort in the **Western Boreal Forest** is largely unknown at this time. Breeding pair surveys are scheduled for the Boreal Conservation Project area (located between High Prairie and Fort McMurray, Alberta) and various locations in the Yukon over the next few weeks; reconnaissance surveys are planned for Saskatchewan. There are no scheduled surveys in the boreal portions of the Northwest Territories, British Columbia, and Manitoba; breeding effort information will be limited for these areas. The breeding effort should be good in northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan and most of the Northwest Territories, where spring habitat conditions were good. The boreal transition zone and areas in northern British Columbia and Alberta have received below average precipitation. As such, the breeding effort is expected to be below average in northern Alberta. The long-range forecast for the Western Boreal Forest calls for above average temperatures in all but the Yukon and the northwest corner of the Northwest Territories, where the temperatures are to be average or below average. Precipitation is expected to be below average in all but the east half of the Northwest Territories and coastal areas of southwest Yukon, where they anticipate above average precipitation.

Following a mild, dry April, spring rains have returned and have improved habitat conditions throughout southern **Ontario**. This timely recharging of the wetland base has conditions now grading from fair in the extreme southwest to good in the southeast. Wetlands in central Ontario remain in good shape while those throughout the northern regions of the Province continue to be rated as very good. Early breeding effort appears to be average, although the initiation of breeding seemed to be slightly advanced in response to favourable spring weather.

Habitat conditions are good in all regions of **Quebec**. Temperatures continued to be above normal in April and precipitation was also above average in all regions except the Lower St. Lawrence and Ottawa River valley regions. These two regions also received below average snow accumulations during the winter. An early spring thaw resulted in rapid snowmelt and early nesting species did not benefit from a large rise in the water levels of the St. Lawrence. However, precipitation has been abundant since the beginning of May and has provided a good supply of water in watercourses and wetlands. Bachelor groupings and lone male mallards and American black ducks are present on St. Peter Lake and along the St. Lawrence River indicating a good breeding effort.

In **Atlantic Canada**, precipitation is below normal for this time of year and this is affecting water levels in many of the freshwater wetlands. Water levels in wetlands are currently suitable for breeding and brood rearing, but will gradually decline in the weeks

to come due to the lack of precipitation. Overall, habitat conditions are very good in the entire region and this should result in high hatching success rates for all species of waterfowl. Breeding waterfowl surveys are under way in most of the region and preliminary Canada goose and American black duck nesting counts are good. Long-range forecasts are calling for above normal temperatures and very little precipitation in the region.



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