



Ducks Unlimited Canada
CANADA'S CONSERVATION COMPANY

Summer Habitat Conditions in Canada

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With a few exceptions, brood-rearing habitat is good or better across Canada, and waterfowl production should be very good this year. The 2007 Waterfowl Breeding Population and Habitat Survey showed a 14 per cent increase in breeding duck numbers over last year's survey, and a 24 per cent increase over the survey's long term average.

In coastal **British Columbia** precipitation has slowed with the onset of summer. Wetland water levels are decreasing with the warmer weather, but they are still around average seasonal levels after a cool, rainy spring. Temperatures recently hit record high levels in several communities. Agricultural crops on the Fraser Delta have been planted, and harvest should begin next month. Brood numbers and habitat conditions have been average. Many adults are now flightless as they moult new flight feathers.

Spring and summer precipitation has been about normal in the central Interior. Habitat conditions have improved from the same period last year, and are now average. Waterfowl production also appears about average. Brood timing is a week later than normal. Some older (late age class II or early age class III) mallard and Barrow's goldeneye broods have been observed.

In the southern Interior, spring and summer precipitation has been about normal, but wetland conditions are still slightly below average. Waterfowl production appears about average and brood timing is normal.

In the southeast Interior the Upper Columbia experienced a very wet early summer, and conditions are very good. Conditions in the Kootenay drainage are also about normal. Waterfowl population data are not yet available for the region.

In the Peace region precipitation has slowed, and spring and summer precipitation totals are now about average. Wetland conditions are relatively unchanged, and are still feeling the lag effects of the poor spring runoff. Temperatures have been relatively warm, and uplands are in excellent condition. Waterfowl production appears about average. Brood timing is a couple of weeks later than normal. Mallard broods are several weeks old (age class II), and divers such as lesser scaup and ruddy duck are quite young (early age class I).

Although recent hot temperatures have led to some deterioration in wetland conditions across the agricultural region of **Alberta**, brood habitat remains in good to very good condition overall. Precipitation totals for the period from April to July are average to above average in the central and northern prairie, aspen parkland, boreal transition zone (BTZ) and Peace parkland. Areas of slightly below average precipitation include the southern prairie, central BTZ and northern Peace parkland. Recent weather conditions have been ideal for the formation of thunderstorms, which have resulted in locally heavy precipitation events, and in some cases damaging hail.

Brood habitat conditions are rated as good to very good in the north, west and central areas of the prairie biome, and DUC projects are full. In the south and east conditions are rated as fair as the typical summer weather takes hold and wetland conditions deteriorate. In the aspen parkland conditions are rated as good in the east and northeast grading to very good and excellent in central and western sectors; semi-permanent ponds remain flooded into the cattails. In the BTZ conditions are rated as fair to good in the east to very good in the west. The Peace Parkland wetland habitat is in very good to excellent condition in southern sections and good to very good in the north.

Hay harvest began in late June in most areas, which probably resulted in some nest loss. However, excellent cover conditions remain in pastures, wetland peripheries and other idle areas. In many pastures grass growth is exceeding consumption by cattle, which has not occurred for some years.

DUC field staff report sighting “broods on every pond.” Very good spring habitat conditions this year provided improved breeding habitat in Alberta compared to the previous few years. Improved moisture conditions and continued precipitation also provided improved nesting cover conditions. Nest success should respond accordingly and brood habitat is in great condition. As a result of these factors above average waterfowl production is anticipated from the agricultural zone of Alberta in 2007.

Overall, wetland habitat conditions remain good to excellent in the parklands of **Saskatchewan** and fair to good in the prairies. From North Battleford across to Wadena, wetland habitat is in good to excellent condition and there has been flooding in the northeast. Wetland habitat conditions in the southern part of the province are a bit drier, but are still fair to good with fair conditions in the southwest and southeast and good in the northern portion of the Coteau (central). In the parklands, frequent rains have continued to fill even the seasonal wetlands providing good to excellent conditions for brood production.

Brood production should be good to excellent for Saskatchewan, as older broods that are in the I1c size category have been sighted in many areas of the province. There have also been a number of younger broods (age class Ib) suggesting a strong breeding effort across the province. Species sighted with older (age class I1c) broods include mallards, pintails, and canvasback. Some groups of mallards and pintails have been observed on large wetlands and are beginning to moult.

Most of the crops across the province are good to excellent given the moisture, but there has been some localized damage from hail the size of golf balls. Pastures also look good, and haying is getting underway.

Preliminary reports from USFWS/CWS Waterfowl surveys have confirmed previous concerns with initial breeding pair settling in southwestern **Manitoba**. This appears to be most pronounced in the extreme southern areas, which were under much drier spring conditions. Numbers of breeding pairs were down for all species compared to last year, but many species such as mallard, gadwall, and canvasback were still above the long term average. Surprisingly this survey indicated that the overall number of May ponds was up from last year. It is suspected that the wet conditions in the northern parklands added to these numbers, but there may also be other contributing factors. The survey also confirmed that northern pintail numbers were in fact down from last year's

numbers and the long-term average as were American wigeon. The pintail numbers were not surprising as their southern primary breeding area in Manitoba was significantly drier than last year during the pair settling period.

Wetland conditions continue to improve since spring over much of southwestern Manitoba due to frequent rain. Conditions are favourable for brood-rearing waterfowl and reneating birds. Over the past month regular precipitation has continued throughout the region, with many areas receiving 90-125mm of rain in the past month. Since spring, most of the region has received 115-150% of average precipitation. Some temporary (Class II) wetlands once again have standing water and most seasonal (Class III) wetlands are inundated. This has offered excellent brood conditions for waterfowl throughout southwestern Manitoba and good conditions for reneating waterfowl. Broods of many species appear plentiful and the variability in age classes indicates good initial nesting success as well as great reneating success as well. Brood sizes of all species and age classes appear to be larger than most other years.

Brood habitat conditions are average to above average for the vast majority of the **Western Boreal Forest (WBF)**. Brood production, although later than normal, is also average to above average for the region.

In the Yukon, water levels on rivers and basins in the south remain very high, and at near-record levels. A dense mountain snow-pack continues to melt and the runoff is contributing to already high water levels. In the northern part of the territory, above average precipitation has helped keep habitat conditions near average. Mallard and bufflehead broods were observed in relative abundance on aerial surveys that took place in mid-June. Wigeon broods were also very abundant. Trumpeter swans appear to have had a very successful breeding season, as almost every pair observed had 2-4 cygnets. Scaup and ring-necked broods are expected to be plentiful in upcoming brood surveys. Over the next three months, the Yukon is expected to have above average temperatures, with below average precipitation in the north and south, and above average precipitation in the central region.

Northeastern British Columbia received average to above average precipitation from April to July of this year. Brood habitat conditions should be improved upon from the past couple of seasons, although the area, as a whole, is still experiencing below average to average conditions. Breeding pair and brood surveys were not conducted in the region this year. However, this area typically has good numbers of mallards, bufflehead, ring-necked ducks, green-winged teal, and scaup. Above average temperatures and below average precipitation are forecast over the next three months in northeast corner of British Columbia.

In the boreal portions of the Prairie Provinces habitat conditions are generally average to above average. Water conditions in basins, streams, and rivers were all very high this spring. The northern portion of this area has received below average precipitation, while the boreal transition zone to the south has received above average precipitation, particularly in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Above average temperatures and below average precipitation are forecast for the next three months in northern Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba.

Precipitation around The Pas and the Saskatchewan River Delta has been very high compared to the historical average. Habitat conditions are very good in the region.

Late-nesting species, including canvasback and redheads have been observed in the last month. Broods have not been observed in any great numbers, although ducks may be more dispersed with the abundant water.

There is lots of water present near Melfort. Rainfall has been well above average this growing season, and the water level in basins has extended past the normal shorelines, flooding cattail edges and other summer growth vegetation. Brood habitat conditions are very good. A moderate number of broods have been observed locally, with mallards and shovelers being the most abundant species.

DUC staff have observed many mallards, goldeneye, bufflehead, and ring-necked duck broods on a brood survey in late June in northeastern Alberta. Conditions in the area remain average despite below average amounts of precipitation since April.

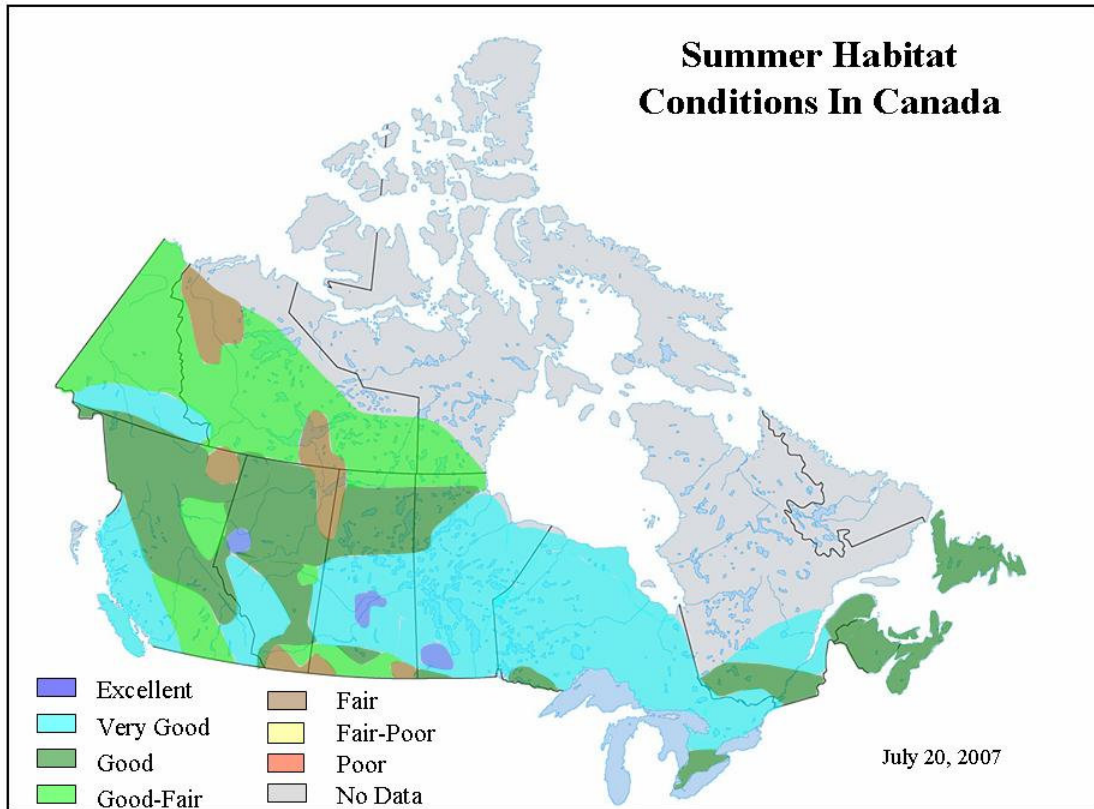
Conditions are average to below average throughout most of the Northwest Territories (NWT). Sites along the Mackenzie River have received 40-60% of their average rainfall this season (April to present). Conditions and precipitation amounts improve in the southwest corner of the territory, which includes Nahanni and Trout Lake. No bird surveys are scheduled this year in the NWT. DUC's scaup nesting study at Cardinal Lake near Inuvik has shown an average number of scaup nests and good numbers of breeding pairs. Production should be on par with other average years and is improved from 2006, when many nests were lost to flooding (water levels are lower this year). Over the next three months the NWT is predicted to have above average temperatures, with below average precipitation in the north and above average precipitation in the south.

Above average temperatures coupled with favourable habitat conditions are boding well for **Ontario** waterfowl. Water levels in most permanent wetlands in southern Ontario have receded due to limited precipitation in May and June, but these habitats still remain sufficiently flooded for developing broods and in some cases have actually rebounded slightly due to some timely July storm events. As such, wetland conditions continue to grade from good in the southwest to very good throughout the central and southeastern regions of the province. Contrary to southern Ontario, northern Ontario received above average precipitation in June, largely as a result of numerous thunderstorms that dumped significant amounts of rain in short periods. This recharging of the wetland base throughout the north should ensure that abundant water is available during the prefledging period. Numerous brood sightings, including continuing reports of many early age class broods, suggests good production has resulted from a strong protracted breeding effort. Although brood sizes seem typical for each age class, there still appears to be a disproportionately higher number of early age class broods for this time of year, which could impact overall recruitment. While the total spring breeding population estimate for Southern James Bay Population Canada geese was much lower this year compared to 2006, the total population estimate remains near the long-term average. In addition, this marked decline seems to be attributable more to a decrease in nesting pairs on the Hudson Bay mainland rather than those nesting on Akimiski Island, where a record number of nests were produced this year. On an up note, the estimated breeding population of Mississippi Valley Population Canada geese was the highest recorded since 1999 and is 10% above the 1989-2007 average. Overall, waterfowl production for 2007 is expected to be average for Ontario.

Temperatures in June were slightly above average throughout **Quebec**. Total precipitation in June was above average in central regions; the Quebec region received approximately 15% more precipitation than average and Outaouais and Montreal regions received about 20% less precipitation than average. The monthly (May and June) averages of the St. Lawrence water level at Sorel station were higher than normal. However, in the south of the province (Montreal, Ottawa River valley and Eastern Townships regions), wetland water levels were lower than normal due to recent dry weather. However, the abundant precipitation of recent weeks has maintained favourable brood habitat and a large number of broods have been observed. Brood timing was slightly late for some species in southern regions. In the Bas-Saint-Laurent (Mont-Joli), abundant precipitation has maintained high water levels and brood habitat conditions remain good. Abundant precipitation in the Abitibi-Temiscamingue region raised water levels after nesting and may have flooded nests thereby impacting nest success. However, waterfowl production has generally been good throughout the province. Resident Canada geese broods were abundant and the average clutch size was high, especially in the Ottawa region.

The nest initiation period of snow geese was delayed by a late spring in much of northern Quebec, where habitat conditions are generally fair. On Bylot Island, spring was early, and warm temperatures melted the snow faster than normal. However, the snow geese were late in returning to the breeding grounds and the breeding period was delayed by the bad weather of recent weeks.

Initial brood surveys indicate that successful early nesting attempts should assist in maintaining waterfowl production levels in **Atlantic Canada**. In some areas there are reports of late broods, but overall production and brood sizes are very much on par for the entire region. Habitat conditions are good throughout the region and water levels are normal in the majority of DUC managed wetlands, thanks to the amount of precipitation received over the last month. The long-range weather forecast is calling for a mix of weather over the region, with temperatures remaining just around seasonal. The predicted seasonal weather will aid in seeing good numbers of these broods to fledge.



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