



Ducks Unlimited Canada
Conserving Canada's Wetlands

Late Fall Habitat Conditions in Canada

November 20, 2007

Fall has been warm, dry and protracted across much of Canada this year. As freeze-up approaches habitat conditions are generally good in British Columbia and eastern Canada. However, the warm, dry weather has resulted in low soil moisture and a downgrading of habitat conditions in much of the Prairie Provinces and Western Boreal Forest, where additional precipitation will be needed to ensure a good frost seal this winter.

In the **British Columbia** coastal region conditions are generally mild and wet (with the exception of the west coast of Vancouver Island), wetlands are mostly recharged, and snow is building on the coastal mountains. The outlook for this winter's snowpack is good, and there are no water supply concerns for the Lower Mainland. Remnant crops, such as potatoes, are a great fuel source for migrating waterfowl, and agricultural fields have been especially valuable during some recent wind storm events that have pushed waterfowl from intertidal areas. Migration is well underway, and the number of wintering birds in the region is growing.

Precipitation has been above average in the central Interior this fall, and wetlands and rivers have maintained generally good conditions. Freeze-up has just begun, but many marshes are already iced-over. Migration is nearing completion, and the onset of the cold weather should move the rest along as relatively few birds over-winter here. The prospect for a frost seal is good in the region.

A few recent storms have moved through the southern half of the province, and precipitation has been above average this fall. Wetland and river conditions are near normal. Freeze-up is still a few days off, but the prospect for a frost seal is good.

Recent precipitation has been low in the southeast Interior and temperatures have been relatively cool. The prospect for a frost seal is below average.

In the Peace region the fall was slightly dryer than normal, but wetlands maintained fair-good conditions due to a cool, damp summer. The prospect for a good frost seal is better than last year, but still below average. Temperatures were mild this fall, resulting in a longer ice-free season. Waterfowl are mostly gone, except for a few straggler geese, and there is little open water, even on large lakes.

Fall has been dry and protracted in **Alberta**, with warm temperatures and strong winds. The parklands, northern prairies and Peace region have had below average precipitation while the southern prairies have fared slightly better with recent storms. More rain will be needed in all regions prior to freeze-up to ensure a good frost seal this winter. There is still open water on some larger water bodies, but smaller water bodies are generally frozen over and some waterfowl still remain in the province.

Dry conditions persist in the prairies of **Saskatchewan** and the prospects for a good frost seal are currently poor in the region. Conditions are improved in the parklands, where the frost seal should be good this winter despite the recent lack of precipitation. Most priority areas in the parklands still have abundant water thanks to plentiful precipitation received this past spring and summer. Temperatures are currently near freezing and wetlands are icing-over with some mallards and Canada geese remaining. There has yet to be a significant accumulation of snow in the province.

There has been very little recent precipitation in southwestern **Manitoba** with the region receiving its last significant rainfall in July. As a result, soil moisture is generally low at present and more precipitation will be needed to create a good frost seal this winter. Wetlands are showing signs of stress with mudflats exposed on semi-permanent (Class IV) wetlands both in the extreme south and Shoal Lake areas. The majority of waterfowl left the region in the first week of November with small numbers of birds remaining at present, which is much later than normal.

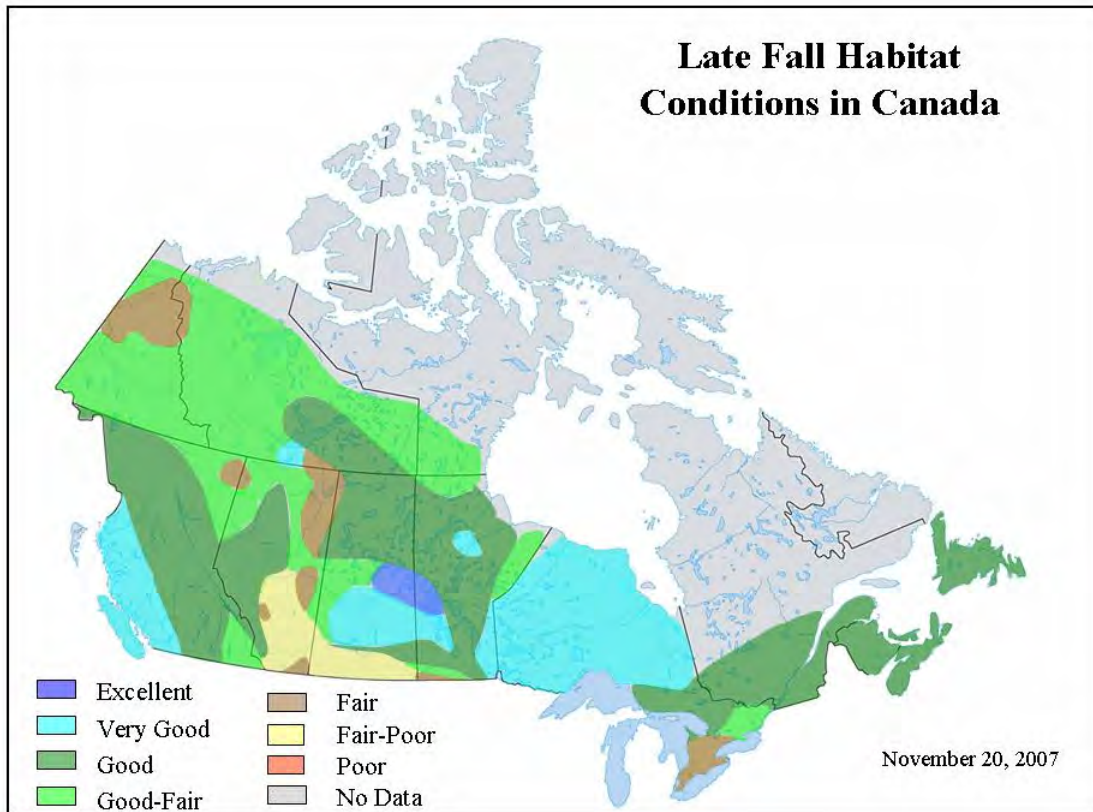
The Western Boreal Forest (WBF) has experienced warm temperatures and little precipitation this fall with the exception of the area near The Pas, where the water table remains high. The majority of waterfowl have left the WBF with the odd flock of straggling Canada geese and ducks remaining. Water bodies are now generally frozen in the WBF, with open water only on some of the larger rivers. The long-range forecast calls for below average temperatures in the Northwest Territories, Yukon, northern Manitoba and northern Saskatchewan with average temperatures elsewhere. Manitoba and the more northern reaches of the Northwest Territories are expected to have below average precipitation in the next three months with above average levels of precipitation elsewhere.

Little has changed since last month's habitat report with wetland habitats across southern **Ontario** continuing to provide staging waterfowl with satisfactory habitat. However, soil moisture levels are less than optimal as freeze-up approaches due to the lack of recent precipitation. The southwestern part of the province continues to be drier than the southcentral and southeastern regions, where wetland water levels have actually rebounded slightly due to some timely rain events, however, wetlands generally remain below full supply. Water levels in all the Great Lakes continue to be below their long-term monthly averages for this time of year, which has not affected waterfowl use, but is hindering hunting accessibility. In contrast, northern Ontario continues to see rain with some areas having received more than double their typical monthly precipitation amounts. This has soil moisture levels across the north in great shape prior to the arrival of colder weather. Temperatures have been unseasonably warm throughout the province but especially in the south, with inland wetlands remaining ice-free and receiving good waterfowl use, while diver numbers continue to build along the coastal marshes of the lower Great Lakes.

In **Quebec**, October temperatures were exceptionally warm in all regions, ranging from 2.5-3.5 °C above normal. October has been dry in all but the eastern region, where

moisture conditions are improved. The first snowfall occurred on November 9th but snow did not stay on the ground in southern regions until November 15th. Water levels are below normal throughout the province with levels in the St. Lawrence River 55 cm below normal in September and October, representing the lowest levels in 10 years. Habitat conditions remain good throughout the province, but more rainfall will be needed in late November to ensure a good frost seal.

Fall weather has arrived in **Atlantic** Canada bringing snow, rain and cooler temperatures. Several heavy frosts have been experienced during the last month and many of the inland waters have had a thin ice layer lasting for part of the day. Normal numbers of waterfowl are migrating through the area and hunters have been experiencing a very good fall hunt to date. Long range forecasts are calling for seasonable temperatures over the next month. Moisture conditions over the region are normal, with several fall rain events occurring over the past month. Overall, habitat conditions in Atlantic Canada are good.



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