



Ducks Unlimited Canada
Conserving Canada's Wetlands

Fall Habitat Conditions in Canada

October 22, 2007

Habitat conditions are somewhat varied across Canada. The prairies require significant rain to ensure a good frost seal this winter as does southern Ontario and the Peace region of British Columbia. Early season hunting has generally been good.

There has been little change in habitat conditions in **British Columbia** in the past month. In the coastal region wetlands are recharging with the return of the wet season. Cover crops and perennial forage are being planted in agricultural fields in the region and waterfowl are feeding on residual vegetation. Early migrants including mallards and snow geese have returned and pintails and wigeon are starting to arrive.

In the southern Interior precipitation has been more plentiful in western areas than in the east, and temperatures have been cool throughout. Wetland conditions remain stable from the last report and are currently fair-good.

There has been abundant precipitation in the central Interior and wetlands are in good shape with the recent cool temperatures.

In the Peace region precipitation has been low this fall and the soil is dry. There is some early concern over the quality of the frost seal this coming winter. Grain harvest was a little late in the region this year and is still underway, with some reports of waterfowl depredation. There is low hunting pressure in the Peace, but waterfowl appear to be plentiful this year.

There has been little precipitation in much of the parkland and Peace regions of **Alberta**, while precipitation has been more plentiful in the southern prairies, where conditions have recently been quite dry. Soil moisture is generally fair-good throughout the province at present with some seasonal (Class III) wetlands now dry. Recent temperatures have been above average and migration is generally on schedule and expected to peak in the coming week with mallards still present on every pond. Swans have been moving through the region and snow geese are present in the east. Harvest is 75-80% complete in the province.

As has been reported throughout the year, there are good to excellent wetland conditions in the parklands of **Saskatchewan** and poor to fair wetland conditions in the prairies. The parklands continue to get periodic showers which help to maintain wetland levels and improve ground moisture for freeze up. The prairies have had very little moisture and wetlands are drying. In particular, the Thickwood Hills, Allan / Dana Hills, Touchwood Hills and east-central Saskatchewan continue to have good to excellent moisture and wetland conditions, whereas the Missouri Coteau is dry along the US border (poor) but generally improves as you move northward (fair). Duck and goose numbers

are good to excellent across the parklands as large numbers of snow geese and flocks of mallards are feeding in crop fields. The snow geese have yet to move further south, likely due to the warm temperatures in the past few weeks. Hunters have been experiencing optimal conditions with the warm weather and plentiful birds. Harvest is, for the most part, complete across the province.

Southwestern **Manitoba** has received little precipitation since the beginning of September and there hasn't been a significant rainfall since July. Soil moisture is generally low and significant rainfall will be required to ensure a good frost seal this winter. Wetlands in the Boisevain/Deloraine/Killarney area have been particularly hard hit, and some semi-permanent (Class IV) wetlands are dry with mudflats exposed on many of the ponds; the deeper wetlands in the Shoal Lake/Minnedosa area are faring better. Local waterfowl were plentiful in the region in September followed by a lull in migration at the end of September and beginning of October. A large number of waterfowl then quickly moved through southwestern Manitoba on the 11th and 12th of October, and there are currently few birds in the region. There has been little tilling in the area with the dry soil conditions.

In the **Western Boreal Forest (WBF)**, moisture conditions are currently average in the Northwest Territories (NWT). Late September brought snow to the NWT, but the weather has since warmed, allowing for some rain. The peak of migration appears to be over, as dabbling duck numbers are lower this month and there are few scoters present. There are still many divers in the region, especially scaup and ring-necked ducks. The eastern and western portions of the NWT are forecast to have below average precipitation over the next three months and the central region of the territory is expected to have average precipitation. The temperature is expected to be above average for all of NWT in the coming months.

In the Yukon, the temperature is forecast to be above average for the next three months. Precipitation is also expected to be above normal, except for the portion of the Yukon that borders the NWT. There is a small area in the west central part of Yukon that has a high drought code.

Moisture conditions are average in northeastern British Columbia and there are good numbers of migrating ducks and geese passing through. During the next three months the temperature and precipitation is expected to be average in the region.

The temperature for the boreal portion of all three Prairie Provinces over the next three months is expected to be above average. The precipitation forecast for Alberta and Saskatchewan is average, except for a portion of northeast Saskatchewan which expects above average. In Manitoba, the precipitation forecast is average, except for a small area in the northwest which expects above average precipitation and the area bordering Ontario which predicts below average precipitation.

Moisture conditions in the boreal portion of Alberta are average and habitat conditions are good or better throughout the region. Many large migrating flocks of Canada geese have been observed in the past month. Scaup, ring-necked ducks, buffleheads, canvasbacks, swans and green-winged teals are abundant. Blue-winged teals and redheads seem to have migrated already. Many flocks of staging ducks have been noted in the past two weeks.

There are still many ducks present in northern Saskatchewan, although migrating flocks can constantly be seen or heard. Habitat conditions are good or better. There is a great deal of hunting activity in the Melfort area and hunters are reporting a great deal of success. This could be due to the good conditions in the area, as there is plenty of habitat for the ducks. Mallards and snow geese are particularly abundant.

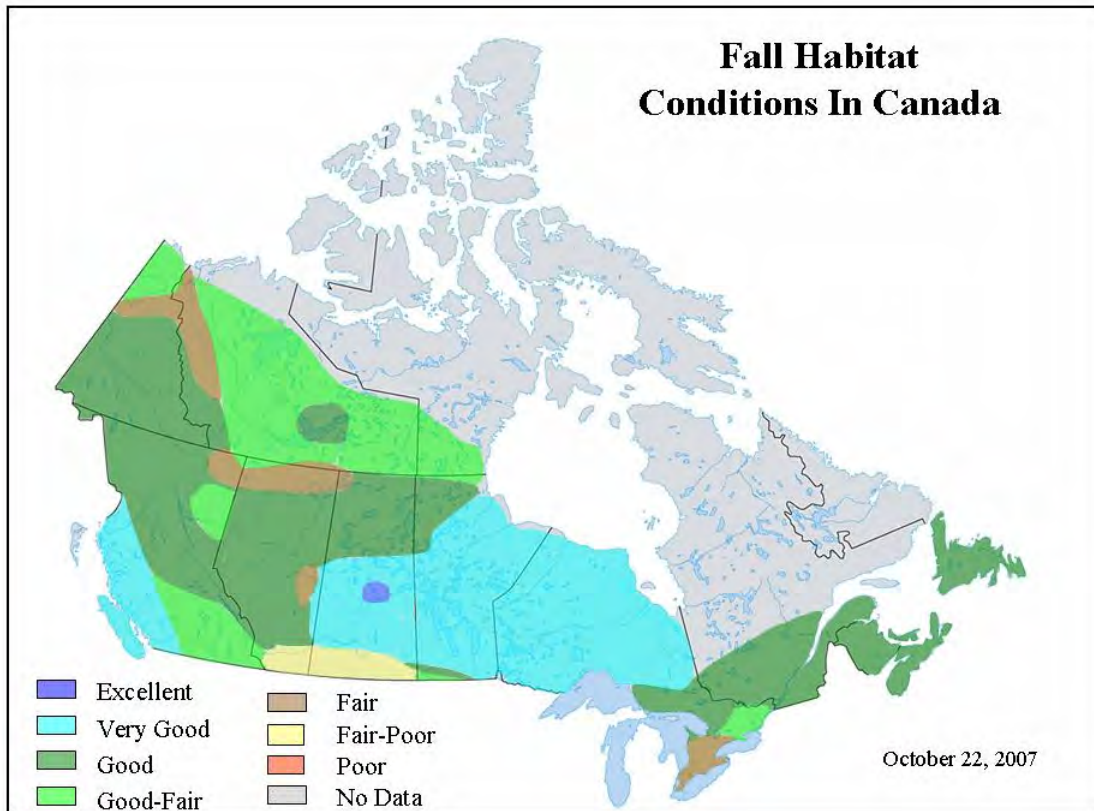
Northern Manitoba is currently experiencing average moisture conditions. Many birds have begun migration, as evidenced by the decrease in the number of divers present. Hunters report that conditions are average to above average, especially when hunting teals. There also appear to be more Ross's geese present this fall than last.

The above average temperatures and lack of rainfall that characterized the weather of this past summer have continued into the fall and as such, moisture conditions across southern **Ontario** are less than optimal as winter approaches. The arrival of autumn is usually marked by a return of wetter weather, however with monthly rainfall totals ranging from half to a quarter of expected amounts, abnormally dry conditions exist throughout the southern parts of the province. Hardest hit has been the southwestern region where soil moisture is well below normal. Conditions throughout southcentral and southeastern Ontario have fared only slightly better and although most wetlands are far below full supply, there remains sufficient habitat for migrating waterfowl as they wing their way south through the province. Water levels in all the Great Lakes continue to be below their long-term monthly averages for this time of year, but this will not negatively impact bird usage of these areas. Most of northern Ontario, on the other hand, has received significant amounts of precipitation, including single-day rainfall accumulations in excess of 35 millimetres, which has soil moisture conditions across the north in great shape well in advance of colder weather. Early season hunting has been generally good despite the very warm temperatures. Dabblers including mallards, black ducks, green-winged teal and wood ducks have been the main staple of bag limits. Divers are only now beginning to trickle into the lower Great Lake region, however, reports of good numbers of scaup staging in northern Ontario is welcomed news.

September was warm in **Quebec** with temperatures 2° C above average. Rainfall amounts have been below seasonal amounts, with the exception of the eastern part of the province, which received 40% more precipitation than usual. Throughout the summer temperatures were average and rainfall was slightly below average. Consequently, water levels are low throughout the province and water levels in the St. Lawrence are 55 cm below normal. Habitat conditions are generally good throughout the province, although more rainfall is needed to ensure a good frost seal. Early season hunting results have been good. The snow goose migration peaked a week later than normal at the Cap Tourmente Reserve with 45,000 geese counted on October 9th.

The entire **Atlantic** region has experienced unseasonably warm and dry conditions in the past month. However, most permanent inland waters have maintained their normal operating water levels. To date there have been only a few heavy frost events and all inland waters are ice free. Fall migration is well underway over the region and reports indicate very good numbers of returning waterfowl. Hunting seasons have been open over the entire region for several weeks and initial reports are very good. Local

breeding ducks and geese are abundant and migrants are slowly returning to the region. The numbers of migrant waterfowl are likely to increase over the next week or two. Overall, habitat conditions for the Atlantic Canada region are good.



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