



Ducks Unlimited Canada
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Late Fall Habitat Conditions in Canada

November 28, 2008

Fall has been warm and dry in many areas across 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, where additional precipitation will be needed to ensure a good wetland conditions next spring.

In the **British Columbia** coastal region conditions are generally wet and wetlands are mostly recharged. Mountain snowpacks are relatively low due to mild temperatures. Remnant corn crops were left on some fields and these are expected to provide a good fuel source for wintering waterfowl. Migration is mostly concluded and many thousands of snow geese have returned to forage on winter cover crops. There have been no major storm events, and waterfowl are still feeding in estuaries and other intertidal areas. Precipitation has been below average in the central interior this fall despite a couple of recent snowfalls. Temperatures have been mild and snow has quickly melted. Most of the smaller and less permanent wetlands are at low levels, with the frost seal being average at best. In the southern interior fall conditions were wet in the Thompson drainage but dry in the Okanagan. Temperatures have been mild, and mountain snowpacks are well below normal for this time of year. The frost seal is expected to vary from poor to average. Recent precipitation has been low in the southeast interior and the prospect for a frost seal is below average. In the Peace region the fall has been mild with little snow. The frost seal is almost non-existent and significant winter snow and a rapid spring melt will be required to bring wetlands back to normal conditions.

Warm, dry weather conditions have continued through the fall in most of **Alberta**, with precipitation being below average through most of the agricultural zone. The parklands, northern prairies and boreal transition zone have soil moisture levels below or well below normal, while the southern prairies have normal to above moisture conditions. Prospects for a frost seal are fair to poor in the agricultural zone of Alberta at this time. Temperatures have been below freezing overnight but daytime temperatures have been generally above freezing in November. There is still open water on some larger water bodies, but smaller water bodies are frozen over and some waterfowl still remain in the province.

Wetland habitat conditions across the prairies and parklands of **Saskatchewan** remain largely fair as there has been very little precipitation in the past few weeks across the entire province. Fall rains across the north-central part of the province have kept wetlands in fair to good condition and have improved the chances of a decent frost seal.

In the prairies there are only a few places with any snow and most wetlands are dry. The Missouri Coteau is very dry and could be facing a drought situation if substantial snow is not received this winter. Temperatures are predicted to be above zero this week which will melt what little snow remains on the ground. Most wetlands are frozen and most birds departed in mid-November. A few Canada Geese remain along the Saskatchewan River and are feeding in harvested agricultural fields.

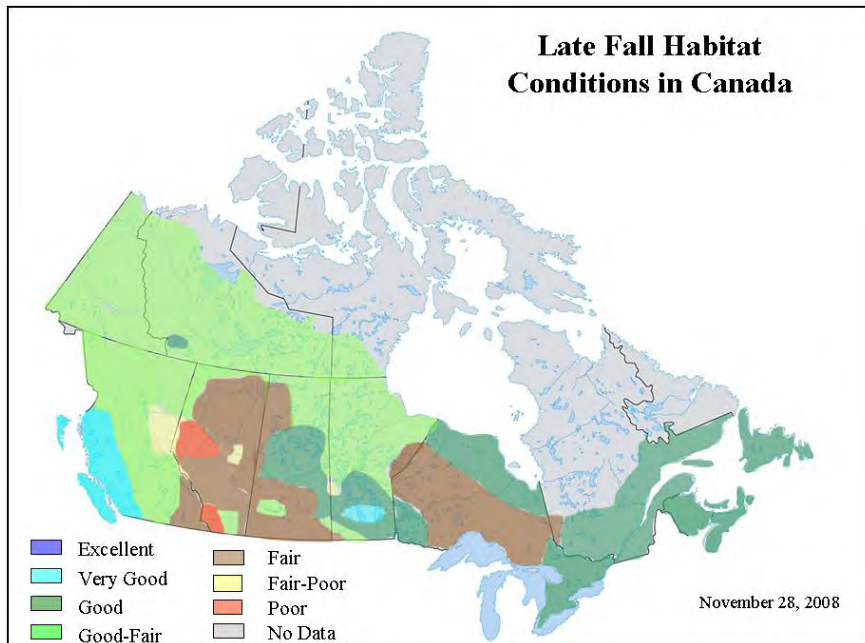
In **Manitoba** wetland conditions remain very good north of Brandon and fair to good further south. Soil moisture conditions mirror the wetland conditions in each area. The Killarney landscape received significant snowfall and rain during the first week of November which will help wetlands rebound in spring. The frost seal in this area is also projected to be good due to improved soil moisture conditions. A cold spell during the 3rd week of October sent many birds south but wetter areas such as Hamiota and Shoal Lake were still holding good numbers of large Canada Geese and hardy Mallards until the recent snow event. Large numbers of ducks were seen using lure crops near Oak Hammock Marsh up until the last week of November.

The Western Boreal Forest (WBF) has experienced warm temperatures across much of the region. However, many areas in the Yukon and Northwest Territories, including Whitehorse, Haines Junction, Yellowknife, and Hay River have received above average precipitation. The Yukon River is still generally open with ice flows present. Most small ponds are frozen and waterfowl have mostly moved from the area, although a few mallards and some swans were seen in early November. The WBF in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba has also been quite warm and precipitation has generally been below normal except near Prince Albert and La Ronge. The majority of ponds are frozen near The Pas, and the Saskatchewan River has formed a thin layer of ice. Most waterfowl have left the area.

Soil moisture conditions across southern **Ontario** are generally good as freeze-up approaches, while wetlands continue to be at or near full supply due to timely rain events. Despite October precipitation amounts being below normal for most of southern Ontario, the 3-month precipitation totals are near normal across the entire southern region, which coupled with recent November rains should result in an adequate frost seal as colder temperatures arrive. Many parts of northern Ontario on the other hand continued to see very little rain during October, and as such, much of the region is drier than normal with many wetlands below capacity. Temperatures have been unseasonably warm throughout the province and many inland wetlands remain ice-free throughout both the southern and northern regions.

In **Quebec**, October temperatures were warmer than normal except for southern regions which were close to average. Rainfall amounts have been average except for the Cote-Nord region which received double the normal rainfall amounts. There has been some snow, but it has melted with the warm weather. Water levels are close to normal in the St. Lawrence River and habitat conditions remain good throughout the province.

The month of November in **Atlantic** Canada has started out to be wetter than in previous years and the cold temperatures have begun the freeze up over the entire region. Rain events in Atlantic Canada have been frequent with larger than normal amounts for this time of year. Immediately after the wet portion of late October and early November the cold weather came and temperatures dropped below average. Within the past week most of the region has been covered in a blanket of snow from two weather systems that came through, dropping as much as 30cm in some parts. The long range forecast is calling for warmer than seasonal temperatures for at least a week, this will slow down the freeze up, but will provide an opportunity for waterfowl to easily access food before the migration gets into full swing. Overall habitat conditions for the Atlantic Region are good.



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