



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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WATERFOWL BREEDING-GROUND CONDITIONS DESCRIBED

Secretary of the Interior Douglas McKay announced today that surveys made by the Fish and Wildlife Service and cooperating agencies in Canada during May and June reveal no significant change in the waterfowl breeding populations in the Dominion's south-central region. There is a noticeable increase, however, in the eastern region as compared with last year.

Breeding-ground reports serve both Canadian and United States officials as a basis for forecasting the fall flights of wild ducks and geese. Drafting of regulations for the waterfowl hunting season is based on the reports. The surveys are studied by wildlife conservationists and sportsmen in both the United States and Canada.

Aerial survey crews in south-central Canada flew more than 15,000 miles (of $\frac{1}{4}$ -mile-wide transects) in sampling the breeding grounds of southern Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and western Ontario. Over-all breeding duck populations (game-ducks plus nongame ducks) in this region showed an increase over last year of eight percent while breeding game-ducks alone had increased by two percent. These findings lead to the "no significant change" conclusion.

The breeding season in the southern portion of the south-central region started out with a general deficiency of soil moisture and fewer water areas as compared with last year. This resulted in some shift of breeding populations into the more northern districts where water areas were more numerous and stable but where success in bringing off broods is normally lower. This situation, combined with periods of heavy snows and freezing temperatures, caused some loss in potential production. Precipitation and low evaporation, however, bolstered the water supply in the prairies. This, along with delayed fallowing and seeding operations, increased the chances for a fair-to-good hatch.

Survey crews in Canada's eastern region flew over 5,000 miles (of $\frac{1}{4}$ -mile-wide transects) to cover the waterfowl breeding grounds in Quebec, Labrador, and the Maritime Provinces. Pronounced increases (over last year) in breeding populations were recorded for all the important breeders in this region except goldeneye ducks. The over-all breeding-duck population showed a 66 percent increase, while breeding game-ducks alone increased by 27 percent. These findings led to the "noticeable increase" conclusion.

In contrast to the situation in south-central Canada, the breeding season over most of the Dominion's eastern region was a week to ten days early this year. Weather and water conditions have been good in Quebec and Labrador and, given continued normal weather in these provinces, the larger breeding populations (as compared with last year) should produce an improved hatch, particularly of black ducks, scaup, and Canada geese.

Survey reports from Alaska, northern Canada, and northern United States, not yet received, will complete the continent's breeding population picture and permit a full analysis of the situation.

Breeding-ground surveys will be continued throughout the summer months. Aerial surveys will produce information concerning summer water conditions and the production of new birds. Ground surveys will help improve sampling methods and shed new light on waterfowl breeding requirements. As large a sample as possible of young waterfowl will be banded, in order that returns later on may indicate hunting pressures, mortality rates, and the distribution of birds to the several flyways.

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