



## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### INFORMATION SERVICE

UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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#### CURRENT OUTLOOK FOR WATERFOWL PRODUCTION CONSIDERED UNPROMISING

Current reports indicate an extreme drouth in the prairie portions of Canada where about 60-70 percent of North America's ducks are produced and waterfowl breeding conditions for this year presently are "not promising," the Department of the Interior reports.

In fact were it not for two somewhat meager possibilities the reports would warrant extreme pessimism about waterfowl production this year, the Department said.

One of these possibilities is that the rains will come in sufficient quantities before it is too late--that is within the next few days. The other is that the birds which are driven from their customary breeding grounds by drouth will find satisfactory nesting places farther north, or that the production from the potholes that have water will make up to some extent for the big losses in the potholes now dry.

Reports from southern Manitoba and southern Saskatchewan indicate that 75 percent to 90 percent of the potholes where the ducks are produced are either dry now or will be dry before the end of the nesting period.

One unusual factor is that in many instances potholes which have water now and which should be harboring their quota do not have the birds. Currently biologists on the job decline to even presume where these birds are but hope that some of them have gone on to the northward in search of more satisfactory breeding areas. This will be checked on as the surveys progress.

In some places--unless rains change the picture soon--hatching time will find water areas from five to seven miles apart. Even the mallards which nest away from water and travel with their broods as much as two or three miles to water will be restricted in their nesting possibilities.

The Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife has eight planes making the breeding pair surveys in Alaska, Canada, the Dakotas and western Minnesota. These are manned by 14 Bureau personnel and one each from the Manitoba and Saskatchewan

game departments. They will fly about 10,000 miles during the month of May and early June surveying the number of breeding pairs and checking the condition of the habitat. Later, in July, a production survey will be made. The area covered in Canada will be from eastern Ontario to Alberta, up into the MacKenzie River and in Alaska.

The Bureau also has research crews studying the ecological conditions and the relationship between ground and air observations. The Bureau is doing everything possible to get an accurate picture of the waterfowl crop, and by the end of July will have good data upon which to base recommendations for the 1959 hunting season, FWS officials said.

The research crews are composed of eight Bureau personnel, eight from the Canadian Wildlife Service, two from Ducks Unlimited, one each from the Ontario and Alberta game departments.

Progress reports giving the public the latest information relative to conditions in the duck producing areas will be issued from time to time by the Fish and Wildlife Service.

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