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IMPROVED WATERFOWL NESTING CONDITIONS REPORTED BY INTERIOR DEPARTMENT

A general improvement in waterfowl nesting conditions in northern breeding areas was announced today by the Department of the Interior following extensive ground and aerial surveys by the Department's Fish and Wildlife Service and cooperating State and private organizations.

The surveys, delayed somewhat by inclement weather, indicated better surface and subsurface moisture, with survey crews recording more potholes this year than last. However, a high percentage of these water areas was of low quality and continuing rains will be needed for a successful hatch.

Canada's grassland areas of southern Alberta and southern Saskatchewan are still suffering from a drought that has plagued the prairie pothole country several seasons, but in the tri-State area of North Dakota, South Dakota, and western Minnesota, conditions for a successful duck production season are better than in many years. In this area, the surveys found that the statistical indexes for both the breeding duck population and total water areas were substantially above average for the five years that comparable surveys have been conducted there.

Surveys of waterfowl breeding populations showed slight to moderate increases over 1962 in most areas. Although the Alaska part of the survey revealed a slight decrease in breeding populations, nesting conditions there were excellent.

Throughout the primary breeding grounds in the Prairie Provinces of Canada, the distribution of birds was spotty in response to nesting conditions. Where conditions were good, ducks were present in increased numbers.

The final production will depend on continued rainfall on the northern prairies and favorable weather in the Arctic portions of the breeding grounds. The Fish and Wildlife Service's Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife will conduct a second survey during the summer to determine the success of the nesting season. The results of these two surveys and other data will form the basis for setting the hunting regulations for this fall's waterfowl season.

Final waterfowl production data are due in Washington, D. C., during the latter part of July to allow time for analyzing the information prior to the meeting of the Secretary of the Interior's Waterfowl Advisory Committee in early August. This Committee's recommendations are important in developing waterfowl hunting regulations.

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