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DUCK BREEDING POPULATION UP; BREEDING AREA DROUGHT CONTINUES

The spring waterfowl survey by the Interior Department's Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife indicates a slight increase in ducks over the number seen in a similar survey a year ago, but the drought that has plagued important nesting grounds on the northern prairies for six years is still much in evidence.

Bureau Director Daniel H. Janzen said the size of the fall flight depends on nesting success, which in turn depends largely on the amount and type of summer rainfall and other factors which effect production.

Meanwhile, he added that some field reports just received indicate serious deterioration of water conditions in a number of nesting areas. Director Janzen said a complete report on the summer production survey will not be available until early next month.

The spring survey by the Bureau is aimed at finding out the general condition of waterfowl nesting areas and the number of breeding ducks in those areas.

There was a wide variation in the number and quality of water areas or pot-holes in the breeding grounds. The numbers of ponds and water levels were higher than average in southwestern Manitoba, southeastern Saskatchewan and extreme southern Alberta. These increases were more than offset, however, by decreases elsewhere.

In the Dakotas and western Minnesota, the estimated number of ponds decreased 47 percent. For the entire prairie pothole country, the decrease was eight percent.

Elsewhere in the waterfowl breeding range, conditions varied from poor to good. In Alaska conditions were poor. The spring thaw began in a routine manner in April. Many ducks and geese arrived on schedule near the end of the month. A

hard freeze in May delayed nesting, and when the cold weather finally broke in June, melting snow flooded many of the low nesting grounds. These conditions are expected to adversely effect waterfowl production in Alaska this year.

The pattern of spring weather in northern Alberta and the Northwest Territories was almost identical to that in Alaska, but except for flooding in some river deltas, habitat conditions appeared good.

The thaw was early in northern Saskatchewan, northern Manitoba, and Ontario. With a few exceptions, water conditions appeared adequate-to-good.

While water conditions in the breeding areas generally were below average, there was a somewhat larger breeding population of waterfowl. The survey indicated this population is up 14 percent. Director Janzen emphasized again, however, that hunting success this fall will depend not on the number of birds that went north in the spring but on the size of the fall flight, which is determined by nesting conditions.

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