

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife

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WATERFOWL HABITAT POOR, BREEDING POPULATIONS DOWN, INTERIOR DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Waterfowl nesting conditions remain poor and breeding populations are down 16 percent from a year ago, surveys by the Interior Department's Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife indicate.

These surveys, which help determine the fall hunting regulations, have been completed on all the major nesting grounds of the continent. Among some of the important hunting species, the mallard breeding population is down 4 percent from 1967, pintails down 12 percent, blue-winged teal down 30 percent and redheads down 22 percent. Gadwalls were up 40 percent, American widgeon up 22 percent and canvasbacks up 13 percent.

A late June survey indicated that only about 600,000 water areas, primarily potholes, remained, and they were drying faster than usual. Normally about 2,000,000 water areas are counted as late as July--the smallest number was 600,000 in 1961. Ducks need water to get broods on the wing.

From early May to late June, the rate of pond loss from drying was 65 percent; since 1955, this rate between May and July has averaged only 43 percent.

The unusually dismal outlook was not brightened by a report from Sport Fisheries and Wildlife Director John S. Gottschalk who visited wetland areas in the Dakotas in mid-June. "Extensive rains in eastern North Dakota probably encouraged some new nesting, but unless there is more rain to provide brood water for young ducks the late nesting will not produce any more birds. The situation is critical," Dr. Gottschalk said.