

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife

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WATERFOWL NESTING CONDITIONS REPORTED FAR FROM IDEAL THIS YEAR

Waterfowl nesting conditions are far from ideal this year, the Interior Department's Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife is finding in its survey of the northern prairie "duck factory" regions. Potholes are reported exceptionally dry.

The vital breeding grounds include the Dakotas, western Minnesota, eastern Montana, and large parts of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. Potholes are glacier-formed ponds and lakes which are ideal duck nesting sites with the right combination of snow and rainfall.

The May observations of water levels in this region are made by the Bureau in cooperation with the Canadian Wildlife Service, State and Provincial agencies, and Ducks Unlimited, Canada.

Nearly two out of every three ducks which come down the flyways are hatched in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. Habitat in southern Manitoba and Saskatchewan is reported the worst it has been in the 20 years since the surveys began. Southern Alberta was also described by aerial survey crews as "bad."

A few small pockets in south central Saskatchewan are reported "somewhat better," with enough water to produce some broods. Park lands north of the Bald Prairie also have some fair to good brood water.

Lands in the Dakotas are definitely drier than a year ago, but some areas are "fair." Montana has practically no natural potholes, although stock dams are in fair to good condition.

The situation, which could severely affect waterfowl production, has been caused by a "mild" winter and less than normal rainfall since last summer.

Without considerable rainfall in coming weeks, many ducks may find that their homes are dried up before broods are on the wing.

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