

## What you can do to help:

You can save the life of a loon, duck, or other waterbird. Lead poisoning is preventable.

- Remove and properly dispose of all lead sinkers and jigs in your tackle box.
- Use inexpensive and ecologically sound alternatives to lead fishing weights. Sinkers and jigs made from non-toxic materials, including steel, tin, brass, tungsten and bismuth, are widely available.
- Spread the word by telling other anglers about the problem with lead and urging them to switch to non-lead sinkers and jigs. State law in New Hampshire prohibits the use and sale of lead sinkers one ounce or less and jigs less than one inch long.
- Ask your local sporting goods store to stock non-lead fishing tackle.

## For more information, please contact:



N.H. Fish and Game Department  
11 Hazen Drive  
Concord, NH 03301  
603-271-3212  
[www.FishNH.com](http://www.FishNH.com)



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
70 Commercial Street, Suite 300  
Concord, NH 03301  
603-223-2541  
[www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov)



Loon Preservation Committee  
PO Box 604  
Lee's Mills Road  
Moultonborough, NH 03254  
603-476-LOON (5666)  
[www.loon.org](http://www.loon.org)

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The New Hampshire Fish and Game Department (NHFG) joins with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and private industry in a partnership to conserve our aquatic resources. NHFG's conservation activity is supported by fishing license revenue and Sportfish Restoration funds.



New Hampshire Fish and Game Department

# Let's Get the Lead Out!



*Anglers can help protect the Common Loon*

## Let's Get the Lead Out!

Lead is a toxic metal. To reduce human exposure, we no longer allow it in our gasoline, paint or plumbing. Not only is lead harmful to humans, but it can be toxic to many wildlife species. Loons, ducks, swans, cranes and other waterbirds can die from lead poisoning after swallowing lead fishing sinkers and jigs lost by anglers.

Anglers attach lead weights to fishing lines to sink the hook, bait or lure into the water. Some anglers use lead-weighted hooks, called jigs. Lead gets into waterbodies by accidentally detaching from a line and falling into the water, or the hook or line may become tangled and the line may break or be cut.

Loons and ducks swallow small stones and grit from the bottom of lakes that aid in grinding up their food. Lead weights are the same size as these stones and thus are picked up. Loons and other fish-eating birds also may eat escaped fish still carrying lead tackle.

Biologists have studied the effects of lead sinkers and jigs on waterbirds, such as loons and swans, since the 1970s. Their ongoing research has documented that, in the Great Lakes region, the northeast U.S., and eastern Canada where loons breed, lead sinkers or jigs are causing the death of adult loons. Research suggests that in New England, lead poisoning accounts for more deaths than any other cause.

Current research shows that bald eagles and peregrine falcons are also routinely exposed to the effects of lead poisoning by feeding on lead-poisoned waterbirds.



PHOTO © DONNA DEW HURST/USFWS

## Lead Poisoning

A bird with lead poisoning will have physical and behavioral changes, including loss of balance, gasping, tremors, and impaired ability to fly. The weakened bird is more vulnerable to predators or it may have trouble feeding, mating, nesting, and caring for its young. It becomes emaciated and often dies within two to three weeks after eating the lead.

## Safer Fishing Tackle

Lead poisoning is preventable. Inexpensive and ecologically sound alternatives to lead sinkers and jigs are available. Anglers can use sinkers and jigs made from non-toxic materials such as steel, tin, brass, tungsten and bismuth.

## It's the Law

In 2000, New Hampshire was the first state to ban lead sinkers and jigs to protect common loons and other diving birds. As of 2007, the following other states have regulations regarding lead fishing tackle: Maine, Massachusetts, New York and Vermont. Many other states across the nation are also considering banning the sale or use of lead fishing products. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has banned the use of lead sinkers and jigs on National Wildlife Refuges where loons and trumpeter swans breed, and is considering bans in additional areas. In Canada, it is illegal to use lead fishing sinkers and jigs in national parks and national wildlife areas.

## New Hampshire's Law Prohibiting Use and Sale of Lead Fishing Sinkers and Jigs

Lead sinkers weighing 1 ounce or less and lead jigs less than 1 inch along their longest axis are prohibited for the taking of fish in any fresh water in New Hampshire. Also, no person shall sell or offer for sale lead sinkers weighing 1 ounce or less and lead jigs less than 1 inch along their longest axis.

# Facts About Lead and Loons in New Hampshire

## How does lead ingestion affect the N.H. loon population?

In 2006, the adult loon population in New Hampshire was 528. Joint research by Tufts University and the Loon Preservation Committee (LPC) shows that seven out of 16 dead adult loons studied during the breeding season that year were known to have died from ingesting lead sinkers and jigs. This represented a 1.3 percent loss to the state's total loon population that year directly as a result of eating lead tackle. Loons typically only have one chick each year, so a small loss in the population due to lead poisoning is significant.

## What are the long-term trends?

From 1992 to 1999, just prior to the 2000 ban of lead sinkers and jigs in New Hampshire, an average of 6 loon deaths from lead poisoning were recorded each year. From 2000 to 2006, the trend has gone down slightly, to an average of 5 loon deaths per year from lead poisoning, according to the Tufts/LPC studies. Lead fishing tackle continues to be the largest single cause of known adult loon mortality in N.H. The prevention of even two deaths of adult loons per year would help protect New Hampshire's loon population.

## What types of lead tackle cause the problems?

The following categories of lead fishing tackle were recovered from the gizzards of the loons:

- Lead sinkers averaged 1/2 inch measured on any axis (maximum size was 1 inch measured on any axis).
- Lead-headed jigs – Specialized hooks with lead just below the eye of the hook.

## How can anglers help?

Even though New Hampshire's common loon has made tremendous gains during the past three decades, the actions of anglers can make a big difference for the future of our loons. In 1977,

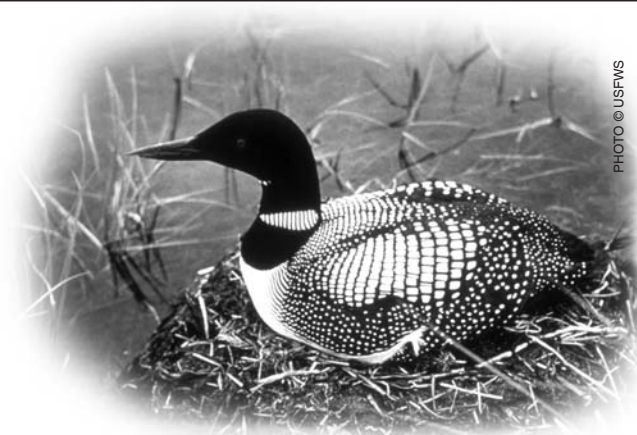


PHOTO © USFWS

there were a total of 62 nesting pairs of loons in the state; by 2006 that number had increased to 140 nesting pairs. Each year, these breeding pairs will lay one to two eggs. Survival for the chicks is usually greater than 70 percent, but the loss of a single chick or parent from lead poisoning is significant to the overall loon population. **Anglers should be aware that it is against the law in New Hampshire to use lead sinkers one ounce or less or lead jigs under an inch long on any freshwater pond, lake, river or stream.**

## How to dispose of lead tackle:

DO NOT put lead tackle in the trash! Since lead is toxic, when you check over your tackle box and remove any lead sinkers and jigs, dispose of them safely at:

- N.H. Fish and Game offices (Concord, Durham, Keene, Lancaster, and New Hampton) and state fish hatcheries. Visit [www.FishNH.com](http://www.FishNH.com) or call (603) 271-3212 for locations.
- Household Hazardous Waste Collections, held throughout the state from April through June. Call the N.H. Department of Environmental Services at (603) 271-2047, or visit [www.des.state.nh.us/hhw](http://www.des.state.nh.us/hhw).
- The Loon Preservation Committee's visitor center on Lee's Mills Road in Moultonborough; visit [www.loon.org](http://www.loon.org).