



It's Time To Get the Lead Out!

From the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
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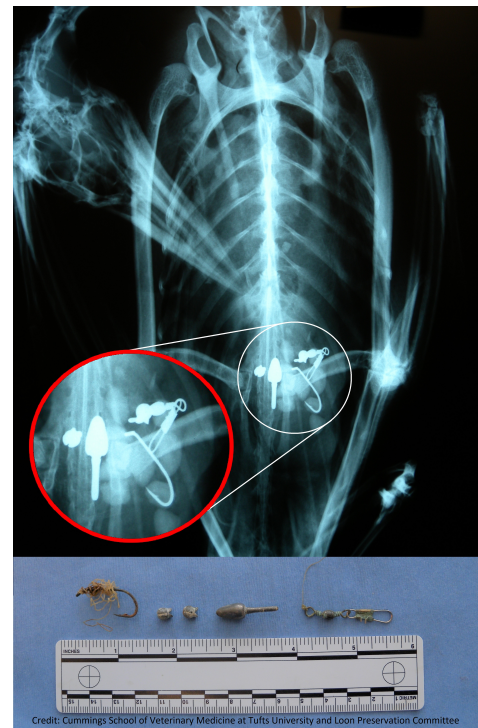
Most of the weighted fishing tackle currently available on the market is made of lead, which is a toxic metal that is lethal in even the smallest amount to common loons and other wildlife, including trumpeter swans and bald eagles. Across the United States, lead poisoning is a leading cause of death for loons. An estimated 20-25 percent of loons die from lead poisoning, primarily from swallowing lead jigs and sinkers. Loons consume fishing tackle by:

- Picking up lost tackle found on the bottom of lakes when they gather pebbles to help digest their food,
- Striking at bait or a caught fish as it is being retrieved by an angler, and
- Eating a fish that has ingested tackle or has tackle attached.

Lead affects the nervous and reproductive systems of mammals and birds. Loons with lead poisoning exhibit physical and behavioral changes, such as loss of balance, gasping, tremors, and limited flying abilities. A loon with lead poisoning will have difficulty feeding, mating, nesting, and caring for its young. Depending on the quantity of lead swallowed, lead poisoning will kill a loon in two days to three weeks. *(At right: An x-ray reveals several pieces of lead tackle inside a loon carcass.)*

The loon population in Minnesota is also threatened by climate change, habitat loss, and predation; however, deaths due to lead poisoning from lead fishing tackle are completely preventable by making the switch to lead-free tackle. Alternatives to lead are more common, popular, and better performing now than they have been in the past. The next time you buy tackle, look for these materials: tungsten, bismuth, steel, tin, or glass.

If you are interested in disposing of your lead fishing tackle, please make sure to bring it to your local household hazardous waste collection facility. Lead is toxic, so it should never be thrown in your garbage or put in your curbside recycling. (Note that Milaca Iron & Metal <http://www.crowwingrecycling.com/> at 11713 180th St, Milaca, MN 56353 accepts lead materials.)



Credit: Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University and Loon Preservation Committee



The Mille Lacs Lake Watershed Management Group regularly offers a lead tackle exchange at its events where the public is invited to bring in old lead tackle for safe disposal and to pick out samples of tackle made from new, safer materials. **Our next event with a tackle exchange is the Healthy Land, Healthy Lake Expo coming Saturday, September 17 from 9 a.m. to noon at McQuoid's Inn and Conference Center in Isle.** Visit MilleLacsWatershed.org to learn more.

Left: A variety of lead-free lures and weights are available to anglers.

If you're a retail establishment that sells tackle, you may be eligible for a 35% rebate on purchases of lead-free tackle for sale to the public. Learn more here: <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/leadoutrebate>.

The Get the Lead Out program within the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency is working to protect the common loon through education and outreach that encourages anglers to use lead-free fishing tackle. If you have questions about the program, want to learn more, or partner with the MPCA to collect lead in your community, contact us at leadout@state.mn.us. Follow Get the Lead Out on social media to learn about upcoming events and the work they are doing:

Facebook: www.facebook.com/LeadOutMN

Instagram: [@LeadOutMN](https://www.instagram.com/LeadOutMN).



Visit MilleLacsWatershed.org to learn more about supporting a healthy lake environment.