

Get the lead out!



Non-lead fishing tackle is an effective alternative, and it protects loons, eagles, and other wildlife.

Tackling the problem

Lead is a toxic metal that, in sufficient quantities, has adverse effects on the nervous and reproductive systems of animals. Found in most fishing jigs and sinkers, this metal is poisoning wildlife such as eagles, loons, and other waterfowl.

More anglers are using fishing tackle made from non-poisonous materials such as tin, bismuth, steel, and tungsten. And these alternatives are becoming easier to find.

Toxic twins



These pebbles and sinkers were found in the gizzard of a lead-poisoned loon from Minnesota. You can see how loons can mistake lost fishing weights for the pebbles they seek to help grind their food. Loons die within two to three weeks after swallowing a lead sinker or jig.

Non-lead weights and jigs

Lead-free options are now available for nearly all types of tackle.

Copper composite



*

Tin



*

Tungsten/nickel



Tungsten composite



Snap-on tungsten composite



*

Tin/pewter



*

Stainless steel



Bismuth/tin



Bismuth/tin



Bismuth/tin



Tungsten composite



Glass





X-ray of a dead loon with ingested lead fishing tackle, found in a northern Minnesota lake.

Price point

Expect to pay a bit more for non-lead tackle. But consider all the other costs involved in a fishing trip — a few cents more to avoid lead poisoning of wildlife is well worth it.



Don't throw old lead tackle in the trash. Bring it to your local household hazardous waste collection site during your next visit. Some scrap metal recyclers may also accept lead.

Trolling for Change

Minnesota is fishing country. We buy a lot of tackle. That's a big reason why our focus is on educating and partnering with others to stimulate the marketplace and speed the transition toward lead-free angling. Today, more environmentally friendly tackle is being made and sold, and growing numbers of anglers are going lead-free.

In Minnesota, there are no bans on the sale or use of lead weights and jigs. In many areas though, non-lead tackle isn't just a good idea — it's the law.

- ▶ Maine, New Hampshire, New York and Vermont have banned the use or sale of lead sinkers in recent years. Massachusetts prohibits their use in certain key wildlife areas. Canadian national parks and national wildlife areas have banned the use of lead sinkers and jigs weighing less than 1.76 ounces (50 grams).
- ▶ The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has or is planning restrictions on lead sinker use in over two dozen national wildlife refuges and Yellowstone National Park.
- ▶ The European Union has banned lead in all consumer products, including fishing tackle.

What's the risk?

Weigh the evidence:

While it is hard to get an accurate count of water birds and birds of prey that die from ingesting lead tackle, current research indicates that lead poisoning is a serious concern — and that such poisoning is avoidable because non-toxic alternatives are available.

Research around the nation has found that lead poisoning from lead fishing tackle is responsible for 12 to 50% of adult loon deaths.

The Raptor Center at the University of Minnesota has monitored injured bald eagles for lead since 1980. Lead poisoning has been the cause of admission of 315 out of a total of 1,398 eagles, or 23%. Eagles are exposed when they eat fish that have ingested lead tackle.



Teach your tadpoles

Create a lead-free tackle box for your kids or grandkids. Choose from the tin split shot, bismuth jigheads, and tungsten composite worm weights. They are non-toxic and safer for youngsters to handle. Plus, it's a great way to help instill a strong conservation ethic.

This publication can be made available in other formats, including Braille, large type, computer disk or audiotape, upon request.



Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

www.pca.state.mn.us/sinkers