

# NEW HAMPSHIRE'S LOONS NEED YOUR HELP

*Senate Bill 89 (SB89) Will Protect Our Loons from Toxic Lead Sinkers and Jigs.*

Loons are a threatened species in New Hampshire, and their numbers remain well below the level the state's lakes can support—despite 37 years of intensive management and outreach to increase the Granite State's loon population.

The Loon Preservation Committee (LPC) projects New Hampshire's loon population to decline in the future—even with continued management and outreach efforts—as a result of current and forecasted threats to the species.

Survival of adult loons is the most important factor in assuring the continued viability of our state's loon population. **The largest known cause of New Hampshire adult loon mortality is ingestion of fishing tackle made of the toxic metal lead**—specifically, lead sinkers and jigs (weighted hooks) weighing 1 oz. or less.



Photo by Kittie Wilson

New Hampshire lost 124 adult loons to ingested lead sinkers and jigs between 1989 and 2011. The loss of these loons, which do not reproduce until their sixth year of life on average, has had a large negative impact on our state's small loon population.



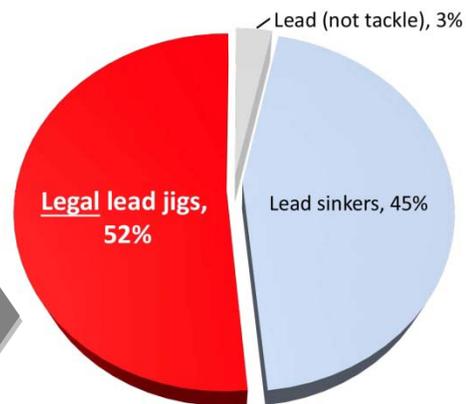
Documented Causes of Adult Loon Mortality in NH



**Lead fishing tackle is responsible for 49% of all documented mortality of New Hampshire's adult loons.**

Unfortunately, current State law banning the sale and freshwater use of small lead tackle misses the single largest known cause of adult loon deaths—larger lead-headed jigs.

**Larger (and currently legal) lead-headed jigs have been found in over half of New Hampshire adult loons killed by lead ingestion.**



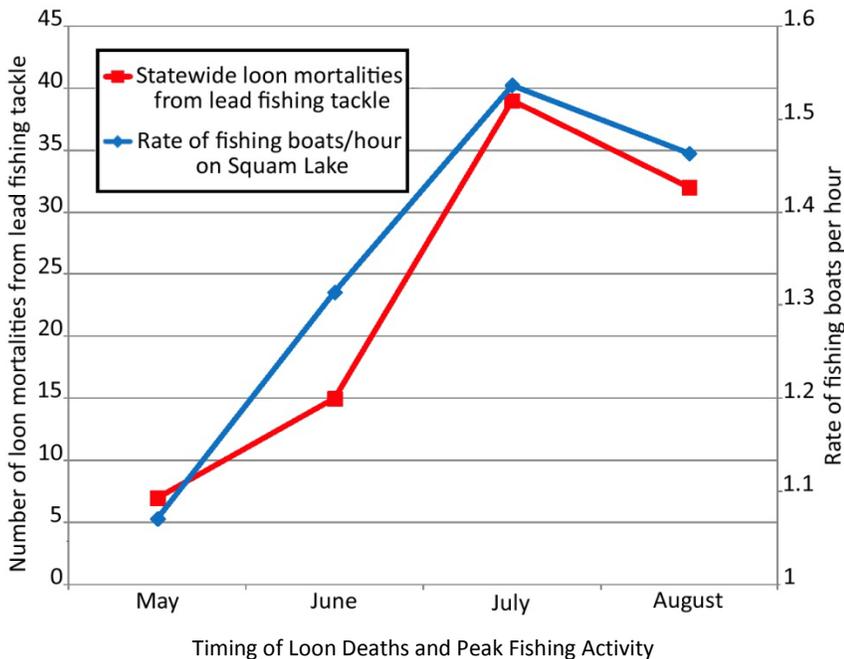
Lead Objects Recovered from Dead NH Loons

**Public education without additional regulation of toxic lead sinkers and jigs is inadequate as a means of reducing loon mortality.**

LPC recognizes the value of education and has made it a major component of our organization’s work for over three decades. However, it is also important to recognize its limitations as a stand-alone approach.

For example, despite an intensive and well-funded 10-year education effort (but no regulation of lead sinkers or jigs), Minnesota failed to show reduced rates of loon mortality from ingested lead fishing tackle. While LPC will continue its educational work in collaboration with the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department (NHF&G) and others, the reality is that education alone is not effective in reducing lead mortality.

**The moment for legislative action is now, as the passage of time will not make the current law more effective in curbing loon mortality from lead poisoning.** The timing of loon deaths, which spike in the late summer months at the same time as peak fishing activity, indicates that current use of lead tackle—and not a leftover “reservoir” of tackle on lake bottoms—is responsible for the majority of lead deaths.



**For these reasons, SB89 seeks to amend current law to ban the use and sale of lead jigs weighing 1 ounce or less, which are the largest known cause of loon deaths in NH. Please support SB89.**

“...[N]o one knowledgeable about our concerted and sustained educational efforts in Minnesota would make the claim that education alone will sufficiently reduce or eliminate avoidable loon deaths as a result of lead ingestion.”

Kevin McDonald, Supervisor of the Sustainable Development Unit, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.



Lead jig removed from a poisoned loon in NH

***Lead poisoning from ingested lead fishing tackle is not solely a loon problem.***

Lead fishing tackle ingestion has been documented in **28** bird species, including Bald Eagles, Great Blue Herons, and many species of waterfowl. The EPA considers over 75 species to be potentially at risk from ingested lead tackle.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS RELATED TO SENATE BILL 89**

### ***Where can I find non-toxic fishing tackle, and is it more expensive than tackle made of lead?***

There are a number of manufacturers of tackle made from non-toxic substances. A list can be found at LPC's website: [www.loon.org](http://www.loon.org). In most cases, the cost of tackle made from alternative metals is comparable to that of lead tackle. Additionally, the availability of non-toxic tackle will expand if the bill is passed, bringing prices down. After smaller lead tackle was banned, there was a significant increase in the variety and availability of non-toxic alternatives.

### ***Will this bill impact businesses?***

The proposed bill avoids impacts on commercial fishing by restricting only freshwater use of lead tackle. It also minimizes impacts upon fishing tackle retailers by including a lengthy phase-in period during which they can sell their inventory. Currently, those who have invested substantial time and money to restore the loon are bearing the cost of the use and sale of toxic lead tackle. Just 34 pieces of lead tackle entirely reversed five seasons of intensive loon nesting raft management by LPC and its partners.

### ***What is the status of current education initiatives?***

LPC has been educating the public about the dangers of lead tackle to loons since the 1980's through exhibits, presentations, press releases, and other media. LPC's lead tackle outreach program helps to remove hazardous lead sinkers from our environment, promote sound fishing practices, and engage lake users in loon conservation. LPC also posts educational signs at public access points to lakes and at lakeside businesses and publishes findings of its research in peer-reviewed journals, in the *Loon Preservation Committee Newsletter*, and in other popular forums.

LPC is currently participating in a steering committee led by the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department to develop a collaborative education initiative. While this is an important step, education by itself is not a substitute for adequate restrictions on toxic lead fishing tackle. An education-only approach has failed to limit loon mortality from ingested lead tackle anywhere it has been tried—even where significant resources were invested in it. Even if the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department had significant resources available for education—which it does not—additional regulation would still be needed.

### ***Are neighboring states doing anything to protect loons?***

**Yes.** Massachusetts now bans the freshwater use of lead sinkers and lead-headed jigs weighing less than one ounce, and the Maine legislature is considering a ban on the use and sale of similarly-sized lead tackle.

***Answers to additional frequently asked questions and more information about threats to New Hampshire's loons may be found by visiting [www.loon.org](http://www.loon.org).***

## ABOUT THE LOON PRESERVATION COMMITTEE



The Loon Preservation Committee (LPC) was created in 1975 in response to concerns about a dramatically declining loon population and the effects of human activities on loons. LPC's mission is to restore and maintain a healthy population of loons throughout New Hampshire; to monitor the health and productivity of loon populations as sentinels of environmental quality; and to promote a greater understanding of loons and the larger natural world. LPC raises funds primarily through private donations.

For over 35 years, LPC's state-wide monitoring, research, management and outreach to preserve loons and their habitats has included work by LPC staff and a large grassroots network of members, volunteers, and e-mail subscribers to:

- Educate the public about loons through exhibits, presentations, summer programs, signs, our website, and The Loon Center in Moultonborough;
- Monitor the number and breeding success of loons to identify trends and areas of concern;
- Band loons to study their life history;
- Rescue sick or injured loons to be rehabilitated and released;
- Recover dead loons and non-viable eggs to determine contaminant levels and causes of death;
- Quantify the challenges facing loons, and our success in helping loons cope with them;
- Digitally map loon nesting and nursery sites to identify and protect critical habitat;
- Build and float nesting rafts, and protect nesting loons on rafts and on natural nest sites;
- Implement all of the above as part of a comprehensive Loon Recovery Plan to ensure the long-term viability of New Hampshire's loon population.

LPC has created the most complete and longest-running database of loon populations and productivity that exists anywhere in the world and conducted the most comprehensive research ever undertaken on contaminants and other challenges facing loons. This research has revealed that lead fishing tackle is currently the greatest threat to New Hampshire's loon population.



Photo by Kittie Wilson



LPC is joined in its legislative efforts to secure adequate protection for our state's loons by the New Hampshire Lakes Association (NH LAKES). NH LAKES is a statewide, member-supported, nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting the Granite State's lakes and ponds for our enjoyment today and for generations to come.

Loon Preservation Committee

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