



February 2022 -Our Lakes –

<https://ourlakes.ca/data/documents/February-2022-Our-Lakes.pdf>

For Love of Loons By Margie Manthey

Wolfe Lakers Initiate Lead Tackle Buy Back Program

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February 2022 - Our Lakes Community Profile



Photo by Paula Haskin, Upper Beverley Lake

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column in the Review Mirror. Aquatic birds, like loons, eagles, and waterfowl, are especially vulnerable and rarely survive lead poisoning. Other raptors, songbirds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, and even fish are

documented to suffer from the harmful effects of lead toxicity, which can cause multiple organ failure, anemia, reduced reproductivity, arrested development, deformities, cancers, hypertension, behavioural manifestations, decreased survivability and, in many instances, death. A powerful neurotoxin, lead also poisons people, especially young

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Current provincial regulations allow lead shot for hunting upland game birds and target shooting; and lead fishing tackle is permitted everywhere outside of national parks and wildlife areas.

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Continued: Invisible to Wildlife

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Lead is invisible to wildlife!

Lead tackle is ingested by loons and other aquatic birds in different ways. Loons intentionally swallow small stones to help digest their food, and small lead sinkers and split shot, lost by anglers on lake bottoms look just like natural pebbles, except they're poisonous.

Also, when a fish breaks your line and swims away with tackle attached, it becomes an easy catch for loons, eagles, and

ospreys; and sometimes, when a fish dies from swallowing tackle, it is scavenged, literally, "hook, line and sinker." Even larger lead

ig heads are accidentally consumed, as is evident from radiograph images of sick birds or necropsies of fatally poisoned ones. Once lead begins to



Photo by Julie Dier, Buck Lake

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and sinker.” Even larger lead jig heads are accidentally consumed, as is evident from radiograph images of sick birds or necropsies of fatally poisoned ones. Once lead begins to break down in a bird’s gizzard, it is doomed.

Some U.S. states, including New Hampshire, Maine, New York, and Minnesota, run “lead buy back” initiatives that encourage anglers to exchange their existing lead fishing tackle for a voucher redeemable on alternative non-lead tackle products and also by spreading public awareness on the dangers of fishing with lead. Collectively, these programs have kept thousands of pounds of toxic lead from reaching the environment! As Fishing Director for the Wolfe Lake Association, I saw an opportunity to create a similar initiative in our community. I began contacting different lead buy-back groups to learn more about the mechanics of their programs, and then proposed the idea to my fellow WLA Directors, who approved the idea. Donna Garland, who co-manages the project with me, was especially enthusiastic and steered us towards potential funding. We submitted a grant proposal for \$6,000 to the South Frontenac Lake Ecosystem Grant Program, which was accepted – perhaps, in part, because the research we provided was compelling, and our project offered a practical way to confront a growing problem. Presently, the grant from South Frontenac is our primary source of funding.

Recruiting Outdoor Retailers - The program’s list of participating retailers is still growing. As of this time, our confirmed retailers include Norris’s Bait & Tackle, Big Rideau Tackle,

Bait Casters, Manotick Bait, Spinner Aas Fishing & Outdoor Store, the Home Hardware & Building Centre in Hartington, and the Westport Lions Reuse & Recycle Centre. These retailers will receive several \$10 vouchers to award customers in exchange for lead fishing tackle (limit one coupon per customer). The voucher can be used at the participating store location on or toward the purchase of lead-free fishing tackle only. We are employing an honour system with the community, offering vouchers in exchange for any quantity of lead tackle they wish to bring in. While we can’t guarantee everyone will practice integrity, we believe most anglers will bring in lots of lead once they realize how deadly it is to wildlife. To simplify the role of

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Continued: Recruiting Outdoor Retailers



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Photo by Andy Beuchler
Loon, Beverly Lake

Photo by Marisa Phamkay, Wolfe Lake

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Photo by Jocelyn Parsons, Buck Lake

Continued: Many Project Partners

retailers, our program volunteers will visit participating store locations once each month to collect the lead and reimburse retailers for any vouchers awarded.

The WLA Lead Fishing Tackle Buy Back Program has secured partnerships and other support from the local community and beyond, including the Westport Area Outdoor Association, Rideau Valley Conservation Foundation, South Frontenac Township, Rideau Lakes Township, Westport Lions Club, Camp IAWAH, Westport Arts Council, Westport Brewery, Fish-hawk.net, Sandy Pines Wildlife Centre, and the Ottawa Valley Wild Bird Care Centre. We are proud to have an endorsement from MP Scott Reid. Support of this initiative is growing exponentially, and we are both encouraged and grateful to all.

Good Science!

As we amassed research, we learned more about the tremendous environmental threat posed by lead. Through personal communication, several



Photo by Sharon Hogan, Sand Lake

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Photo by Christine Muchmore, Bobs Lake

Continued: Extensively Researched

expert resources were consulted, including conservation biologists from Audubon; the Loon Preservation Committee; Dr. Mark Pokras, Associate Professor of Veterinary Medicine (and loon expert) at Tufts University; fisheries biologists; Loonsafe.org; the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency; Birds Canada; the Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation; Sandy Pines Wildlife Centre; and Avian Haven, among others. We also consulted published studies, including, "A Review of the Environmental Impacts of Lead

Shotshell Ammunition and Lead Fishing Weights in Canada" (Scheuhammer & Norris); "Management Concerns about Known and Potential Impacts of Lead Use in Shooting and in Fishing Activities," (Chris Goddard, Executive Secretary of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, et al); and "Lead poisoning from ingestion of fishing gear: A review," (Tiffany Grade, et al). Good science is key to credibility and raising public awareness. For example, we know for a fact that just one small lead sinker or pellet can kill an adult loon or duck, and that,

in the meantime, lead toxicity causes great physical suffering, as poisoned birds often die slowly, wasting away over a period of three to four weeks.

A grassroots campaign

To the best of our knowledge, the Wolfe Lake Association Lead Fishing Tackle Buy Back Program is pioneering this initiative in our region of Ontario. The Temagami Lake Association launched a similar program back in 2015 and collected hundreds of pounds of lead. In our fledgling year, we will work

Preservation Committee; Dr. Mark Pokras, Associate Professor of Veterinary Medicine (and loon expert) at Tufts University; fisheries biologists; Loonsafe.org; the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency; Birds Canada; the Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation; Sandy Pines Wildlife Centre; and Avian Haven, among others. We also consulted published studies, including, "A Review of the Environmental Impacts of Lead Shotshell Ammunition and Lead Fishing Weights in Canada" (Scheuhammer & Norris); "Management Concerns about Known and Potential Impacts of Lead Use in Shooting and in Fishing Activities," (Chris Goddard, Executive Secretary of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, et

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Engaging the community - The Westport Area Outdoor Association’s Wolf Howl ice fishing derby, slated for February 19, 2022, was recently canceled due to risks associated with COVID. Therefore, the “soft launching” of the lead-buy back initiative considered for

the Howl was scratched. We look forward to raising awareness for the fish lead-free movement at other community events, such as “Music Westport,” sponsored by the Westport Arts Council; Friends of the Library outdoor book sale fundraisers; and various events hosted by the Westport Lions.

Each June, Camp IAWAH hosts a summer ecology camp that moves several hundred kids through the program. During talks with IAWAH’s Managing Director, the lakeside ecology class would be the perfect environment to educate youth on the dangers of fishing with lead tackle. The Wolfe Lake Association will provide free literature geared towards youth, along with free samples of lead-free tackle.

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Continued: What Fishing Should & Shouldn't Be

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What is Fishing?

Fishing gets us outdoors, where we can appreciate our natural resources and encounter wildlife. Fishing allows us to unwind, breathe, think, heal, spend time with family and friends, challenge ourselves, get competitive or simply just "be." For over a half-century, fishing has been all of these things for me and more, since I first started fishing as a little girl alongside my dad and big brother, casting for bluegills with a bobber and worm. Years later, I was still at it, and my husband and I took our two little boys fishing. One has since grown into a competitive angler with skills surpassing his parents. Fishing has gifted me with some of my very best memories that will last a lifetime. In turn, I try to give back to the fishery

Community Profile



Photo by Julie Dier, Buck Lake

What Fishing Shouldn't Be...

As both a lifelong angler and dedicated conservationist, I'm dismayed that despite irrefutable evidence that it poisons wildlife, lead tackle is still so commonly used. Science continues to reveal the deadly impacts of lead on wildlife and the serious threats it poses to our children and water quality. These dire threats are avoidable, and yet lead continues to pile up in the environment. Why? Because it's dirt cheap.

Yes, lead-free alternatives are more expensive; however, the annual cost increase to the average Canadian angler to switch from lead to lead-free tackle is estimated to be less than 1-2%. Is the wellbeing of wildlife and our natural resources not worth this small expense? Furthermore, if more anglers and retailers commit to lead-free options, the increase in demand will drive down product costs over time as more manufacturers begin to produce more lead-free options. It won't happen overnight, but by pledging to fish lead free, we can help staunch the hemorrhage of toxic lead into the environment.

Margie Mandryk is the Fishing Director of the Wolfe Lake Association in the Westport area.

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Fishing has gifted me with some of my very best memories that will last a lifetime. In turn, I try to give back to the fishery and, along with other volunteers at the Wolfe Lake Association, have undertaken various projects benefiting lake ecosystems, including restoring historical walleye spawning sites; sinking old Christmas trees to create fish and wildlife habitat; installing monofilament fishing line collection bins at the boat launches; and the construction and placement of two loon nesting platforms. What Fishing Shouldn't Be... As both a lifelong angler and dedicated conservationist, I'm dismayed that despite inarguable evidence that it poisons wildlife, lead tackle is still so commonly used.

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