

Wolfe Lake Association leads charge to reduce lead fishing tackle in the environment

Wild Around Westport – Rearview Mirror - March 31, 2022

The Wolfe Lake Association (WLA) has spearheaded an initiative to reduce the accumulation of toxic lead fishing tackle in the environment where it poisons wildlife and threatens water quality. The “Lead Fishing Tackle Buy Back Program” launches this week on March 31st and runs through March 31, 2023. The Westport Area Out door Association (WAOA) has partnered on the voluntary initiative, which incentivizes anglers to switch to lead-free tackle. The program has also inspired commitments from other lake associations and several different organizations to promote lead-free fishing in their communities.

The government has acknowledged that lead (Pb) is an incredibly dangerous neurotoxin harmful to all living things. Yet, with the exception of National Parks and designated Wildlife Areas, anglers can legally use lead fishing tackle everywhere else. Consequently, each year, thousands of tons of lost lead fishing tackle continues to pile up in Canada’s waterbodies. Why? Because lead is cheap. Meanwhile, it endangers entire ecosystems and our priceless natural resources. Loons, eagles, swans, geese, ducks, and other aquatic birds are vulnerable to poisoning as they ingest lead while picking up pebbles to aid digestion, catch or scavenge fish with lead tackle attached, or while foraging.

Lead tackle is especially deadly to loons. In some regions, lead poisoning from fishing tackle accounts for almost half of all loon mortality, as revealed by necropsies on thousands of dead loons. Studies also show that lead buy back &/or tackle exchange programs, in conjunction with public awareness campaigns and stricter regulations on certain types of lead tackle, can significantly reduce the number of loons dying from lead poisoning. Furthermore, biologists have identified that loons are dying from lead tackle



LET'S GET THE LEAD OUT

LEAD FISHING TACKLE KILLS LOONS AND OTHER WILDLIFE. Lead poisoning from lost lead tackle is a leading cause of death for loons. Lead poisoning is also a leading cause of death for eagles, swans, geese, ducks, and other aquatic birds. Lead also threatens our water quality and other natural resources.

LEAD FISHING TACKLE BUY BACK PROGRAM

Starting March 31, 2022, exchange your toxic lead tackle for a \$10 voucher redeemable on lead-free tackle at participating retailers across 8 counties north or north-west of Westport Lions House & Recycle Centre.

Participating Retailers:
 Morris Bay & Tackle Westport,
 Big House Tackle Smith Falls, Westport Hardware,
 Westport Hardware, Mackinac Island, Westport Home Hardware & Building Centre, Ballantyne Carlson Place

*Not valid today at PHARMACIES

PHILADELPHIA CA | Lead Fishing Tackle Buy Back Program
 An Initiative of the Wolfe Lake Association, Westport, Ontario, Canada

BUSINESS MARKETPLACE

Air Conditioning / Heating
 THANE HOME COMFORT CENTRE
 224-2963

Appliances
 DUNELUX APPLIANCE SALES & SERVICE
 224-2963

Architectural Design
 BARRY BROWN ARCHITECTURE INC.
 224-2963

Fluoride & Barbecue
 RIDEAU VALLEY HEALTH & HOME
 224-2963

Automotive
 FRENCH'S Automotive & Welding
 224-2965

PROPANE
 LEVAC
 224-2965

being used now, so by reducing the flow of lead into the environment, loons and other vulnerable wildlife gain an immediate benefit. Lead toxicity in wildlife is preventable!

So, how does the Lead Fishing Tackle Buy Back Program work? Thanks to generous financial support received from South Frontenac's Lake Ecosystem Grant Program, the WLA will award \$10 vouchers to anglers in exchange for their lead tackle. Vouchers will be issued, one per customer, by participating retailers (currently, there are 7 locations) who will also collect the lead. Customers can then redeem their vouchers for the purchase of lead-free fishing tackle at participating stores. Individuals answering a few brief questions on the voucher will be entered into random prize draws throughout the program's calendar year. Once each month, WLA volunteers will visit the retailers to collect the lead and arrange reimbursement for redeemed vouchers.

Lead will also be collected at the Westport Lions Reuse & Recycle Centre and at community events, where public awareness brochures and samples of eco-friendly tackle options made from tungsten, steel, bismuth and tin will be distributed. Educational signage will be placed at several boat launches, and youth education will be promoted in cooperation with Camp IAWAH, Sandy Pines Wildlife Centre, and the Ottawa Wild Bird Care Centre.

Look for Lead Fishing Buy Back Program volunteers at the upcoming Westport Market Place in the WTC Community Centre on April 9th from 9am–3pm. Bring in your lead fishing tackle to get entered in a prize draw later that day, and while supplies last, free non-toxic tackle samples will be available.

The WLA is grateful to everyone who has pledged support for the Lead Fishing Tackle Buy Back Program and to promote lead-free fishing. The initiative is growing exponentially, which is encouraging. Help spread the word, and "Let's Get the Lead Out" to protect wildlife and our priceless natural resources! Visit fishleadfree.ca for additional facts on the dangers of lead tackle and to learn more about the program, its participating retailers, and for a listing of lead-free tackle manufacturers and sellers.

Margie is a self-proclaimed nature nerd with a passion for all things finned, furred and feathered...even the creepy-crawly-scaly kinds. She's summered on Wolfe Lake since childhood and loves sharing what she learns about wild things