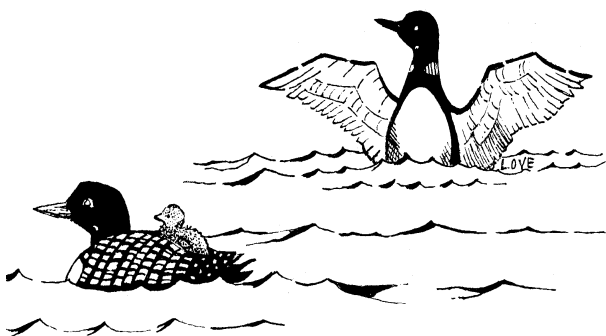


## Other Threats facing the Common Loon in Michigan

Loons in Michigan face a special threat. Commercial netting on the Great Lakes has resulted in the drowning of unknown numbers - perhaps in the hundreds - of loons yearly in the past. Research supported by the MLPA has shown that by enlarging the mesh size of the trap in these nets, fewer loons are lost. We continue to address this issue.

Loss of habitat, pollution, mercury poisoning, infections and trauma all cause mortality. Nesting loons and pairs with chicks are especially vulnerable to disturbance by boats and personal watercraft approaching too closely. Anglers can help by avoiding nesting loons, and giving plenty of space to loon families. About 100 yards or so is sufficient. Go slow near loons to avoid collisions.



## The Michigan Loon Preservation Association

The MLPA is a nonprofit affiliate of the Michigan Audubon Society and the North American Loon Fund, formed to protect Loons. The concern arose because of dwindling loon numbers due to many causes, among them lake development, pollution and loss of safe habitat.

The mission of the Michigan Loon Preservation Association is to conserve and enhance the Common Loon population through research, habitat protection and restoration, species protection, and public awareness and involvement.

### For more information, contact us at:

Michigan Loon Preservation Association  
6011 West St. Joseph Highway, Suite 403  
PO Box 80527  
Lansing, Michigan 48908

Or visit us at:  
[www.Michiganloons.org](http://www.Michiganloons.org)



The Michigan Loon Preservation Association is an affiliate of The Michigan Audubon Society and the North American Loon Fund.

## Information for Fishermen

# Lead Poisoning in Loons

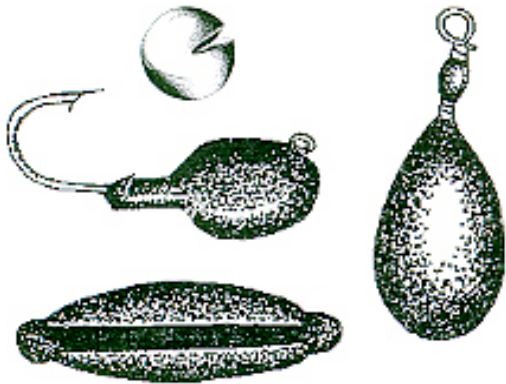
[www.Michiganloons.org](http://www.Michiganloons.org)

Birds commonly eat small pebbles to grind food for digestion. Small lead sinkers and jigs may be mistaken for these pebbles, or lures with fish and lead attached may be consumed by the bird directly. A bird that eats lead will become ill and die. Ingested lead enters the gizzard, where a combination of stomach acids and abrasion breaks down the metal. It then is absorbed into the bloodstream.

A bird with lead poisoning will exhibit physical and behavioral changes including loss of balance, gasping, tremors, and an impaired ability to fly. The weakened bird is more vulnerable to predators, or it may have trouble feeding, mating, nesting, and caring for its' young. It becomes emaciated and often dies within two or three weeks after eating the lead. Just one lead sinker or jig can poison a water bird.

## Extent of the Lead Problem

Lead, once dispersed into lakes, may persist for up to 300 years, though degradation can be more rapid depending on soil conditions and other factors. At least 27 different species are known to be affected by lead poisoning, including numerous duck species, the Trumpeter, Tundra and Mute swans, Bald eagles, Sandhill cranes, and the Common Loon, a threatened species in our state. Studies in the northeast have shown that over 50% of loons autopsied died of lead poisoning. In Michigan, lead accounts for about 25% of autopsied loon deaths.



*Lead sinkers and jigs.*  
(Drawing: Michael Cooper, Environment Canada)

## Prevention Approaches

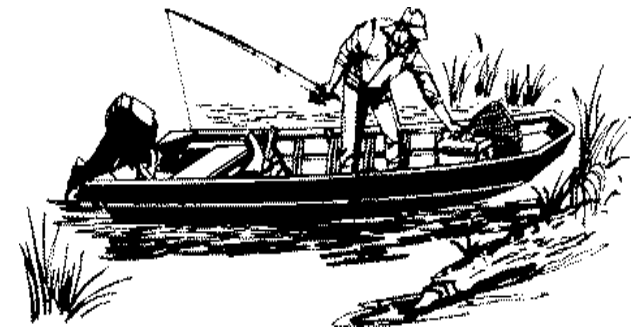
The United States banned the use of lead shot for hunting migratory waterfowl in 1991. Great Britain has banned the use of lead sinkers after a voluntary effort there did not produce results. Subsequently, the Mute Swan reversed its decline there. The Loon Preservation Committee of New Hampshire recently successfully proposed legislation that banned lead from use for fishing sinkers and jigs. Maine has enacted a law limiting the use of lead, as well. Canada has banned the use of lead sinkers in national parks and wildlife preserves, and is considering a total national ban (to include lead shot, which is still allowed for the hunting of migratory waterfowl in Canada). Similar legislative efforts have been or are planned in New York and Vermont.

## Alternatives to Lead

Alternatives to lead sinkers and jigs are available, but not commonly stocked in sporting goods stores. A recent check at a large chain sporting goods store found none in stock! The US EPA has estimated that replacement of lead would result in an additional cost of \$10 or less per angler per year, a trivial cost in comparison to that spent overall. Lead sinker exchanges have been implemented in other states with some success. Contacts for lead free manufacturers can be found on our website at: <http://www.michiganloons.org/lead.htm>.

## What you can do to help prevent loon deaths from lead poisoning: The Voluntary Solution

Switch to lead free substitutes. Jigs, particularly, have been found to account for most of the lead poisoning deaths in Michigan loons. Encourage your sporting goods store to stock these substitutes. Reel in your line when loons are near. Loons take live fish and have been known to ingest lead from fish on anglers lines. Pick up discarded monofilament line. Loons can become entrapped and hurt or killed by monofilament line. Help the MLPA educate the public about the dangers of lead. Pass this brochure along, or refer others to our web site.



*Fish Lead Free!*