

# LOONS AND LEAD: How to Keep the Adirondacks Echoing with Loon Calls

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## SUMMARY

- Loons consume lead from lead fishing gear, including jigs and sinkers.
  - Loons are listed as a species of “Special Concern” in New York State.
  - Lead poisoning causes 10-80% of adult loon deaths.
  - New York State has not banned lead jigs and has only banned the sale of lead sinkers that weigh half an ounce or less.
  - Banning the sale and use of lead jigs and sinkers up to one ounce can prevent loon deaths.
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## ADULT LOONS DIE FROM INGESTING LEAD

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Loons consume small lead jigs and sinkers, thinking they are small rocks that they will use to grind up their food. Jigs are lead-weighted hooks, and sinkers are lead weights attached to fishing line to make it sink. Loons can also consume lead from the fish they eat.

Lead is the leading cause of loon deaths, killing more than gunshot wounds, trauma, infections, or other impacts. Banning the use and sale of lead fishing tackle will help keep loons alive in Adirondack lakes.

New York State laws fail to fully protect loons from lead poisoning. New York has not banned lead jigs and has only banned the sale (and not the use) of lead sinkers that weigh half an ounce or less. To fully protect loons, New York State should ban the use and sale of lead jigs and ban lead sinkers up to one ounce.

## LOONS: EMBLEMS OF THE ADIRONDACKS

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Loons are an emblem of the Adirondacks, tied to the character of the region. Loons are beloved by locals and visitors alike. Many people seek out Adirondack lakes to experience the haunting call of this iconic bird.

## BANNING LEAD JIGS AND SINKERS

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- 1) The New York State legislature should ban the sale and use of lead fishing tackle up to 1 oz.
- 2) New York State should institute a buy-back program to incentivize people to turn in their old lead fishing tackle.



Photo by Dan Poleschook

## NEXT STEPS IN SAVING LOONS

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Building on current law to ban the sale and use of lead fishing tackle will help protect a well-loved bird, and in turn, sustain wildlife tourism, art, and local economies.

A buy-back program will remove old lead fishing tackle from potential use. A buy-back program in New Hampshire succeeded in removing 4,780 pieces of lead fishing tackle from potentially poisoning loons. It cost only \$1,240 and may save many loons.

## SOURCES

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