



## Lake Friendly Tip: Clean out that old tackle box!

by Andrea LaMoreaux, Vice President, NH LAKES (July 2018)

Ok, be honest. Is there an old fishing tackle box in your family—one that might contain lead tackle? Do you occasionally pull it out for the kids or grandkids when they come to the lake for a visit?

I admit, for several years I have suspected that the tackle box we pull out for our daughter and her cousins to fish with when visiting Grandma and Grandpa's house at the lake contained lead tackle—sinkers and jigs that were probably given to my mom by her parents who fished with their kids whenever they could back in the '50s and '60s.

As an aquatic biologist, I know better. I should have investigated the tackle box long ago as most old fishing tackle likely contains the metal lead—a neurotoxin. Not only can touching lead tackle pose health hazards for people (especially children), if used in a lake, lead tackle can be dangerous for wildlife.

In fact, the leading cause of death for adult Common Loons in New Hampshire is lead poisoning caused by the ingestion of lead fishing tackle. Loons may strike at a fishing line with lead tackle or at a fish being reeled in that was caught with lead tackle, or eat a fish that has ingested lead tackle or has attached to it a broken fishing line with lead tackle. Sometimes, loons pick up pieces of lead split shot or other small lead tackle from the lake bottom which they mistake for small pebbles—loons must ingest pebbles to help grind up food in their stomachs. For these reasons, New Hampshire state law prohibits the use of lead fishing sinkers and lead jigs weighing one ounce or less in our lakes.

At the beginning of this summer, I finally bit the bullet (but not the suspect tackle) and took some time with my mom to look through the tackle box. Not surprisingly, we identified a couple pounds worth of tackle that we decided likely contained lead. Why did we think this tackle contained lead?

- Some of the packages actually indicated that the tackle contained lead, but most of the loose stuff strewn about the box was not labeled and we knew it was all older than two years old and likely contained lead (in 2016, the sale and use of lead fishing sinkers and jigs weighing one ounce or less was restricted in New Hampshire).
- We assumed that the pieces that were soft (could be scratched or bent with pliers), weren't magnetic, left a line when used like a pencil across a piece of paper, or just looked really old, contained lead.



*By cleaning out that old fishing tackle box to remove tackle that may contain the metal lead—a neurotoxin—you will help protect loons and other wildlife, and human health, too!*



We were told that we could buy an inexpensive lead testing kit from the local hardware store but decided that we would rather just get rid of the suspicious pieces.

By getting rid of the tackle, I don't mean we tossed it into the trash. I turned it in to the lead fishing tackle collection bin at the NH LAKES office in Concord where I work. At the end of each summer, NH LAKES works with its partners, including the Loon Preservation Committee and the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, to ensure that all collected lead tackle is properly and safely disposed of.

If you have an old fishing tackle box in your family, or even if it is relatively new, I urge you to take a few minutes this summer to do some detective work. Have an adult in the family put on a pair of gloves, sort through the sinkers and jigs (be careful of sharp hooks), and anything you think might be lead (or if you don't know what it is made out of), just take it out and put in in a clean jar with a secure lid. If the kids or grandkids want to help, please don't have them touch the tackle—they can help by counting the number of pieces collected or weighing the closed jar before and after it is filled with tackle. Afterwards, everyone should make sure to wash their hands thoroughly.

There are several locations throughout the state where you can drop off lead tackle. These locations include the NH LAKES office in Concord, the Loon Preservation Committee headquarters in Moultonborough, all New Hampshire Fish and Game Department Regional offices, and some municipal transfer stations.

For more information about lead free fishing, including specific information on where to drop off lead tackle, and where you can purchase lead-free tackle, visit [www.fishleadfree.org/nh/](http://www.fishleadfree.org/nh/).

By taking a few minutes to clean out that old tackle box this summer, not only will you help protect the loons, you'll help protect other wildlife—maybe even your kids and grandkids, too!

NH LAKES is the only statewide, member-supported nonprofit organization working to keep New Hampshire's lakes clean and healthy, now and in the future. The organization works with partners, promotes clean water policies and responsible use, and inspires the public to care for our lakes. For more lake-friendly tips, visit [www.nhlakes.org](http://www.nhlakes.org), email [info@nhlakes.org](mailto:info@nhlakes.org), or call 603.226.0299.

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