

Isabel Eisendrath
living in Worcester summering on MDI.
LD 958

I may not have that much influence or power in this matter as I am not a Maine resident, nor am I an expert in loons or conservation biology, but I do have a strong connection to the state of Maine as well as to the loons that often call Maine their summer home, just as I have called Maine my summer home in the past. As a student of Tufts veterinary school and volunteer at the wildlife clinic there, I have seen loons suffer the effects of lead-poisoning from completely preventable conditions. A Loon does not know if a lead jig is painted or not. It does not care if it is painted or not, nor does it know what terrible fate may become of it once it ingests the lead jig. The paint does not deter the bird and it also does not prevent birds from dying after consuming one of these fishing implements by accident. I have seen evidence of this in real life. Just last week I attended a loon necropsy where the loon, a perfectly healthy first year bird, was killed by ingesting a lead fishing weight that appeared to have been painted over. The paint had almost completely eroded away and all that was left was the large lead fishing weight. It makes sense that the paint would wear off. With a pH of 1-2 and a thick muscled wall, I would expect most paints to easily wear off in a short period of time, allowing the lead inside any painted jig to be exposed once more and able to cause the deaths of any animal that ingests it. This in itself presents you with a larger problem. If the lead from a fishing jig can be exposed in time, whether due to erosion or time inside of the strong stomach of a loon, this means that lead has the ability to recirculate into the surrounding environment from which it is found. Not only that, but what of other animals with similar stomachs to the loon who may, by accident ingest one of these painted lead jigs. If loons are susceptible to such deaths by painted lead fishing gear what about other endangered species of bird like the Common murre, Greater scaup, American coot etc. What if these birds are also susceptible to the dangers of lead poisoning? I suppose this is all just speculation and no evidence as I am only just a person who cares about loons but with no credential to show for it. What I can say is I have seen birds die completely preventable deaths. Deaths that would be easily avoided by preventing lead fishing gear from being sold and used for fishing in the state of Maine.