



Avian Haven

April 8, 2025

Committee of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife c/o Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: Testimony In Support of LD 1364- Resolve-Authorizing a Study on the Impact and Risks of Lead based Ammunition

Dear Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts, and Members of the Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife:

On behalf of Avian Haven, a wildlife rehabilitation center dedicated to the care of wild birds, I am writing to express our strong support for LD 1364, which calls for the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to make recommendations for the phase-out of lead-based ammunition. As a facility that cares for over 3,000 birds each year, we witness firsthand the devastating effects of lead toxicity on wild birds and other wildlife species.

Lead poisoning, or plumbism, is a major cause of suffering and death among the animals we treat. Every year, we admit numerous birds that have been poisoned by ingesting lead fragments, often from ammunition left behind in the environment. These lead particles, whether from shot game or remains of carcasses, continue to poison wildlife long after the shot has been fired. Species like eagles, vultures, and other scavengers, as well as ground-feeding birds, are particularly vulnerable to this silent and insidious threat.

One of the most tragic aspects of lead poisoning is the slow and painful toll it takes on its victims. Symptoms include neurological damage, paralysis, and in many cases, death. Even when exposure is not immediately lethal, lead poisoning weakens animals, making them more susceptible to predation or disease. Our staff regularly treats birds that exhibit these symptoms, often with little hope for recovery.

We are not alone in this struggle. A study published in the journal *Science* in 2022 found that up to 47% of eagles tested had bone lead concentrations above thresholds for chronic poisoning, and a third of the eagles had acute poisoning. This evidence highlights the population-level effects of lead ammunition on these iconic raptors. Furthermore, the evidence is clear that lead ammunition is a leading cause of death for the endangered California condor, and it continues to harm countless other species every year.

The shift to non-toxic alternatives to lead ammunition is long overdue. As demonstrated by successful bans in states like California, a transition to non-lead ammunition is not only feasible but beneficial to both wildlife and hunters. Non-toxic ammunition performs effectively, is widely available, and is safer for the environment. The use of alternatives like copper, steel, and tungsten can help protect wildlife from the dangers of lead poisoning and ensure that hunters can continue to enjoy their sport responsibly.

At Avian Haven, we see the direct consequences of lead poisoning on the birds we care for. By passing LD 1364 and working toward the phase-out of lead-based ammunition, Maine has the opportunity to be a leader in wildlife conservation and public health. We urge you to support this important legislation and help protect wildlife for future generations.

Thank you for your consideration of this critical issue. Should you have any questions or wish to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact us. We look forward to the positive changes that this legislation can bring.

Sincerely,

Barbara Haney
Executive Director
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Barb Haney
Avian Haven
LD 1364

Testimony is presented here as an uploaded file.