

Susan Hayhurst  
Falmouth  
LD 958

Dear Committee Members,

Thank you for considering my written testimony in support of LD 958.

I am a veterinarian and former marine science educator, who practices in Brunswick, Maine. I treat domestic pets including birds, and I volunteer helping with wildlife. I live in Falmouth, and my family and I also have a camp on Kezar Lake.

For the past several years, I've been doing monthly loon necropsies of deceased loons, as part of a loon necropsy working group made up of wildlife professionals and veterinarians. We meet at the Center for Wildlife once a month. There, I have witnessed first hand the total devastation that lead poisoning can have on loons - and how often it happens. I open up a loon cadaver and find the body cavity just full of blood, with forensic evidence the bleeding happened before death. Sometimes these were birds were found stranded, acting odd, or weak. And invariably we find lead fishing gear in the stomach among the pebbles there. (Loons and many birds ingest pebbles to help with digestion, but the problem is that lead fishing gear can look like something to eat.) The sad thing is that most of the birds we find dead from lead poisoning are in strong healthy condition - with a great weight and muscle, beautiful feathers, and no parasites. In other words, acute lead poisoning is taking down numerous of Maine's otherwise healthy breeding loons.

Loons face many other challenges that are harder to address - mercury, waves and strikes from wakeboard and other recreational boats, and more. But lead poisoning is likely what I've seen most in otherwise healthy adult birds, and it's something we can do something about.

I also write, on a less scientific side, as a camp owner from Kezar, where my daughters have grown up watching, loving, and of course, listening to loons. My 13-year-old daughter loves them so much that she asked if she could do a science fair project on loon biology this year. In her opening paragraph, she wrote, "Common loons are a symbol of Maine - they inhabit almost every lake, and are hard to miss with their distinctive black and white coloring and striking red eyes." I couldn't have said it better.

Please help protect this iconic Maine species by passing LD 958, for now and for future generations like my daughter's.

Sincerely,  
Susan E. Hayhurst, MS, DVM  
Falmouth, Maine