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## Fishing: a fun recreational pastime? Or a burden to wildlife and the environment?

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Fishing is a common outdoor recreational activity that allows individuals to enjoy the environment and become immersed in nature, but some of the equipment used with this activity like fishing sinkers and jig heads primarily, pose a threat to wildlife. Necropsies were done on different types of waterfowl (i.e. common loon and Canada goose) that were submitted to the Wildlife Pathology Unit (WPU) at the NYS DEC. These two species are very susceptible to adverse health effects (such as lead poisoning) due to their consumption of such toxic items (sinkers or jig heads). Sinkers weighing  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz. or under are illegal if composed mostly of lead, however vague discrepancies arise because there are no set amounts stated for elemental composition and the law is not always enforced. Many sinkers are made of toxic metals such as lead, zinc, and cadmium. Over 50 samples of sinkers encompassing a variety of different brands were obtained through store-to-store sampling from the Albany area. Samples were logged in, photographed, weighed, and tested to identify the elemental composition. This was accomplished in two ways, either through on site laboratory testing at the WPU where lead and cadmium indicator tests were carried out, or by sending samples away for a more precise lab elemental analysis where percent composition was taken into account in units of parts per million. The purpose of this project was to provide public awareness and to get individuals on a path to enjoy nature, the environment, and wildlife without harming it further.