

TTSS Joins Lawsuit Challenging EPA's Failure to Protect Wildlife from Lead Poisoning

Millions of Birds, Other Wildlife, Poisoned Yearly by Lead Ammunition Left in Wild—Including Eagles, Condors, Swans, Loons

WASHINGTON— Seven conservation groups filed suit on June 7th against the Environmental Protection Agency for refusing to address toxic lead in hunting ammunition that frequently poisons and kills eagles, swans, loons, endangered California condors and other wildlife, as well as affecting human health. Ignoring well-established science on the dangers of lead poisoning from spent ammunition, the EPA refuses to acknowledge or evaluate risks to wildlife and human health. The EPA in April denied a petition requesting a public process to consider regulations for nontoxic hunting ammunition. This lawsuit challenges that decision.

“The EPA has the ability to immediately end the unintended killing of eagles, swans, loons, condors and other wildlife,” said Jeff Miller with the Center for Biological Diversity. “Unfortunately, the agency refuses to address this needless poisoning. We’ve removed toxic lead from gasoline, paint and most products exposing humans to lead poisoning; now it’s time to do the same for hunting ammunition to protect America’s wildlife.”

“Expended lead shot persists in the environment for a long time, and thousands of trumpeter swans have died recently from ingesting lead shot deposited by hunters decades ago,” said hunter John Cornely, executive director of The Trumpeter Swan Society. “Hunters and anglers can provide leadership to prevent killing of non-target wildlife. Getting the lead out is in line with traditional conservation and hunting values.”

“Wildlife hospitals across the country see a dramatic rise in lead-poisoned eagles and other raptors during hunting season each fall,” said Louise Shimmel, executive director of the Cascades Raptor Center in Oregon. “Lead poisoning is a major cause of death and injury for wildlife, and is easily preventable by taking action to prohibit lead shot.”

Millions of nontarget birds and other wildlife are poisoned each year from scavenging carcasses containing lead-bullet fragments or from ingesting spent lead-shot pellets. Spent ammunition causes lead poisoning in 130 species of birds and animals and frequently kills bald eagles, trumpeter swans and endangered California condors, especially condors in Arizona, where lead is the leading cause of these birds’ deaths. Nearly 500 scientific papers document the dangers to wildlife from this kind of lead exposure. Lead ammunition also poses health risks for people eating game contaminated with lead bullet fragments.

“This action is *not* about restricting hunting—it’s about ending preventable lead poisoning of birds and reducing health risks for people eating lead-shot game,” said Dick Preston, president of the Tennessee Ornithological Society. “The nonlead hunting regulations in California are a good model for hunting to continue with nontoxic materials.”

“Lead poisoning of wildlife is a national tragedy,” said Larry Boersma with Preserve Our Wildlife. “There are safe, effective alternatives to toxic lead ammo, so there's no reason to continue to condemn untold numbers of birds and other wildlife to agonizing deaths.”

In March, 100 organizations in 35 states asked the EPA to initiate a rulemaking under the Toxic Substances Control Act to regulate the toxic components of ammunition, the lead bullet and shot projectiles that cause lead poisoning of wildlife. Although the EPA has authority to require nonlead bullets and shot for hunting and shooting sports, it refused to review the petition. Today’s lawsuit challenging that decision was filed by The Trumpeter Swan Society, Cascades Raptor Center (Oregon), Center for Biological Diversity, Loon Lake Loon Association (Washington), Preserve Our Wildlife (Florida), Tennessee Ornithological Society and Western Nebraska Resources Council.

There are many alternatives to lead rifle bullets and shotgun pellets. More than a dozen manufacturers market hundreds of varieties and calibers of nonlead bullets and shot made of steel, copper and alloys of other metals, with satisfactory-to-superior ballistics. Hunters in areas with restrictions on lead ammunition have transitioned to hunting with nontoxic bullets. For example, there has been no decrease in game tags or hunting activity since state requirements for nonlead hunting went into effect in significant portions of Southern California in 2008 to protect condors from lead poisoning.

The EPA claims it lacks authority to regulate toxic lead in ammunition under the Toxic Substances Control Act, the federal law designed to limit exposure to dangerous chemicals, including lead. Yet the law provides specific authority to regulate lead bullets and shot. Lobbying by the National Rifle Association resulted in the House of Representatives in April passing the “Sportsmen’s Heritage Act,” aimed at removing the EPA’s present authority to regulate toxic lead in ammunition and fishing equipment.

Get more information about the [Get the Lead Out campaign](#).

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Cascades Raptor Center is a nonprofit nature center and wildlife hospital in Oregon that fosters a connection between people and birds of prey through wildlife rehabilitation and education.

www.eraptors.org

The Center for Biological Diversity is a national, nonprofit conservation organization with more than 350,000 members and online activists dedicated to the protection of endangered species and wild places.

www.biologicaldiversity.org

Loon Lake Loon Association is a nonprofit based in Washington formed to protect the common loon and other waterfowl in the Pacific Northwest. www.loons.org

Preserve Our Wildlife is a Florida organization dedicated to protection of wild animal species and conservation of their natural habitats.

Tennessee Ornithological Society is a nonprofit educational and scientific organization devoted to the study and conservation of birds. www.tnbirds.org

The Trumpeter Swan Society is a nonprofit organization based in Minnesota, dedicated to assuring the vitality and welfare of wild trumpeter swan populations. www.trumpeterswansociety.org

Western Nebraska Resources Council is a nonprofit dedicated to preserving watersheds and native biomes in western Nebraska.