



Wildlife Issues:

Lead poisoning and prevention

February 2008

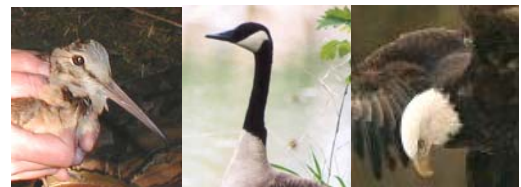
- Nationally, lead poisoning of waterfowl and the Bald Eagle resulted in a 1991 federal ban on the use of lead shot in waterfowl and coot hunting. In 1997 alone, the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) estimated that the ban on lead shot saved 1.4 million ducks. In Canada, a study showed a decrease in lead levels in bone in waterfowl of 50-70% as a result of the ban on lead shot for waterfowl hunting in that country. These and other studies have demonstrated that switching to nontoxic shot, defined as any shot type that does not cause sickness and death when ingested by birds, can help protect bird populations and improve the environment.
- Twenty-five states have nontoxic shot requirements for hunting beyond those required by the federal government for waterfowl. Four additional states are discussing possible nontoxic shot requirements.
- Nontoxic shot is becoming increasingly available. There are now nine shot types approved by the USFWS as nontoxic.
- A Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) study published in 2005 found that some American Woodcock in Wisconsin are accumulating unusually high levels of lead in their wing bones. The exact source of the lead is not known at this time, but a dietary source for the lead is likely, and the study could not rule out lead shot in soils as the ultimate source of the lead.
- In Wisconsin, lead poisoning is a significant mortality factor for the Trumpeter Swan, an endangered species in the state. Of 110 Trumpeter Swan carcasses submitted to the WDNR for post-mortem examination between 1991 and 2004, 34 deaths (~31%) were attributed to lead poisoning.
- Of 559 Bald Eagle carcasses submitted to the WDNR between 1994 and 2003, 68 (~12%) of those deaths were attributed to lead poisoning.
- In 1992, at least 200-300 Canada Geese died as a result of acute lead poisoning from ingesting lead shot on a former trap and skeet shooting range near Lake Geneva in Walworth County, Wisconsin. The US Environmental Protection Agency reportedly spent ~ \$1.88 M on a Superfund cleanup of the site, removing ~28,000 tons of lead-contaminated soils. Another large-scale lead poisoning event in

Wisconsin occurred when ~200 Canada Geese were collected in 1999 and again in 2000 from a location in Outagamie Co.

- Lead poisoning has been reported in at least 37 species of birds beyond waterfowl.
- Requiring the use of nontoxic shot for dove hunting and other uses has been discussed at numerous meetings of WI conservationists. Many hunters are asking, 'Why don't we require nontoxic shot for dove hunting?'
- Of the 40 states that hunt doves, 16 have some level of nontoxic shot requirements for hunting doves. Some restrict on all state lands, some just on intensive dove areas and some just on waterfowl/wetland areas. MN and IL both have some level of nontoxic shot restrictions on some public lands. MI and IA do not hunt doves. **Beginning in Fall 2008, Wisconsin hunters must use nontoxic shot when hunting mourning doves on department managed lands.**
- In states that have nontoxic shot requirements for doves, there have not been any reported problems of nontoxic shot availability from local retail stores.
- Research in Missouri has shown negative affects on dove behavior that could result in increased mortality from other sources (predation) within 24 hours of ingesting lead shot. The study also suggests that doves may select for shot while feeding.
- The Minnesota Nontoxic shot Advisory committee concluded in their December 2006 report that "It is inevitable that lead shot will have to be restricted for all shotgun hunting at some future time."

Information from:

- "A Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative Issues Paper" by N. Cutright and S. Diehl
- Mississippi Flyway states' wildlife management department personnel
- Mississippi Flyway states' hunting regulations
- The Minnesota Nontoxic shot Advisory committee
- The WDNR Migratory Game Bird Program
- The WDNR Wildlife Health Program



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© Annedave | Dreamstime.com (Mourning dove)
WDNR staff and WDNR website (all other photos)

