

## **Loons, Lines and Lead Sinkers**

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I thought I was going to write a good news story about a loon caught up in fishing line. For a couple of days, word was out around Lake Sunapee that a loon appeared to be injured. Folks were looking for it, but the loon moved around the lake. Finally the loon was spotted by a kayaker in Herrick Cove. She called both the Loon Preservation Committee (LPC) and LSPA's Loon Committee.

A loon rescue was first conducted by LPC director Harry Vogel with LSPA's Committee Chair, Kristen Begor. Their attempt was not successful, due to the loon's diving whenever they got to within 10 feet of the loon. This is a common issue when trying to help loons.

Later, the loon was again spotted in Herrick Cove, and LSPA staff went to check out the situation. Clearly the loon had fishing line wrapped around its bill and looked terribly sick. That evening two other folks tried to save the loon and did manage to pick it up and remove the fishing line. At that point, the loon appeared fine, preening itself and going back to fishing. It needed to catch up on its food intake to prepare for the fall flight to the ocean, where loons stay for the winter. One reason they were able to pick it up at that point, was that it was very weak.

Unfortunately the next day, the loon was found beached and dead. It was then retrieved by LPC and immediately brought to a veterinarian for necropsy analysis. It weighed in at 5 pounds, confirming its emaciation. Many people around the lake were keeping an eye on this loon and it saddened them all to watch its decline. But as a wild animal, it didn't know that we were there to help. In the wild, it looks out for itself. What loons cannot deal with are human debris such as fishing lines. It did have some damage to its tongue where the line had been tangled.

Sometime fishing line gets caught in the many rocks in Lake Sunapee. If at all possible, fishing lines should be retrieved, so it does not interfere with the lake's wildlife. And non-lead sinkers should also be used because lead poisoning is a sure death warrant for loons and other waterfowl. Both fishing lines and lead poisoning ensure undeserved slow and painful deaths for loons.