

Milton youth keeps lead sinkers out of state waters

LENOX

Have you been wondering what good things you can do for our environment? If you had a relatively painless way to help save our waterfowl, especially the loons, would you?

Well, Michael Brown, a youngster from Milton, did just that. According to an article in the latest issue of Massachusetts Wildlife, he applied for and received a grant from the Massachusetts Toxics Use Reduction Institute at the University of Massachusetts at Lowell. He attended fishing derbies, created and disseminated educational materials and exchanged non-lead sinkers for lead sinkers. By doing so, he won a Field & Stream magazine Hero of Conservation award, earned his Eagle Scout award and received a President's Environmental Award.

Studies indicate that, on average, an angler loses one sinker for every six hours of fishing. Waterfowl and loons scoop them up with gravel to grind up food in the crop or gizzard of their digestive systems. The results of a study indicated that of 522 loons found dead in New England, nearly half of the breeding adult loons were confirmed or suspected of dying from lead poisoning.

New Hampshire, Vermont, Maine and New York have already banned or



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restricted the use of lead fishing gear. Massachusetts has banned the use of lead sinkers in the Quabbin and Wachusett reservoirs. In an expression of concern, the Berkshire County League of Sportsmen recently unanimously voted to support a ban on lead sinkers in all of Massachusetts. There are less environmentally toxic alternatives to lead: bismuth, ceramic, steel, tin and tungsten. They may cost a little more, but what is it worth to hear the sound of a loon on a quiet evening on a New England pond?

If readers know of any enterprising youths or non-profit organizations that may be interested in implementing a lead sinker exchange, funds are available to help out. TURI will receive grant applications until June 30, so don't delay. Contact Joy Onasch at joy@turi.org or call (978) 934-4343 for more information, or visit www.turi.org/community to download application materials. Incidentally, Onasch, who wrote the MassWildlife article, grew up in the Berkshires and would love to see a program implement-

ed here.

According to Gary Johnston, newsletter editor for the Stockbridge Sportsmen's Club, the following officers were elected at its recent annual meeting: President Wayne Slosek, First Vice President Mike Buffoni, Second Vice President Marc Fadding, Treasurer Bonnie Buffoni and Secretary George Chasse. Buffoni and Chasse replaced Jim Balfanz and Joan Borghi, who had served as secretary and treasurer for many years.

The SSC will be holding a License To Carry/Firearms Identification Card course on Tuesday and Wednesday. The fee is \$35. Applicants are asked to show up 20 minutes early on Tuesday to register, but if they can't make that date, they are encouraged to download the application from the club Web site and mail it in. Call John Farina, the licensed instructor, at (413) 243-2418, for more info.

The SSC will be conducting its Youth Rifle League again this summer. Sign-up will be June 21 from 10 a.m. to noon. The league will be held each Wednesday evening from 5 to 7 starting on July 2. To register, visit stockbridgesportsmenclub.org.

Chuck Jones, newsletter editor for The

10 Ring section of the Lenox Sportsmen's Club newsletter announced that patches, rockers and recognition medals were presented to Kyle Catanzarita, Mike Zsofka, Mac Litishin and Dan O'Brien for their progression in its youth rifle league and to its coach Dick Wisenbaker. Wisenbaker was the driving force in organizing the league (October Mountain Sharpshooters) and procuring guns and related equipment through grant writing. Incidentally, the youngsters in the league have voted to continue shooting through the summer. The hours are Saturday mornings from 8:30 to 10:30.

According to Jones, "It's great to see the enthusiasm for shooting among the younger set, and also to see the remarkable progress they make. Young eyes and reflexes are wonderful things."

According to Charlie Chapin, newsletter editor of the Pittsfield Sportsmen's Club, the following officers were elected at its recent annual meeting: President Fran Tremblay, First Vice President Dave Pemble, and Second Vice President Bill Nylic. Tremblay replaces Barbara Scott, who held the position of president for the last three years. Rick Farrell was elected clerk and recording secretary and Larry Goggia was re-elected treasurer.

According to the PSC newsletter, three one-acre pieces of land were clear-cut last year for habitat improvement for rabbits, birds and deer. There are plans for two more five-acre plots to be cleared for habitat improvement. They have also applied for a Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program grant. A call was put out for "fresh ideas and strong bodies" to help maintain the club property, which includes 470 acres, more land than any other club in the state.

Incidentally, WHIP is a voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to landowners who want to improve fish and wildlife habitat or restore natural ecosystems on their land. The United States Department of Agriculture's National Resources Conservation Services will pay up to 75 percent of the cost of establishing and maintaining conservation practices that are necessary for enhancing/improving wildlife habitat and restoring natural ecosystems.

Next Saturday, the Isaac Walton League of America is sponsoring a free fishing derby for youths 12 years and under from 9 to 11 a.m. at the Berkshire National Fish Hatchery in Monterey.

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