

Date: March 4, 2025

The Honorable Brian Feldman, Chair

Senate Education, Energy & Environment Committee

2 West Miller Senate Office Building

Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: SB 634 – Hunting - Nonlead Ammunition, et cet. - FAVORABLE

Dear Chairman Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee:

Southern Maryland Audubon, representing 650 members, strongly supports SB 634—Nonlead Ammunition Phase-Out- and urges you to pass this bill out of committee.

Nearly half of Bald Eagles—our national bird— in Maryland and across the United States suffer from chronic lead poisoning, according to a ground-breaking study conducted by the U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Virginia Wildlife Center of Virginia, West Virginia University and Conservation Science Global published in 2022.

Eagles, vultures and other raptors ingest the lead when they feed on the remains of deer and other animals that have been killed with lead ammunition. In Southern Maryland, where I reside, we often see large flocks of vultures, interspersed with Bald Eagles, feeding on the remains of deer carcasses hunters leave behind for scavengers after they have dressed out the deer.

This is the unseen challenge affecting birds of prey: Even small exposures to lead can build up over time, causing devastating illness in eagles and other raptors. Common symptoms include brain swelling,

respiratory distress, muscle weakness, dehydration, starvation, kidney and liver damage and seizures. Neurological damage can result in loss of vision, coordination and nerve function making the bird appear “drunk” or unable to stand.

Over an eight-year period, researchers from the organizations we site above examined samples of bones, feathers and livers from more than 1,200 bald and golden eagles from 38 states, and tested blood from about 620 live birds.

The study found that bald eagles in D.C., Maryland and Virginia had lead concentrations in their blood and livers that measured above the threshold for clinical lead poisoning. Roughly 46 percent of eagles from the region had lead in their femurs that was also high, suggesting they’d had chronic lead poisoning, or what scientists call “a lifetime of exposure.” A prime cause is eating animals killed by lead ammunition.



Here’s what lead poisoning looks like in a Bald Eagle. The bowed head, drooped wings, and green stained tail feathers are all typical

signs of lead poisoning of raptors. This Bald Eagle was admitted to The Raptor Center in St. Paul, MN where it was determined by veterinarians to be poisoned by lead.

Our national bird was brought back from the brink of extinction 50 years ago. But major challenges to their health and survival remain. You can help protect our national bird by voting yes on SB 634.

If you have any questions or need assistance, please let me know. I appreciate your support and look forward to working together to advance this important bill!

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