

Study Finds Harmful Contaminants In Maine Birds
Channel 2: News Center

Web Editor: [Susan Kimball](#), reporter

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FALMOUTH (NEWS CENTER) -- Wing Goodale looked out over the fields at Maine Audubon and talked about the bird eggs that had been tested in Falmouth and in 29 other towns in Maine.

Goodale, of the BioDiversity Research Institute in Gorham, says a comprehensive report documented over one hundred contaminants in the bird eggs that were tested.

Researchers found mercury, pesticides, flame retardants, PFC's.

"We looked at perflorinated compounds," says Goodale, "which are stain and water repellants and they've never been looked for in Maine birds. We found them in every single one of our samples and that's from swallows to eagles."

They tested the eggs of some of Maine's most treasured birds--loons and puffins and piping plovers. Goodale says the the chemicals are coming from two sources--from pollutants in rain and snow--and from flame retardants and stain and water repellants found in things like television sets, computers, furniture and some clothing.

When those goods end up in landfills or incinerators, say environmentalists, the chemicals find there way to nature.

Susan Gallo, a wildlife biologist at Maine Audubon, says chemical companies need to be on alert.

"The chemical industry needs to pay attention and realize just because they're putting a chemical in a tv, its not a big leap to say ok, that chemical is going to end up out in the ocean," says Gallo.

There was also some good news, though. Researchers say that they found a seven fold decrease in pcb's--a chemical compound banned in Maine thirty years ago. Wing Goodale says that shows that regulation works. Susan Gallo says Maine leads the nation in mercury restrictions. She hopes lawmakers will consider expanding that kind of protective legislation.

The findings of the study were presented on Tuesday to the Legislature's Natural Resources Committee.