



CHEBACCO LAKE ASSOCIATION Newsletter *News from around the lake for friends of Chebacco Lake*

A Quarterly Publication of the Chebacco Lake Association

Winter, 2005

From the CLA President's Chair

For the last four years, Chebacco Lake has been faced with water level problems caused in great part by a colony of beavers who have built their lodge and dammed a portion of the lake's only outlet, Alewife Creek. The beaver activity has contributed to high water levels and threatened septic systems, wells and even homes.

Two years ago, the Chebacco Lake Association (CLA) saw the need to alleviate the problems created by the beavers and began a program of maintaining the flow from the lake by opening up gates in the dam and cleaning the channel when it was blocked. The CLA also is working to get the outlet cleaned and maintained on a regular basis. Members of the Board of directors and other association members have given many hours of their time to this effort. Last year we hired a professional trapper to remove the beaver family from the outlet to minimize their impact on the water level of the lake, and we are carrying on the regular cleaning of the gates at the dam and the channel on the creek.

While we continue these actions, we are aware that we face a problem with the beavers that cannot be solved with a short term solution like trapping. We have undertaken the trapping reluctantly, and with the knowledge that long term solutions to this and the other problems facing the lake must be found. The outlet is becoming clogged with debris from nature and man, and is overgrown in some parts with invasive weeds. The maintenance of the creek is an important part of water level control.

The local newspaper has portrayed us as pro-trapping, but we are actually pro-lake and against the damage to the lake that flooding will create. We are following the course that for now is the most effective to protect the lake and the homes surrounding it. As better technology and information comes up we will act appropriately.

The CLA is making every effort possible to find the best solutions to this and other lake issues. We recognize the need for involvement by the Towns of Essex and Hamilton, the State, and from private agencies. As a small volunteer organization funded by its members, our resources are limited. We are working to develop a solid lake management plan that will address as many of the issues concerning all of us as possible. As President of the CLA, I will be attending meetings of relevant groups, meeting with State officials and area politicians, and seeking funding sources for our efforts. Please be assured that the CLA is working hard for the benefit of Chebacco Lake and all of its residents. Our long term goals can be summed up by the phrase "To preserve the beauty and life of Chebacco Lake".

Thank you for your consideration.

David Kerr, CLA President

Our River Otters

A funny thing happened a few weeks ago. Nancy Doyle, board member of the Chebacco Lake Association and long time member of the infamous "Dawn Patrol", was once again checking the outlets at the beaver dam. To her surprise something quickly swam by her feet. At the same time across the pond the five foot high (above the ice) by fifteen foot wide snow covered beaver lodge, had taken on some unmistakable markings in the snow. They were otter snow slides! These secretive, gregarious and playful creatures



Photo courtesy of the U.S. National Park Service. Credit: Rocky Mountain National Park

were sliding down the outside of the beaver lodge. It is hard not to like the playful antics of the otter. We are so lucky to have this beautiful creature

continued on page 6

Issue Highlights

| | |
|---|---|
| From the CLA President's Chair..... | 1 |
| CLA Officers and Board of Directors for 2004 - 2005..... | 2 |
| News & Notes..... | 2 |
| "Yesteryear on the Lake" - The Chebacco Ice Industry..... | 3 |
| Mark Your Calendars..... | 3 |
| Designing With Nature - Landscaping for a Healthy Lake..... | 4 |
| Kids Quiz..... | 7 |
| CLA Membership Application..... | 8 |

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News & Notes

The Board of Directors of the Chebacco Lake Association has been very active in the last month. Here's what has been happening.

New CLA Web Site

Sheri Lamkin has found a volunteer to set up a web site for us - Ron Lamkin. The web site can be accessed at www.chebaccolake.org. *Thank you Ron!*

Informational Meetings

Vice President Sue McLaughlin, Hamilton Representative Nancy Doyle, and President Dave Kerr all attended the **Massachusetts Coalition of Lakes and Ponds** meeting on January 26. All of them were educated and motivated by this day-long session.

Robyn Kanter has offered to contact the **Essex Conservation Commission** on our behalf and will be attending future Conservation Commission meetings.

Dave Kerr had an informal meeting with the Chairman of the Master Planning Commission in Hamilton and will be scheduling meetings with the **Planning Board** and the **Zoning Board**. He will also be contacting the **Conservation Commission in Hamilton**. Dave also attended a meeting of watershed groups at the **Annisquam Station of the MA Division of Marine Fisheries** on February 2. The main focus was on the status of the river herring or Alewife. Chebacco Lake is a spawning pond for these fish that enter and exit the lake through Alewife Brook in Essex. We need to help with the Alewife counts beginning in April. Please watch our web site for more information, email us, or call one of the CLA representatives.

Lakeside Survey in the Making

Nancy Doyle will be developing a survey for lakeside residents to answer and let us know what they see are problems and issues on the lake.

Grant Proposals in Development

On the financial side, Dave Kerr has been working on three separate grant proposals for the CLA. Two are for the CLA alone, for educational and physical projects. The third is in partnership with the Mass Audubon North Shore, which will allow us to do an assessment of issues on the lake and develop a quality long-term lake management plan for the lake's watershed.

New Name for CLA?

In order to accurately define our association and to develop relationships with other organizations in the area that we can work with to care for our lake, we are proposing that we change our name from the Chebacco Lake Association to the **Chebacco Lake and Watershed Association**. The open space, woodlands, and wetlands surrounding us are all important to us, and they affect the lake. Please let us know your feelings. We can be reached at the emails on the web site, by phone, or by mail.

Mass Congress of Lakes and Ponds (COLAP) Annual Workshop

On a very cold Saturday, January 29, Dave Kerr, Nancy Doyle and Sue McLaughlin traveled to Becker College in Leicester to attend the annual MACOLAP workshop. Representatives from lake and pond associations through the State came to get information and discuss problems with people from State agencies and businesses. Some of the topics discussed were:

- Aquatic plant and lake management plans
- Water quality monitoring
- Weed Watchers Volunteer Program
- Impact of road salt on lakes and streams
- Permitting problems, geese and overdevelopment

A lot of information was brought back to share with the entire CLA Board. Some of this will be in future newsletters.

By Sue McLaughlin

“Yesteryear on the Lake” – The Chebacco Ice Industry

Ice harvesting on Chebacco Lake was a thriving business for many years. In 1850, a Boston company decided to build a railroad line from the center of Hamilton to Essex to transport the ice. The Essex branch of the Eastern Railroad Co. was completed in 1872. Smaller ice cutting operations had probably been on the lake for many years, but the coming of the railroad brought opportunities for much larger companies.

James Brown of Cambridge built the Drivers Union Ice Co. on the shore of the lake where Echo Cove Road makes the turn. The rail line ran closest to this spot and several rail sidings were put in for the ice houses. The Drivers Union buildings were built in 1877. There were nine ice houses – each one measuring 32 ft. by 100 ft. They could hold 10,000 tons of ice. C. W. Mears built an ice house in 1883 to the right of what is now called the “old” Essex beach on Red Gate Road. In 1900, he built a larger ice house on the shore of the lake where the “Patriots Landing” houses are now. This building was 200 ft. by 240 ft., and had walls 18” thick, filled with sawdust for insulation. After the Mears ice house was filled each year, marsh hay was laid on top of the ice and a moveable roof was put on. The building was rebuilt several times after fires – the last time was about 1935, and a permanent galvanized roof was installed. Two smaller ice houses were built by Alvah Day and Bertram Mears. There was also a boarding house that served meals and provided lodging to workers who lived too far away to go home at night.

continued on page 6

Mark Your Calendars

Non-Toxic Landscaping & Gardening Fair

The fair will be held **Saturday, March 19**, 9 am – 3 pm at Gloucester High School Field House. The event is sponsored by the Cape Ann League of Women Voters.

For a list of invasive non-native plants & shrubs check out the New England Wild Flower Society’s web site at:

www.newfs.org/conserve/invasive.htm

Spring Yard Sale

As you know, we had our first CLA yard sale last year at The Junction’s parking lot. It was a great success, bringing in \$701 to our treasury.

We’re planning to have our 2nd Annual CLA Yard Sale on **Sunday, May 15**. Please consider donating your unwanted objects for our yard sale. If you have any items you’d like to donate, please call Betty Ozolins at 978-468-3088.

Summer Meeting/Picnic

Our Annual Meeting will be held on **Sunday, June 26**, at Centennial Grove. The meeting will be followed by a picnic. Our picnic last year was a huge success. Mark your calendars and plan to join us for the meeting and a lot of fun.

Hazardous Waste Drop-Off

The Town of Essex will hold their hazardous waste drop-off on **Saturday, June 11**. For information and to register, call the Essex Department of Public Works at 978-768-6431.

The Hamilton date for the fall is still to be determined.

Designing With Nature – Landscaping for a Healthy Lake

The Shoreline Buffer Zone

If you have ever walked along the ponds in Chebacco Woods, you may have noticed the grouping of plant material that separates the trails from the ponds. This shoreline vegetation along the bank is an example of a natural BUFFER ZONE. This area is important in that in addition to creating a naturally scenic shoreline, the plants in the buffer zone are helping to curb runoff pollution and soil erosion. They are also providing a wildlife habitat. In short, this buffer zone is extremely important in maintaining good water quality.

When all the homes around the lake were summer cottages, we still had the benefit of this natural buffer zone. However, as homes were remodeled, septic systems installed, lawns, and driveways developed many of these vegetated areas were lost. Nevertheless, it is very easy to recreate these areas, either in a natural state or in a more designed setting – “controlled wildness”, as I call it. If you look closely at the plants that make up a natural buffer zone, they include many plants that landscape professionals use all the time in their work. Usually, because these plants have already adapted to the soil conditions they are easy to grow and require very little maintenance (which is why homeowners love them).

In this article, I will talk about the plants you can use along the edge of the shoreline, as far back as 10 – 15 feet.

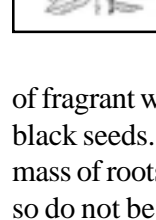
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Designing With Nature – Landscaping for a Healthy Lake

If you want the natural look, just select a few from the list below, randomly plant them and let nature take its course. For a more designed look, layout a few beds and plant in masses of one variety. You may want to frame an opening vista or pathway to the lake. BE CREATIVE!



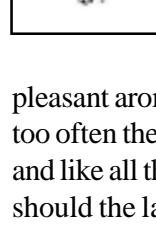
Amelanchier canadensis (Shadbush) – A sturdy tree-like shrub that has clouds of white flowers in early spring followed by dark red fruits. The branching has a nice form with gray bark so it can stand alone as a specimen plant. A great choice for the water’s edge as it tolerates “wet feet”. 10 – 15’



Clethra alnifolia (Summersweet or Sweet Pepper Bush) – This is a great shrub with showy spikes of fragrant white flowers in late July followed by clusters of small black seeds. It spreads by underground stems and makes a dense mass of roots, giving it value as a soil binder. It can stand in water, so do not be afraid to plant this plant near water as well. 6 – 8’



Ilex verticillata (Black Alder) - This deciduous holly is the plant with the showy bright red berries in late fall that you see growing in the streams and ponds in Chebacco Woods. The shrub grows in regular soil as well and with a little pruning it makes a great wide-spreading shrub 6-8’ high.



Lindera benzoin (Spicebush) – This native shrub was a staple of colonial gardens because of the pleasant aromatic qualities of its flowers, but you do not hear of it too often these days. It is a great shrub for any naturalistic setting and like all the plants on this list, it can take considerable moisture should the lake rise. 6 – 8’



Morella pensylvanica (Bayberry) – This sturdy shrub is grown like Clethra in that its roots are clump forming. Therefore, it makes for a great soil binder. You may be familiar with the berries, but the foliage is very attractive as well – a glossy green color with nice fall shades. In an exposed setting it will only get about 3’ tall.



These are just a few shrubs to get you started. I have used botanical names because when it comes to native shrubs there is often more than one name. Spicebush, for example, refers to at least five different plants that I know of. The local nurseries are usually very willing to help you select the right plants if you tell them the setting and soil conditions. By the waters edge you want plants that can tolerate a lot of moisture.

A few tips: When planting in masses, use an odd number (5/7/9) and plant in a zigzag pattern. In addition, if you want someone to give you a little more time at the nursery, try to go during the week. ***Spring is just around the corner!***

By Robyn Kanter

Drawings courtesy of the USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / Britton, N.L., and A. Brown. 1913. Illustrated flora of the northern states and Canada. Vol. 2: 292; Vol. 2: 667; Vol. 2: 489; Vol. 2: 135; Vol. 1: 585.

Phosphorus-Free Dishwasher Detergents

Phosphorous can lead to a nutrient imbalance in ponds and lakes, which fuels the overgrowth of algae and aquatic plants, leading to depletion of oxygen, causing fish kills and a stagnant murky water.

Along with encouraging everyone to use non-phosphorous lawn and garden fertilizers, we'd like to encourage you to use phosphorous-free dishwasher detergents. If you live within 300 feet of Chebacco Lake, phosphorous you use in your home can reach the lake through your septic leaching system.

Phosphorous was banned from laundry detergents years ago. At the time, however, dishwashers were not widely used and were overlooked. According to information we received from Martin's Pond Association, if you use your dishwasher five times a week, using Cascade Plus Powder, you may contribute 3.3 pounds of phosphorous per year to Chebacco Lake.

Below are some common dishwasher detergent brands and their phosphorous content.

| Brand | Phosphorous (grams/tbsp) |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Trader Joe's Store Brand: | 0 (phosphorous free) |
| Ecover Natural (Shaw's): | 0 (phosphorous free) |
| Seventh Generation Free & Clear (Wild Oats): | 0 (phosphorous free) |
| Cascade Gel: | 1.00 |
| Electrosol Powder: | .72 |
| Market Basket Gel: | .80 |
| Sunlight Gel: | .83 |
| Electrosol Gel: | .70 |
| Palmolive Gel: | .32 |

The March 2005 issue of Consumer Reports rated Trader Joe's powder as excellent – in fact, it was #2 on their chart. If you don't currently use a phosphorous-free dishwasher detergent, please switch to one and help restore the health of Chebacco Lake.

Next Issue of the Newsletter

Please send submissions for the next newsletter by April 1, 2005 to Betty Ozolins at bozolins@Comcast.net

Become a Member!

Renew Your Membership!

For many years the CLA has been working hard to protect our most valuable asset – Chebacco Lake. Along with their continuing efforts toward a lake management plan, the CLA continues to educate us about our lake's history and ways in which we can preserve and continue to enjoy Chebacco Lake.

In the past we primarily depended on volunteers for our projects – for example, lake shore clean-ups (removing debris and foam blocks), abandoned dock removal (removing those dangerous abandoned docks). It has only been through volunteer efforts that we have been able to maintain water flow and stabilize the lake water level.

However, some of our projects do require a financial investment. For example, permitting and water quality testing are CLA expenses. Two new aquatic weeds have been detected, and their identification and control plan will require professional analysis and reporting. The CLA also maintains our membership and representation in the Massachusetts Coalition of Lakes and Ponds Association, which is a wonderful source of information. Our quarterly newsletter, written and laid out by volunteers, requires printing and postage.

Of course – We like fun, too! We'd like to increase participation in our annual July 4th boat parade. Join us for our annual meeting and picnic on Sunday, June 26 at Centennial Grove. Last year's first annual picnic was a huge success.

Please join the CLA. It's an investment in the future good health and beauty of Chebacco Lake.

continued from page 1

Our River Otters

on our front door. Many of us have experienced the shenanigans of the otters swimming by, diving for fish and mussels, floating on their backs and eating away. They also eat small amphibians.

Otters manage their lives by being the high tempo, agile, yet methodical animal that is such a pleasure to watch. They have a single minded focus on their environment and a fine sense of control. Yet, they go about their business of their life with such seeming freedom and joy, that it seems a shame not to describe them as happy-go-lucky critters of nature.

Bob Arnebeck, who has been tracking River Otter on an island in the St. Lawrence River, just east of Lake Ontario since 1994, says that he thinks otters are not like other animals that just roam around looking for things. To him otters always seem to be going somewhere in particular, on a mission, a rendezvous with the right fish at the right time. This is a strategy that has brought them the most food for the least effort. They do not stay in one pond. They will stay for periods of weeks and move on from pond to pond and back again, never depleting the fish supply.

Unfortunately, as he had done to the beaver, man nearly hunted the otter to the point of extinction in the early and mid 1900's. Originally there were otter from Alaska to Florida, but today it is largely absent from Mid-America due to hunting, habitat lost, and pollution. Even in 2002, the American River Otter is still trapped for fur in thirty states.

By Sheri Lamkin

continued from page 3

“Yesteryear on the Lake” – The Chebacco Ice Industry

The Chebacco ice industry provided work for many local people. Many men would ride the train to the lake from Hamilton and Essex. After 1895, many could ride to work on the street cars that ran along Route 22 and stopped at the waiting room that was later turned into the Junction Ice Cream stand.

The ice was usually 10” thick by the end of December and cutting could begin. Men and horses cleared any snow from the ice and cut 2” deep grooves in a checkerboard pattern. These lines were then cut with ice saws and pushed toward the ice houses with 18 ft. poles. A chain hoist hauled the blocks into the houses. The blocks of ice ranged in size from 22” square to 44” square. The 44” blocks weighed about 600 lbs. Ice cutting season only lasted six to seven weeks each winter, so the men had to work quickly sometimes cutting ice all night. On some days, five or six freight cars were filled from the Mears ice house and sent to Chelsea or the S.S. Pierce Co. in Salem. During open winters, ice was cut at the ends of the coves and hauled by boats to the ice houses. At the end of Echo Cove, then called Blind Hole Cove, the ice would be hauled through the woods to Woodbury’s R.R. crossing, near the intersection of Essex and Forest Streets, and loaded onto freight cars there.

The Drivers Union Ice Co. became the Boston Ice Co. in 1905, and closed down several years later. The building burned on August 4, 1914. The fire was believed to have been set. The other ice houses gradually closed as refrigeration became available. Trains on the Essex branch stopped running in 1942, and the tracks were taken up soon after that. Parts of the railroad beds and pieces of several ice house foundations are all that is left of busy winters on Chebacco Lake.

Pictures, maps and more information on the ice industry are available at the Essex library and there is a permanent display of ice cutting tools at the Wenham Museum.

Safety Tip

Monitor Ice Conditions

As the days get longer and warmer, please keep an eye on ice conditions. They can change overnight and the springs in the lake will make the ice thinner in some spots.

Even if you don’t live right next to the lake, your child or pet may be enticed to walk on unsafe ice.

Boating Courses

Boating courses are offered by the Gloucester Power Squadron and the Beverly Power Squadron.

For information, contact:

Ron Mason
Gloucester Power Squadron
978-468-4824

John Hagar
Beverly Power Squadron
781-334-7259

Hey Kids, Try This Quiz!

1. What is the color of a river otter's fur?

- a. gold
- b. dark brown
- c. light gray
- d. pink

2. What is one of the river otter's favorite foods?

- a. fish
- b. birds
- c. butterflies
- d. weeds

3. What makes river otters slide so well?

- a. their sense of balance
- b. their webbed feet
- c. their glossy fur
- d. their strong tail



4. River otters often use dens built by other animals.

- a. True
- b. False

5. When are river otters most active?

- a. when there are lots of boats around
- b. at night when it is quiet
- c. 4th of July
- d. all of the above

6. What do otters use to mark the land bordering their territories?

- a. tracks in the snow
- b. acorns
- c. rock walls
- d. musk and urine

| | |
|--------------|------|
| 3. c | 6. d |
| 2. a | 5. b |
| 1. b | 4. a |
| Quiz Answers | |

Drawing credit: Charles E. Schafer, *Michigan Wildlife Sketches*, in cooperation with Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

- Voice your opinion!
 - Wildlife sightings
 - Lake related photos
- Send us any news and views.

Announcing our new Web Site!
www.chebaccolake.org



Chebacco Lake Association
P.O. Box 2344
South Hamilton, MA 01982

Chebacco Lake Association Membership Application

If you're not yet a CLA member, please join! We'd really appreciate your participation. If your membership has expired, please renew your membership now. Your membership expiration date is noted on your address label.

New **Renewal** **Choose one:** **Member \$25** **Patron \$50** **Sponsor \$75**

Name _____

Mailing Address _____

Lake Address (if different) _____

Telephone Number _____ E-mail Address _____

Please circle all that apply to your household: Lakeside resident / Property within 500' of lake /
 Seasonal resident / Non-resident property owner / Sport or recreational user of lake area /
 Recreational user of Chebacco Woods

THANK YOU FOR YOUR MEMBERSHIP!

Please send completed form and dues to: CLA, P. O. Box 2344, So. Hamilton, MA 01982