



# CHEBACCO LAKE & WATERSHED ASSOCIATION *Newsletter*

A Quarterly Publication of the Chebacco Lake & Watershed Association

www.chebaccolake.org

February 2009

## Designing With Nature Landscaping for a Healthy Lake

### Winter on Chebacco Lake

The winter season can be especially lovely on and around the shores of our lake. Now that it has frozen there are many winter activities that you can enjoy, such as ice fishing, skating, snow shoeing and cross-country skiing. Last week, after the January 18th snowstorm, I was skiing across the lake and thoroughly enjoying the winter scene. Hemlocks and white pines, their branches heavily laden with snow, hung gracefully around the shoreline. The bare maples and oaks, covered with snow, sparkled in the sunlight. The scene was accentuated by a wonderful cold, bright blue sky.

We all know the trees along the shore play an important role in helping keep the lake waters clean, but they also provide a wonderful aesthetic value. The CLWA thanks all of you that are helping us protect this natural beauty. Try and get out on the lake this winter and enjoy the view!

Another activity that you can partake in this time of year is winter bird feeding. Most birds that stay in our area for the winter eat seed, as insects are hard to find in the cold weather. Black oil sunflower seeds are high in oil content, important for birds to get quick energy in the winter. This type of seed attracts cardinals, woodpeckers, blue jays, goldfinches, chickadees and nuthatches.

Nyger, safflower seed and white millet are also good for winter feeders. Most birders say to avoid mixed seeds, as they contain fillers such as red millet that most birds won't eat. With every thing frozen around them, birds also have a hard time finding fresh water in the winter; so putting out a source of water is also very helpful to them.

If you have planted a variety of shrubs and small trees in your yard the birds will have many perches from which to rest in between meals. I have about seven different types of feeders placed among some small trees in one section of my yard. There are times I will have as many as 50-75 birds "eating and resting". I watch them from my kitchen window as I wash the dishes. It is quite entertaining!

*Robyn Kanter*

## Ice Skating Safety

Skating, cross country skiing, ice fishing or just walking on our frozen lake are wonderful opportunities to get fresh air and exercise. Being on the ice requires a great deal of caution, though. Ice should be at least 4 to 6 inches thick for skating, skiing, fishing or walking. So before venturing out on the ice to skate, ski, fish or walk, be sure it is at least 4" to 6" thick. Ice formed over currents or natural springs is usually thin and weak.

As the days become more sun-lit and the temperatures go up (even slightly) the ice becomes weak and not safe. Typically, clear blue ice is the strongest, white "milky" ice is half as strong, and grey ice indicates the unsafe presence of water. Rain, mild spells and warm winds can impact ice conditions on a daily basis, deteriorating ice quality, making it untrustworthy and unsafe extremely quickly.

As the ice starts to melt, pets must be prevented from wandering on the ice. Pets depend on us humans to protect them from thinning ice.

A skate or walk around our frozen lake can be a great adventure, giving welcome relief from cabin fever – but caution must always be used.

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# Chebacco Lake History

## The Chebacco Ice Industry

Ice harvesting was a thriving business on Chebacco Lake for many years. In the beginning it was small operations for the local area. That changed in 1872 when the Essex branch of the Eastern Railroad Co. was completed from the center of Hamilton to Essex. The rail lines ran near the lake in the area that is now Echo Cove Road, Red Gate Road and Patriots Landing with several sidings installed. Several large ice companies started business. One was started by James Brown from Cambridge who built the Drivers Union Ice Co. in 1877. It included nine ice houses each measuring 32 feet by 100 feet. C.W. Mears built a larger ice house nearby in 1883. The walls were 18 inches thick and filled with sawdust that probably came from the shipbuilding operation on the Essex River. Many of the workers traveled by train and later by street car when that came through the area in 1895. Boarding houses were built to for the workers who lived too far away.

The ice cutting season was short, usually six to seven weeks, so the men had to work quickly. Sometimes they worked all night. Cutting usually started in late December when the ice was about 10 inches thick. Horses pulling a plow cleared the ice of any snow and cut 2 inch deep grooves into the ice in a checkerboard pattern. Men with special ice saws cut the ice and pushed it toward the ice house with 18 foot long poles. The blocks of ice ranged from 22 to 44 inches square. The 44 inch ones weighed about 600 pounds. Some days 5 to 6 freight cars would be filled from just one of the companies and sent to Salem or Chelsea. During winters when much of the ice wasn't safe, the ice was cut at the end of coves and hauled by boats to the ice houses.

The ice industry continued until the early 1900's and gradually closed down as more people had refrigeration. The ice houses eventually burned down, some by accident and some were set. Trains on the Essex branch stopped running in 1942 and the tracks were taken up soon after that. Now parts of the railroad bed and a few sections of the ice house foundations are all that are left of a thriving time on Chebacco Lake.

The Essex Shipbuilding Museum is having a program about the ice industry including pictures, some old movie footage and tools on April 14, at 7:30 PM. Call the museum when it gets closer to the time to confirm the date.

## Lost & Found

**LOST: Gray 2 person kayak. Last seen in Echo Cove in the fall.**

Please call Nancy at 978-468-4487.

# Chebacco Lake & Watershed Association

## Membership Application/Renewal Form

For many years the Chebacco Lake & Watershed Association has been working hard to protect our most valuable asset – Chebacco Lake. The CLWA continues to educate the community about our lake’s history and ways in which we can preserve and continue to enjoy Chebacco Lake. The CLWA conducts water quality testing, works to maintain water flow at Alewife Brook, and supports conservation efforts to protect Chebacco Lake and its watershed. Please join the CLWA. It’s an investment in the future good health and beauty of Chebacco Lake.

Chebacco Lake & Watershed Association

- |   |                                       |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>New</b>     | <input type="checkbox"/> Member \$25  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Renewal</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> Patron \$50  |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor \$75 |

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Lake Address (if different) : \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address(s): \_\_\_\_\_

***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

**All memberships expire January 31.**

THANK YOU FOR YOUR MEMBERSHIP!

Please send completed form and dues to:

Chebacco Lake & Watershed Association  
P O Box 2344  
So. Hamilton, MA 01982