

## Latham's Snipe

Scientific Name: *Gallinago hardwickii*  
Atlas Number: 168

### Description:

Latham's Snipe is the largest snipe in Australia, with cryptic, mainly brown, plumage. The bill is long and straight, the wings rather short and pointed and the tail is long. It has short legs and when folded, the wings project well past the tail, giving a pointed look. The upper body is boldly patterned with black, brown and white. There is a bold narrow dark brown cheek stripe



photo by Charles Dove

and dark line through the eye. The sexes are similar and, unlike most migratory waders, do not show a lot of seasonal variation. The eyes are set well back on the distinctive rounded head. Snipe are very shy and wary and burst from cover when disturbed, zig-zagging off with a very fast flight, with a 'crek' call, before dropping to cover again. This is often the first indication that they are around, as they are usually well-camouflaged when still. This species is also known as the Japanese Snipe.

### Similar species:

Latham's Snipe is very similar in size and shape to Swinhoe's Snipe, *G. megala*, and Pin-tailed Snipe, *G. stenura*. Latham's Snipe is larger and has more pointed wingtips in flight. They are all very similar however in the field.

### Distribution:

Latham's Snipe is a non-breeding migrant to the south east of Australia including Tasmania, passing through the north and New Guinea on passage. Latham's Snipe breed in Japan and on the east Asian mainland.

### Habitat:

Latham's Snipe are seen in small groups or singly in freshwater wetlands on or near the coast, generally among dense cover. They are found in any vegetation around wetlands, in sedges, grasses, lignum, reeds and rushes and also in saltmarsh and creek edges on migration. They also use crops and pasture.

### Seasonal movements:

Latham's Snipe is a migratory wader, moving to Australia in our warmer months. Birds may fly directly between Japan and Australia, stopping at a few staging areas. They leave their breeding areas from August to November, arriving in Australia mainly in September. They leave the south-east by the end of February, moving northwards along the coast. Most have left Queensland by mid-April.

### Feeding:

Latham's Snipe feed by thrusting their long bill into mud with an up and down 'sewing machine' action in soft mudflats or shallow water. They roost in the day and feed at night, early morning or evening. They are omnivorous, eating seeds and plant material, worms, spiders and insects, some molluscs, isopods and centipedes.

### Breeding:

Latham's Snipe breeds in Japan and on the East Asian mainland, on dry ground such as grassy hillsides and forest clearings. The males have spectacular display flights, rising in the air and then diving to the ground, in courtship or to defend territory. The female incubates in a shallow depression lined with grasses and leaves.

Text courtesy of <http://www.birdsinbackyards.net/>

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### Founded in 1977

#### Club's Aim:

To join together people with a common interest who wish to further their knowledge and enjoyment of the bird life around them.

### ILLAWARRA BIRD OBSERVERS' CLUB INC.

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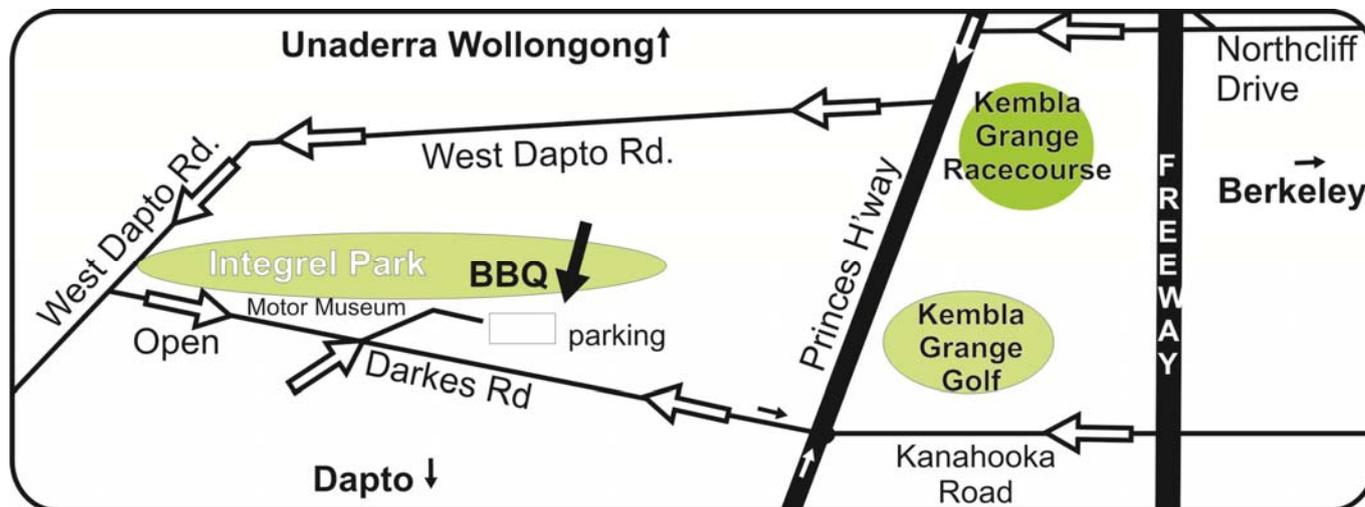
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# DECEMBER ACTIVITIES

**The Christmas Picnic** will again be at Integral Park and will be on 6th December at 4pm. A BBQ will be provided consisting of sausages, onions and bread. If you wish to bring your own meat please do so. Bring your own salads and drinks.



## CHRISTMAS MEETING MONDAY 8TH DECEMBER AT 7PM NOTE EARLY START WITH INTERVAL AT 8.00PM

Come and enjoy our usual Christmas evening of fun, there will be a lucky door prize, verse, quizzes and great prizes, there will also be a prize for the best dressed up person, so come along and bring an extra special plate for supper (soft drinks and nibbles provided). There will also be a silent auction so please consider bringing along an item to donate. Be assured of a great evening.

### EARLY Midweek Walk:

The Feb midweek walk will be at Berkeley Boat Harbour.  
Details in February Newsletter 2015

### **Next Committee Meeting:** Monday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2015

at Betty Hudson's home 1 Drualla Road Jamberoo at 7.30pm

Any members with anything they wish to raise are welcome to attend the meeting.

### **Newsletter:**

Deadline for articles and photos in the next IBOC newsletter is **26<sup>th</sup> January 2015**

Email contributions to Charles Dove [newsletter@iboc.org.au](mailto:newsletter@iboc.org.au) or post to 8 Carroll Avenue, Lake Conjola 2539. Ph: 0417 422 302.

## Fees for 2015

A motion at the AGM to increase the fees was passed.  
So fees will be Singles \$40 & Families \$50 as from 1.01.15



## PRESIDENTS REPORT 2014

Alan Cousins

Another eventful, enjoyable and hopefully interesting year has passed and as I indicated at the 2013 AGM my last as President of this great club. I feel after 5 years at the helm it is time for a change at the top. I am confident that given the response by members that our presentations for the year have been interesting and informative. Our first speaker for the year at the February meeting and club member and long distance traveller (get him while you can!) Peter Fackender whose subject was 'Photography in the Torry Plains, Murrumbidgee Wetlands'. March we were again fortunate to have a presentation by Holly Parsons from Birds in Backyards to let us know 'What Birds in Backyards is up to'. At the April meeting we were treated to the 'Birds of Norfolk Island' by club member Andrew Knowlson. May brought Judy Harrington down from the Sydney Olympic Park Authority with a presentation about 'Sea Eagles - their life in a busy city'. Club stalwart Betty Hudson gave us a glimpse of her 'Trip to Tasmania' at the July meeting. For July we had a diversion from birds with a presentation and display from Garth Rankin from The Illawarra Reptile Society. In August a DVD entitled 'Rainforest - the Secret of Life' was shown. Our September presentation should have been by Jodie Dunn from the Seabird Rescue Programme but unfortunately Jodie had to cancel on the day due to a bout of the dreaded 'Influenza'. After a number of hastily arranged options frustrated by equipment malfunctions member Kara Eddington had a thumb drive with her of her trip to Africa which included birds and animals, so she saved the night and was followed by an amusing story by Neil McKinlay regarding the antics of some Kookaburras at his house, which was incidentally followed up with a report in the next newsletter from Pam and Neil -The Attack of the Kookaburras. In October; Leon Fuller, the author of 'Wollongong's Native Trees' gave us an insight into biodiversity. Our midweek and monthly outings have again been to varied and interesting places. Our thanks go to Rupert Jarvis for arranging the midweek walks and Betty Hudson for arranging the monthly outings. Thanks also to Charles Dove for involvement in organising the joint outings with the Cumberland Bird Observers Club.

Sylvia Garlick again arranged special outings to Integral Park, Dapto, 'Introduction to Birds and Bush Walk for Children' on 23rd March and 21st September 2014. The children attending, accompanied by their parents, were escorted on a trip around the park to see the birds and their habitats. Much interest was shown on both days, a big thank you for Sylvia for the organisation and publicity and to club members who attended to assist. The Easter and Spring Camps have again been well attended and in excellent locations thanks to the efforts of Betty Hudson. Easter camp was in Hat Head National Park, Kempsey and the Spring camp, from which we have recently returned, was at Lake Cargelligo. The final species count for Easter camp was 134 and the count for the Spring camp is 160 a club record. Due to its popularity our 2013 edition of 'The Handbook of Birds found in the Illawarra, Shoalhaven and Southern Tablelands' had to have a further print run and is still selling well. Since 2013 we have again had a very enjoyable get together at Integral park, Dapto for our Christmas Barbeque, thanks again to our able chefs Tom and Neil and to all members who attended to make another successful gathering. The 2013 Christmas party was again well attended. Thank you all members who attended and participated to make a night of fun, food and entertainment. Finally I would like to record my thanks to your Committee for their support during 2014. Andrew Knowlson (Vice President), Betty Hudson (Secretary and many other club duties!), Ken Brown (Our very able Treasurer), Anne Cousins, Charles Dove, Sylvia Garlick and Bill Zealey. Charles Dove for the continued high standard of the Newsletter, Tom Wylie for being keeper of the keys (when he can't foist them on to me) and for setting out the tables and chairs on club nights, Neil Wheway for membership badges and attendance book, Anne Cousins and her helpers for looking after the Library, Sylvia Garlick and Betty Hudson for preparing the tables etc. for supper, Chris Cartledge for his expertise as our Webmaster, Bill Zealey as our representative to BIGnet, Darryl Goldrick as the Records Officer and David Garlick for keeping the notice board up to date. Lastly, thanks to you all for your support during 2014.

**Little Lake Barrack Point**

The first bird sighted was a male Common Koel calling very loudly. We all had a good look at his red eye and then he dashed off looking for his mate (maybe). Fourteen eager Birdos checked out the shores of the lake and came up with a bird on the other side which, after much discussion, we decided was a Common Greenshank. There was also a Common Blackbird heard so we got a few of the commoners out of the way at the start. Two Black-winged Stilts were foraging for food along the shore with a couple of Silver Gulls. The area runs along the back of the bowling club and tennis courts with plenty of trees and mangroves. High up in a large pine tree we spotted a Nankeen Night Heron with his head behind his back and one big eye open watching us. Magpies had a nest in a tree nearby and we heard and saw European Goldfinch. There are always plenty of White-cheeked Honeyeaters present and here was no exception. We then stopped for morning tea in the shade of some swamp oaks.

The second part of the walk was across the road and along the southern side of the bridge spanning the creek. This track runs at the back of houses while on the other side of the creek is a caravan park. Here we saw A Little Egret in breeding plumage and a White-faced Heron. Flying along the creek was a Striated Heron that landed not far ahead of us and we were able to watch it hunting along the far bank. We saw many more birds I haven't mentioned, 53 species altogether. It was good weather and an enjoyable easy walk. Thanks to Rupert for checking out the walk and for leading us.

Bird List for Little Lake Walk Wednesday 12 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 53 species recorded and 14 members attended			
Australian Wood Duck	Nankeen Kestrel	Superb Fairy-wren	Magpie-lark
Chestnut Teal	Black-winged Stilt	Yellow Thornbill	Eastern Yellow Robin
Pacific Black Duck	Masked Lapwing	Yellow-rumped Thornbill	Silveryeye
Rock Dove	Common Greenshank	Spotted Pardalote	Welcome Swallow
Spotted Dove	Silver Gull	Little Wattlebird	Tree Martin
Crested Pigeon	Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo	Red Wattlebird	Red-whiskered Bulbul
Little Pied Cormorant	Galah	New Holland Honeyeater	Common Blackbird
Little Black Cormorant	Little Corella	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	Common Starling
Australian Pelican	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Grey Butcherbird	Common Myna
Striated Heron	Rainbow Lorikeet	Australian Magpie	House Sparrow
White-faced Heron	Crimson Rosella	Pied Currawong	European Goldfinch
Little Egret	Eastern Koel	Grey Fantail	
Nankeen Night Heron	Laughing Kookaburra	Willie Wagtail	
Australian White Ibis	Satin Bowerbird	Australian Raven	

*Pics by Terry Edwell*



**No Weekend Walk Report for November due to cancellation because of inclement weather.**

### Library DVD's.

Would all members please check their DVD library for any that might belong to IBOC, there are a number missing that have not been recorded as on loan, thank you

### Note for your diary change in start time

The Christmas Picnic will again be at Integral Park and will be on 6th December at 4pm. A BBQ will be provided consisting of sausages, onions and bread, if you wish to bring your own meat please do so. Bring your own salads and drinks.

## ARTICLES OF INTEREST

### Dying to be clean:

#### The new technique for controlling feral cats

Nicky Phillips - SMH - November 7, 2014

Cleanliness may be next to godliness unless you're a feral cat, in which case, cleanliness may get you a place next to god; in kitty heaven.

Concerned by the serious harm feral cats are having on native wildlife, a cunning ecologist has invented a device that, when triggered by a passing cat, sprays a shot of poison onto their fur. Inventor John Read said as cats were fastidious about being clean they duly licked their fur clean, ingesting a lethal dose of poison.

"The evidence from the trials we've done so far has demonstrated that most cats will groom fairly fastidiously, fairly quickly in a pen," said Dr Read, an environmental consult and associate lecturer at the University of Adelaide.

While the device is still in early stages, it promises to overcome issues associated with other cat-control methods such as baiting and trapping. To reduce the impact they pose to dozens of native species, prey will also have to adapt. Dr Read's wife, ecologist Katherine Moseby, is leading an experiment to teach native animals to be more vigilant against feral predators, first with dummy foxes and then a real cat. Dr Read said his grooming device, which had a range of about four to five metres, would be most useful in areas with high cat density or where native animals needed protection and conservation.

It uses a poison called PAPP that was more humane than the commonly-used feral bait 1080.

"If a cat ingests a lethal dose they start to get wobbly and sleepy then they lie down and die," he said.

In the off-chance a pet cat or dog ingests the poison, a reversal agent is available.

But Dr Read said the device had specially designed sensors that would not trigger when passed by animals smaller or larger than an average cat such as dogs, wallabies or bilbies.

"It'll only fire on something the shape and size of a cat standing side on," he said.

Dr Read said the idea came from years of studying feral cat behaviour in the desert.

Government and conservationists are also placing a lot of hope in a new lethal bait, called curiosity, currently being trialled in multiple states.



This week it has been announced that the Hooded Plover (Eastern subspecies) has been formally listed as **Vulnerable** under our National environment legislation, the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999. For the first time, there is recognition of the national threatened status of the subspecies (SA, VIC, NSW and TAS). By taking this first major step to recognising a problem and defining the key actions we need to take to mitigate threats, we make great progress in our journey to species recovery. While BirdLife Australia has had the foresight to take action over the past decade, we now have 'top down' support via this listing, which will enable us to better detect developments that may have a negative impact, to access a broader range of funding sources, to emphasise the importance of conservation action for the species when we partake in NRM prioritisation planning, and to have more leverage in arguing for lower or negligible impacts to the species.

## Autumn 2015 Camp Gloucester 11<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> April 2015

The IBOC Autumn 2015 Camp will be at Gloucester Holiday Park, Denison Street, Gloucester from Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> April to Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2015. Nb this is the second week of the school holidays and the week after Easter.

This is a large holiday park on the banks of the Gloucester River close to the centre of the town. Travel north along the freeway to Newcastle and then north on the Pacific Hwy towards Taree. Take the Gloucester road (The Buckets Way) a left turn 18km north of Raymond Terrace.

### Accommodation:

**Cabins:** There are 9 ensuite cabins @ \$90 for 2 people per night. Configurations vary but 2 have 2 bedrooms and the rest 1 bedroom. Bedding is provided for the main bed only. Few details & no plans are available on their web site.

**Powered Site:** \$35 for 2 people per night

**Unpowered sites** \$14 per person per night  
(note these sites cannot be booked in advance but are plentiful).

Additional people are an additional charge for all accommodation.  
To make a booking you will need to phone the park as there are no online booking facilities.  
Phone 02 6558 1720 or email [info@gloucesterholidaypark.com](mailto:info@gloucesterholidaypark.com)

They charge a \$2 fee for credit card payments  
The park have suggested that we make bookings as soon as possible due the school holidays.

## Illawarra Bird Observers Club 2015 Committee

President	Bill Zealey
Vice President	Betty Hudson
Secretary	Pam Hazelwood
Treasurer	Ken Brown
Committee Members (4)	Anna Knowlson
	Darryl Goldrick
	Terry Edwell
	Jann Gowans
<u>Ex Officio positions:</u>	
Public Officer	Chris Cartledge
Newsletter Editor	Charles Dove
Activities Officer Monthly Walks	Alan & Anne Cousins
Activities Officer Camps	Betty Hudson
Activities Officer Mid-Week Walks	Rupert Jarvis
Records Officer	Darryl Goldrick
Librarians	Ann Cousins & Terry Edwell
Web Master	Chris Cartledge
Name Tags	Neil Wheway
Hall	Tom Wylie
Notice Board	David & Sylvia Garlic
Supper	Joan Wylie & Tera Wheway

## Lyrebirds Save Human Lives

Lyrebirds are the ultimate high achievers: the world's best songsters, the world's oldest songbird line (along with scrub-birds), beloved cultural icons that grace our coins, and spectacular ecosystem engineers. They may be something else as well – birds that save human lives.



The 'ecosystem engineer' tag refers to the changes they make when they scratch the ground to unearth insects. One lyrebird in a year can shift 200 tonnes of soil and litter per hectare, causing soil erosion and uprooting ground-hugging plants. A new paper by Daniel T. Nugent and two colleagues takes the engineering concept further by concluding that lyrebirds reduce bushfire risk by burying leaf litter and uprooting the grasses and bracken that carry fire.

They describe one site near Melbourne that because of lyrebird scratching's is virtually devoid of litter over an area of several hectares. Buried leaf litter decays quickly because it is brought into contact with soil micro-organisms and invertebrates rather than drying out on the surface into fuel that can spread fire.

On average, lyrebirds were found to reduce litter fuel loads by 25 per cent by burying 1.66 tonnes of litter per hectare. Nugent's modelling suggests this reduces the risk of fires occurring and the intensity of the fires that do occur. Lyrebirds also create refuges from fire by removing all the fuel from some gullies.

They can't feed where there is a thick understorey, so by scratching up seedlings they are in effect 'maintaining a suitable habitat for themselves through their own activity', Nugent says.

Noting that foxes and feral cats kill lyrebirds, Nugent and his colleagues offer a pithy punchline: "The loss of lyrebirds from forests adjacent to and within urban areas could result in higher fuel loads and an increased likelihood of wildfires threatening human life."

In other words, lyrebirds save human lives.

The research was undertaken north-east of Melbourne in an area hit by the Kilmore East–Murrindindi fire, which extended over 250,000 hectares and was the worst of the fires that struck Victoria on 7 February 2009.

Nugent suggests that elsewhere in Australia Mallee-fowl and burrowing bettongs could play a similar role in reducing fire risk in Australia. Both species are much rarer than they once were.



I know it is not fashionable to like little wattlebirds when they seem to be driving away other smaller and less assertive birds. Our family has a special admiration for Lefty, a little wattlebird who has lived in our garden for over 12 years. Lefty was so named because he was blind in his left eye. He was first noticed by our son Robert who was supposed to be studying for high school exams but instead was gazing out the window. We have watched as Lefty has raised many young ones and we grew to admire this bird who was King (or Queen) of our backyard. Sadly this morning we discovered Lefty lying dead on our driveway. There was no noticeable cause of death. We suspect Lefty's time had come.



Pam Hazelwood

**MONTHLY SIGHTINGS: October/November 2014**

compiled by Darryl Goldrick

SPECIES	NUMBER	DATE	LOCATION	HABITAT	OBSERVER
White-headed Pigeon	1	12/11/2014	Thirroul	Garden	Mike Morphett
Wonga Pigeon	1	8/11/2014	Jerrara Dam	road	Cheryl Akhurst
Topknot Pigeon	50+	23/10/2014	Excelsior Mine Area	Rainforest	Cheryl Akhurst
Tawny Frogmouth	1	8/11/2014	Bulli	Eucalypt Scrub	Max Davies
Striated Heron	1	12/11/2014	Little Lake, Warilla	Estuarine	IBOC
Little Egret	1 br/pl.	12/11/2014	Little Lake, Warilla	Estuarine	IBOC
Nankeen Night-Heron	1	12/11/2014	Little Lake, Warilla	Estuarine	IBOC
Brown Goshawk	1	30/10/2014	Thirroul	Garden	Mike Morphett
Brown Goshawk	1	7/11/2014	Thirroul	Garden	Mike Morphett
Australian Hobby	Pair	9/11/2014	Macauleys Hill, Thirroul	Norfolk Pine	Cheryl Akhurst
Peregrine Falcon	1	5/11/2014	North Nowra	Upper Grotto	Sheila Emery
Latham's Snipe	5	10/11/2014	Milton	Wetland	C Dove C Brandis
Common Greenshank	1	12/11/2014	Little Lake, Warilla	Estuarine	IBOC
Painted Button-quail	1	12/11/2014	Thirroul	Garden	Mike Morphett
Long-billed Corella	5	29/10/2014	Bellambi	Chounding Cres Park	Mike Morphett
Long-billed Corella	20+	7/11/2014	Bellambi	Chounding Cres Park	Mike Morphett
Long-billed Corella	~ 25	12/11/2014	Balarang	Powerlines	Darryl Goldrick
Rainbow Lorikeet	6	10/11/2014	Lake Illawarra South	Residential Yard	Darryl Goldrick
Eastern Koel	1	9/11/2014	Dapto	Backyard residential	Tera Wheway
Eastern Koel	1	8/11/2014	Bellambi	Residential Yard	Tom Wylie
Eastern Koel	1	4/11/2014	Albion Park Rail	Residential - yard	B & B Hales
Eastern Koel	2	11-12/11/14	Lake Illawarra South	Residential Yard	Darryl Goldrick
Southern Boobook	1	8/11/2014	Bulli	Eucalypt Scrub	Max Davies
Dollarbird	1	3/11/2014	Macauleys Hill, Thirroul	Norfolk Pine	Cheryl Akhurst
Green Catbird	1	8/11/2014	Bulli	Eucalypt Scrub	Max Davies
Green Catbird	3	23/10/2014	Excelsior 'scout camp', Thirroul	Rainforest	Cheryl Akhurst
Eastern Whipbird	2	9/11/2014	North Nowra	Garden	Sheila Emery
Cicadabird	1	8/11/2014	Marshall Mount	Eucalypts	Anna Knowlson
Golden Whistler	1	8/11/2014	Jerrara Dam	Trees	Cheryl Akhurst
Rufous Fantail	1	23/10/2014	Thirroul	Sylvan Woods' -forest	Cheryl Akhurst
Leaden Flycatcher	1	5/11/2014	Narrawallee	Tree	C Dove C Brandis
Satin Flycatcher	1	31/10/2014	Yatte Yattah	Tree	MUD birders
Rufous Songlark	1	4/11/2014	Milton	Fence	Charles Dove

**REMINDER**

The bird sightings reported to our sightings officer have dropped off considerably in the last few months, please remember to pass to Darryl Goldrick on [sightings@iboc.org.au](mailto:sightings@iboc.org.au) or to 149 Reddall Parade, Lake Illawarra South 2528 any that you see.

I photographed this Buff-banded Rail on the back lawn of one of my Worrowing Heights neighbours on Sunday 9th Nov. It was attending to the smorgasbord of worms forced to the surface when my neighbor slightly over-watered his lawn (read inadvertently left the hose running while playing bowls).

Peter Salvair

