

## Local group to take part in Christmas bird count

The annual Ruggs-Hardman Christmas Bird Count put on by the Heppner High School Field Biology class will be held on Dec. 22, 1980. The count will be one of 1360 similar counts taken from Hawaii to Labrador, and from Alaska to Venezuela, during the period between Dec. 20 and through Jan. 4.

This year marks the 81st anniversary of the original Christmas Bird Count, taken on Christmas Day, 1900, by an intrepid group of strollers in 25 locations, mostly around major northeastern cities. Since then the annual event has grown from its original 25 locations to its present 1,360, and the total participants

from 27 to an estimated 34,000. The Ruggs-Hardman count dates back to 1967 and averages around 45 to 50 student and adult birders.

This year every Canadian province, every American state, many Central American countries, and numerous West Indies Islands will submit their results to the National

Audubon society, which supervises the affair and publishes all the counts in its journal "American Birds."

The count itself is undoubtedly the big birding event of the year, and for some groups, it means days and weeks of strategy, planning, and logistics in trying to amass, in a single calendar day, the

biggest possible list of birds in the designated area. By tradition, the "count area is a circle of 15 miles in diameter, or roughly 177 square miles. The Ruggs-Hardman count is centered at Porcupine Ridge Road and Highway 207 outside of Ruggs.

Within the circle of land and water, count organizers at-

tempt to field as many competent birders as they can, who are grouped into "parties," each with a section of the circle, or points on the map, which they alone will search. There is no limit to the number of participants. Last year Oakland, Calif., fielded 43, and there were 23 counts with 100 or more participants.

There seems almost no limit, either, to the numbers of birds Christmas counters can

find in the circles. Obviously, at the Christmas season, the warmer climates hold an enormous advantage, as do all counts near salt water. In 1979 the count in the Atlantic area of the Panama Canal Zone scored highest with 320 species; the highest U.S. counts in 1979 were Freeport, Texas, and San Diego, Calif., who tied with 217. By contrast, Bethel, Alaska, at 26 degrees, found only four species. At least 55 of

1,152 counts in the U.S. listed 150 or more species, almost all of them in the balmy climes of California, Texas, and Florida. The Ruggs-Hardman count averages around 50 to 55 species a year.

All this information will be gathered, edited, and published in the July 1981 issue of "American Birds" whose editors organize and run the annual extravaganza. Apart from its attraction as a social, sporting, and competitive event, the annual count sheds much light on the early winter distribution of the different species of our native birds, where they are, and what number.

All counts are open to competent birders: for information on your nearest count, contact Steve Brownfield at 676-9696.

## Navy fireman from Boardman completes basic

Navy Fireman David D. Hug, son of Delmer and Barbara Hug of Route 1, Boardman, has completed recruit training at the Naval Training Center, San Diego.

During the eight-week training cycle, Hug studied general military subjects designed to prepare him for further academic and on-the-job training in one of the Navy's basic occupational fields.

Included in his studies were seamanship, close-order drill, Naval history and first aid. Personnel who complete this course of instruction are eligible for three hours of college credit in physical education and hygiene.

A 1977 graduate of Riverside High School, Hug joined the Navy in August, 1980.

## Have a poison-free Christmas

The Oregon Poison Control and Drug Information Center, based at the University of Oregon Health Sciences Center, urges everyone to have a safe holiday season without trips to the emergency room. These are some of their suggestions:

- Keep Christmas plants out of reach of youngsters. Poinsettias, holly, mistletoe and most greens (juniper, cedar, fir) can be harmful, if swallowed.

- Be aware of potential dangers in toys. Sharp edges, points, small parts and wiring on electrified toys can be dangerous. Also, don't give a toy to a person of the wrong age.

- Toddlers are attracted to the Christmas tree, but don't let them play with the tinsel, lights or bulbs.

- Gifts of perfume, cologne and aftershave are enticing to the little ones, too. The packaging and smells are appealing, but they are poisonous.

- Spiked egg nogs and punches containing alcohol should not be left out for the little ones. Too much can cause serious illness and even death.

- Thaw the Christmas turkey in the refrigerator, or in cold water (in a water-tight wrapper), and wash hands before dressing the bird. The stuffing should go in just before roasting, and should be removed when the bird is done. Be sure the turkey is thoroughly cooked, and don't let the cooked meat, gravy or stuffing sit at room temperature.

- For more details about how to have a safe holiday, the staff of the Poison Center will be happy to answer questions. Please call University Relations for more details.

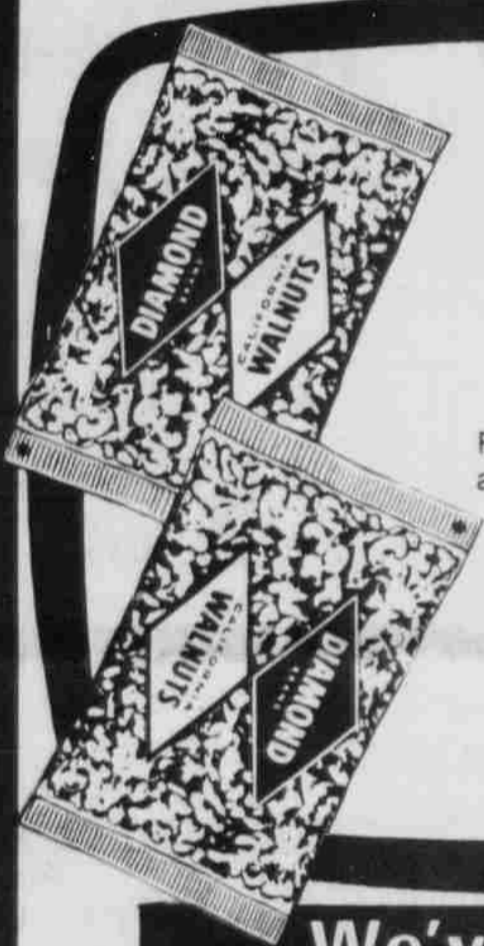
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