

# IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY REFERENCE SERIES

## Desert Birds Above Boise Valley

Number 1023

September 1993

Oregon Trail travelers descending into Boise Valley saw many kinds of birds, including eagles, hawks, falcons, and owls. Large numbers of magpies saluted and entertained them, while sharp tailed grouse, sage grouse, and quail attracted passing hunters. Forty or more species of birds were fairly common: ravens and crows were conspicuous, while smaller varieties included sparrows, meadow larks, horned larks, wrens, buntings blackbirds, king birds, towhees, and shrikes. Emigrant bird watchers could have compiled a much longer list. As they approached river bottom trees and marsh lands, they could add geese and several kinds of native ducks, as well as cliff swallows encountered when they came by lava palisades. Varied landforms attracted or supported selected species of birds that lent interest to emigrant tours through desert lands.