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Société d'Ornithologie de l'Ouest
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The IUCN Sahel Studies, 1991. Ed. by A.P. Wood & P. Rydén, 1992. xv + 169 pp. IUCN, Gland. ISBN 2-8317-0082-5. £12.50 + p & p from IUCN, 219c Huntingdon Road, Cambridge, U.K.

This is the second volume of IUCN Sahel Studies; the first was published in 1989. It is concerned with the issue of achieving sustainable land use in the Sahel and discusses the grand problems involved, including population growth, drought and failure of "development" policies. The major cause of land degradation, in the Sahel as elsewhere, is population growth combined with failure to develop away from subsistence agriculture, which leads to over-use of resources. The region is in a grim situation, with most of its countries bankrupt or nearly so.

IUCN's Sahel Programme began in 1984 and includes regional studies, monitoring, the formulation of national conservation strategies, field projects, training and education, many of which are dealt with in this multi-authored volume. Chapter 2, by C. Geerling & S. de Bie, identifies the key problem with admirable clarity: ecological limits. A human population dependent upon livestock production has reached a limit where higher levels of resource use are not sustainable. The same applies to arable agriculture in the region. This is why fluctuations in key resources, especially rainfall, lead directly to such drastic fluctuations in productivity and human survival. The solution is to develop security of food production at (or below) the carrying capacity of the land: a blindingly obvious conclusion but one that is extremely difficult to implement. This chapter ends by identifying a consequence, that excess people have to be subsidized or employed outside subsistence agriculture, but does not address how this can be achieved in the poor Sahelian countries.

Other chapters consider water scarcity management, the UN Sudano-Sahelian Programme, World Bank activities, the Ethiopian National Conservation Strategy, the Niger rural code, participatory land-use planning, the Tin-Telloust water management programme in Niger and comparative studies from Botswana (wildlife ranching), Saudi Arabia (attempts to reverse environmental degradation) and Australia (range management).

This is obviously not a book about birds but it is about problems that bear upon their survival. Chapter 2 is especially important for all involved in conservation, in any habitat (as the problems identified are so generally applicable). The rest will be of interest primarily to conservationists and land managers working in the Sahel.

Alan Tye

Every Arrival Late. By R.T. Wilson, 1992. 282 pp., black & white photos. Book Guild, Lewes. ISBN 0-86332-734-6. Hardback £14.95.

This may be the first autobiographical work reviewed in *Malimbus*. It concerns Africa, intelligently observed and wryly reported, by an international civil servant and amateur

(in the original and best sense of the word) ornithologist who provides a series of snapshots of two years in his life. It deals with 13 African countries, of which seven fall within *Malimbus*'s area of coverage and which might give an intending visitor useful hints as well as food for thought. For instance, the chapter on Niger recounts adventures which will be only too familiar to anyone who has travelled long-distance by road in francophone West Africa: efficient, but only in comparison with the anglophone parts. More seriously, Wilson presents a perceptive analysis of the problems of desertification in the Sahel. All the chapters are enlivened by little snippets of information thrown in as asides; I didn't know that the Dead Sea Apple *Calotropis procera* (that familiar, spindly, grey, roadside weed of semi-arid regions) was used in Sudan to blind people in one eye so that slavers would reject them. Cameroon, Nigeria and Togo are crammed into one chapter, in which the Cameroon and Nigeria accounts concentrate on the behaviour of bureaucrats, the disorganization of urban Cameroon, the Fon of Bafut and the horrors of public transport, while Togo's bit reinforces the impression of the comparative efficiency and lack of fuss of francophone countries.

Ethiopia gets the most coverage: not surprising given the author's country of residence during the period covered. Of the countries dealt with which I know, the treatment is generally fair, except Wilson is unnecessarily hard on Tanzania, perhaps because he remembered it in better, earlier days and then returned at its nadir. This chapter contains several small errors which increase the level of criticism and rather spoil my enjoyment of it. There is a scattering of misprints throughout the book, the best being "the Mushophagidae - literally the banana-eaters". Yes, birds do feature, although only incidentally, and mostly Corvidae.

Throughout the book, one finds oneself comparing one's own experiences with those recounted and wondering whether one's own are more interesting or amusing and whether one could have written about them better. In producing this book, Wilson has done what many of us have, more or less seriously, considered doing ourselves. He is adept at summing up the character of a country and its people (indigenous and not) in a few words and through a few incidents. The book is written from the viewpoint of an expatriate, and Wilson's problem is that sometimes he is too perceptive; his direct analyses will offend some readers, who will consider him a smug neo-colonialist, without realising that he is simply seeing and telling the truth about Africa, and without seeing his subtle sympathy through the obvious criticism. But then, I doubt that he was writing for such people.

Alan Tye

Bird Census Techniques. By C.J. Bibby, N.D. Burgess & D.A. Hill, 1992. 257 + xvii pp. Academic Press, London. ISBN 0-12-095830-9. Hardback £19.50.

This book is intended to bring together the methodology for various bird census techniques, which is scattered throughout the literature and difficult of access. Chapters