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**Société d'Ornithologie de l'Ouest**  
**Africain**



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## Book Reviews

**The Wild Bird Trade.** Anon., 1992. 24 pp. WCI Policy Report 2, New York Zoological Society/The Wildlife Conservation Society, New York.

**Flight to Extinction. The Wild-Caught Bird Trade.** By D. Bowles, D. Currey, P. Knights & A. Michels, no date (1992). 27 pp. Animal Welfare Institute / Environmental Investigation Agency, Washington DC/London. ISBN 0-9516342-2-4.

These two reports cover the same issue and reach the same conclusion: that international trade in wild-caught birds should immediately be banned. *The Wild Bird Trade* is a policy statement by one of the world's foremost conservation organisations, and one which has long been involved in bird protection issues. *Flight to Extinction* provides more of the background upon which both reports are grounded (EIA help is acknowledged in the WCI report); it is the fact-packed result of detailed investigations by EIA in the world's top bird exporting and importing countries. Some of these facts are of great concern to bird conservation in West Africa. Senegal is the world's number one bird exporter; the biggest importing block is the European Community and the biggest single importing country the U.S.A. There is excellent evidence that trade is the direct cause of declines to near-extinction in many species, especially parrots. Taking account of mortality between capture and final sale in the importing country, some 14-20 million birds are caught for international trade each year, while huge domestic markets in some countries add an unknown extra burden. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) has failed to control this trade and is ignored by most exporting and importing states, whether signatories or not. Its regulations do not even work properly in the two countries with the best controls (U.K. and U.S.A.).

Both reports conclude that the wild bird trade as it currently exists must be stopped, because it is endangering many species, and that a moratorium on all trade is the only way to achieve this. As a resident in the world's number two exporting country, this is a conclusion with which I completely agree. Time is needed to develop and institute workable controls and a moratorium should encourage captive breeding and research on sustainable management of wild populations. Anyone who still believes that the concept of sustainable use, so favoured by some conservation organisations, can be made to work under current conditions should read these reports. To restart trade with good controls from a zero-point will be easier than trying to work existing regulations onto a market which is completely out of control.

*The Wild Bird Trade* is primarily a position statement, useful for influencing policy-makers, while *Flight to Extinction* is more useful as a source of facts. Both are clear and concise; I hope they succeed.

Alan Tye