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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