



**West African Ornithological Society
Société d'Ornithologie de l'Ouest
Africain**



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Conserving Migratory Birds. Ed. by T. Salathé, 1991. 393 + xii pp. Tech. Publ. 12, International Council for Bird Preservation, Cambridge. ISBN 0-946888-20-5. Paperback £19.50 from ICBP, 32 Cambridge Rd, Girton, Cambridge, UK.

In his preface to this book the Director of ICBP points out the need to address the underlying causes of threats to the natural environment: unsustainable use of resources, poverty, debt and population growth, also and of especial importance to the conservation of migratory birds, the "North-South divide". Solving such problems requires international cooperation; establishing reserves is a mere stop-gap until these big issues can be resolved. Commendably, this book considers both aspects of conservation.

Why focus on migratory birds? Reasons given are mass appeal, promotion of international cooperation, Northern finance for conservation in the South, and the fact that migrant birds are sensitive environmental indicators. Few migrant species are globally threatened but many (most?) are in decline; the most threatened are wetland species. The major threat is habitat destruction, closely followed by hunting. Other factors include reduction of food resources (pesticides kill insects), poisoning (pesticides kill birds too), physical obstacles and human disturbance.

The book is mainly about north temperate to tropical migration systems; intra-African migration is scarcely mentioned. The bulk of it consists of regional and case studies, several of which are relevant to West Africa. One such discusses the impact of pesticides on migrant birds in Senegal and elsewhere in the Sahel, particularly the drastic effect of pesticide application to rice-fields and of avicides (for control of *Quelea quelea* etc.) on non-target birds. Another examines the problems faced by White Storks *Ciconia ciconia*, mainly habitat loss in Europe and West Africa, locust control, hunting and, surprisingly, ringing. A paper on migrants in the Niger inundation zone concentrates on efforts to educate the local population in environmental protection, while another documents the successes of the programme to conserve Roseate Terns *Sterna dougallii* in Ghana. An important review by Coulthard of the Hadejia-Nguru wetlands project in northern Nigeria demonstrates in a single example the major themes of the book as a whole - that sustainable, traditional uses (generally less damaging) and the needs of local people should be preferred to expensive "development", that decision-makers need to be convinced of this and of the utility of integrating development with environmental protection, that cooperation between states must be carefully encouraged, that opportunities for conservation must be seized when available and not set aside simply because they do not meet criteria for priority action and that local communities must be properly informed of a project's aims and be involved in the conservation effort and in the integration of their development plans with it. Other reports, not specifically dealing with West Africa, discuss its birds while they are elsewhere, e.g. studies of hunting in the Mediterranean region.

The book is not an unbroken tale of woe; most discussions of the problems faced also include recommendations for their solution. Two useful papers discuss the Bonn

Convention in particular and list all the international conventions which should, if fully implemented, provide most of the protection called for in the book. The problem lies largely with this lack of implementation; those active in NGOs should take note that an important role for them is to promote compliance by their governments. This book presents an excellent summary of the major threats to migrant birds and the action which is being and which should be taken to ameliorate them.

Alan Tye

Les Recensements Internationaux d'Oiseaux d'Eau en Afrique Tropicale, by C. Perennou, 1991. 140 pp. Spec. Publ. 15, International Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau, Slimbridge. Paperback, no price given, obtainable from IWRB, Slimbridge, Glos., U.K.

African Waterfowl Census 1991, by C. Perennou, 1991. 88 pp. IWRB, Slimbridge. Paperback £6 from IWRB.

The first of these two publications (the "Review") reviews in French the IWRB Africa database of records from 1955-1990, while the second (the "Annual Report") is a completely bilingual (French, English) report of the censuses carried out in January and July 1991. All waterbirds are included, though the data are most complete for Anatidae.

The emphasis in the Review is on West Africa, which has contributed most data, especially from the three major basins of Lake Chad and the rivers Senegal and Niger. It seeks to determine the minimum sizes of certain populations of waterbirds in tropical Africa and to identify species requiring attention in future counts because of their vulnerability or lack of current information about them. It also provides a preliminary list of wetlands of international importance by Ramsar criteria. The data are diverse, having been collected over a long period, with no central coordination; coverage is patchy in both space and time and different observers have concentrated on different groups of species. This Review is therefore a valuable basis for future studies which should, from 1991, be better coordinated through the IWRB. One of its main uses will be in pointing out the big gaps, both geographical and taxonomic, in the data. Many recommendations are made for improving the quality of the counts but all depends on the availability of observers and the means to survey.

The Review includes a brief analysis of what limited data are available on the hydrological state of the Senegal and Niger basins in different years. From this are listed "wet" and "dry" years but the list does not appear to correspond with the graphs from which it was made. This is a minor quibble because correlation analyses which show that dry years probably limit population sizes do seem to use the data correctly. Another minor criticism is that the shadings used on some Figures (*e.g.* Fig. 11) are not readily distinguishable from one another. A more major one is that only data from