

**The Black-tailed Godwit.** By **F. Haverschmidt.** E. J. Brill, Leiden, 18 guilders.

This excellent little summary of the distribution, breeding and migration of the black-tailed godwit, mainly in the Netherlands, is by a well known Dutch ornithologist who now lives in Surinam. He mentions briefly the return of this fine wader as a breeding species to Britain and also its arrival as a winter visitor on our southern and western shores, but does not mention that these latter birds are believed to be largely derived from the increasing Icelandic population. It is good to see a short section specifically devoted to protection and the future of the godwit, for all too many scientists still believe this aspect to be beneath their notice. So long as the Dutch continue to produce milk, butter and cheese, so long will there be rich grazing meadows for the godwits to nest in, but there is a danger that as these meadows are "improved," they will become less attractive to birds.

Many British people may be slightly shocked to learn that searching for lapwings' eggs is a kind of national sport in Holland, especially in Friesland, although a close season is strictly imposed on 12th April (19th April in Friesland). There is even a federation of local bird societies devoted to this sport and to seeing that the close season is obeyed. Personally I would rather see people take an interest in wild life in this rather old-fashioned way, than see them wander the countryside listening to a transistor radio.

R. S. R. FITTER

**African Game Ranching.** By **F. Dasmann.** Pergamon Press, 7s. 6d.

The last decade has seen the emergence of a new concept of conservation, the dynamic approach through management as opposed to preservation and non-intervention. In this slim volume the author presents an account of a research project in Rhodesia, and relates it to the overall pattern of wildlife conservation and related problems in Africa. He makes a strong case for a form of land use for marginal lands through management and cropping of wild life. His approach is based on the concept that the many species of indigenous wild herbivores are much better adapted to African conditions than are the few species and breeds of introduced domestic animals. There is good evidence from many parts of Africa that great numbers of wild animals can be supported by marginal lands, without damage to the habitat, whereas lands cleared of game and given over to cattle almost invariably deteriorate. He also argues the parallel case for domestication of indigenous grazing animals.

The second half of the book is devoted to a very readable and clear presentation of these ideas and to their practical application. An inventory of mammals present in a study area was compiled and cropping plans drawn up showing the numbers of each species that could be cropped and still be replaced by young animals. The balance sheet showed a much higher yield of meat per acre from game than from cattle, and as beef production is expensive the profit from game cropping was at least six times that for beef production on similar land. The problems of disease and adequate control of cropping have not been completely solved, but the approach is a promising one. This was a pilot study in one small area (50 sq. miles) only 130 miles from a very good market for the product. Before the results can be applied to other parts of Africa much more work is needed to test it fully, as the author himself points out. There is much talk these days of game cropping as a form of land use, but the practical problems of vast areas, large scale animal movements, and great distance from markets may prove incompatible with