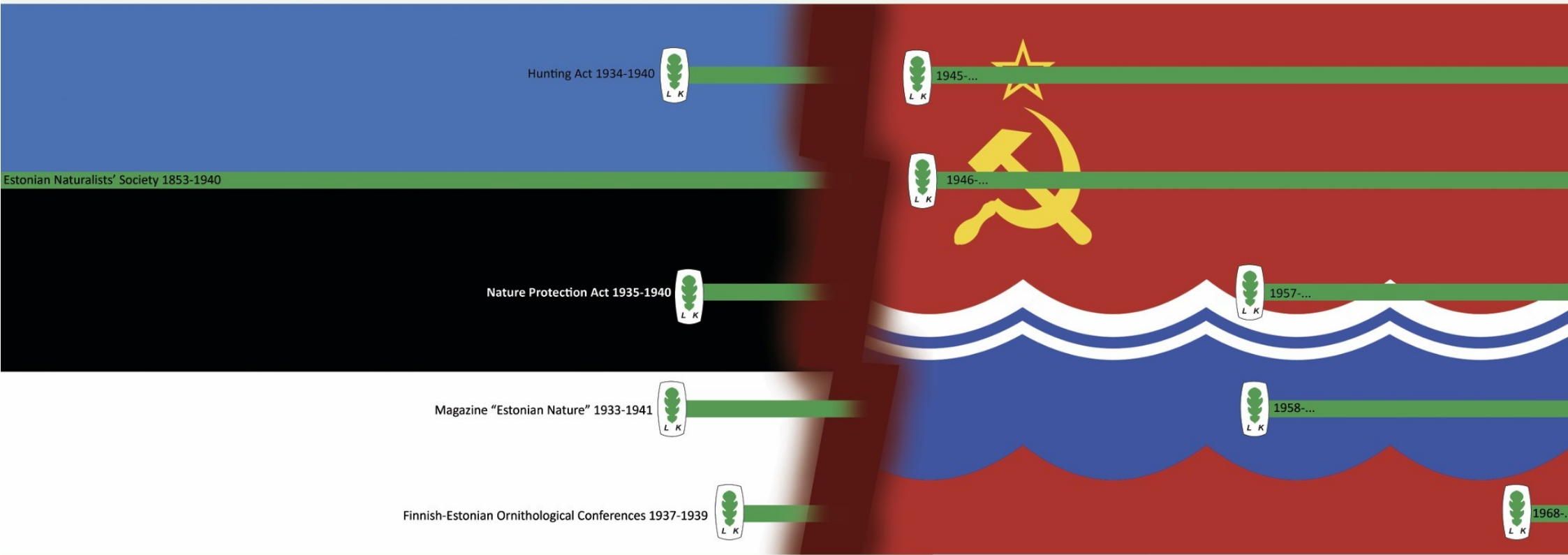


# Nature protection and nature education in Estonia before and after WWII: disruptions and transitions

Silvia Lotman, MSc  
Supervised by prof Ulrike Plath and PhD Kadri Tüür



Although the Republic of Estonia had established its first Nature Protection Law in 1935, it was cancelled after WWII and Soviet occupational government was not keen on re-starting nature conservation. Most other nature conservation processes were cancelled as well: Hunting Act, activity of Estonian Naturalists' Society and publishing of naturalists' magazine "Estonian Nature" among others. The meeting conferences of Finnish and Estonian ornithologists were stopped for over 30 years.



Eerik Kumari (1912-1984) was one of the leading figures in nature conservation and ornithology who worked to overcome the disruptive times and re-establish nature conservation initiatives in Estonia. He worked actively to establish protected areas as well as enforce regulations and advance natural history education.

One of the first laws to protect nature was Hunting Act that was renewed in 1945. It established hunting prohibition areas and times, but differently from the pre-war legislation of Estonian Republic, hunting rights were granted to wider public which thus opened the scene for more hunting. Eerik Kumari and his colleagues managed to promote bird hunting prohibition in Matsalu and other bird sanctuaries. The soviet occupational government of Estonia adopted its own Nature Protection Act only in 1957. The act marks re-establishment of nature protection regulations in the country. Four nature conservation areas were born with this act – Matsalu, Viisandi, Viidumäe and Nigula.

Although it was not allowed for citizens to gather in non-governmental organisations, the Estonian Naturalists' Society managed to re-establish its activity as a part of Estonian Academy of Sciences in 1946. The restoration of periodic publication of the magazine "Estonian Nature" was possible only after 1958 (Khruchchev's thaw). As an ornithologist, Eerik Kumari tried to restore the tradition of meeting between Finnish and Estonian ornithologists. The first one after WWII was allowed to happen only in 1968 and the organisers struggled to get approval of organising the event during all the Soviet occupational period.

**Conclusion**  
The disturbance WWII brought to Estonian society as well as to local nature conservation was huge but even more the permanent soviet occupation was the factor that did not enable to restore processes for nature protection. Although some of the regulations like Hunting Act was approved quite fast after the war, whereas some were ideologically more difficult to re-establish like Estonian-Finnish ornithological conferences.

**Literature**  
Rootsmär, L., Lilleleht, V (1996) Eerik Kumari – Elu täis tööd ja rõõmu. Academy of Science Publication Tallinn pp 132  
Kumari, E. (1986) Teaduse ajaloo lehekülgi Eestist VI. Looduskaitse ajaloost Eestis. Academy of Science Publication Tallinn pp 170