

form around the Schipperskwartier almost seems to be a point of pride for many of the city's inhabitants. In that way this volume is very much a Belgian history of prostitution. It offers a great introduction and overview of the sex trade, a social history of its practitioners, and a pleasurable read.

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Kristian Mennen, *Natuurbeschermers. Een politieke geschiedenis van de natuurbeschermingsbeweging (1930-1960)* (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2025). 317 pp. ISBN 9789464551587.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52024/7x9g1r60>

This 317-page book, including notes, bibliography, and images, is a reference work for scholars and practitioners concerned with Dutch environmental and conservation law and organizations in the interwar and early postwar period. It is highly detailed and follows recognized key figures and institutions in Dutch conservation.

The content is divided into four parts, each consisting of six to nine chapters. The chapters are structured as relatively concise units, some of vignette length. Part One examines the various organizations that addressed Dutch landscapes, environments, and animals around 1930, ranging from amateur biologists to provincial organizations such as Het Zeeuwse Landschap, It Fryske Gea, Limburgs and Utrechts Landschap. It also analyzes the central role played by Natuurmonumenten (the Society for the Preservation of Nature in the Netherlands). In addition, it considers the question of success in the selected period, during which there was relatively limited official policy between the Bird Act of 1912 and the Nature Conservation Act of 1967. Mennen argues that it is precisely this policy gap that makes the period historically significant.

Part Two focuses on the crisis years of the 1930s and the tensions between state measures for creating employment and their associated construction programs, on the one hand, and nature and forest conservation interests, on the other. It also discusses the establishment of the Wevers Commission in 1929 as an official advisory body tasked with providing scientifically grounded guidance to the government on environmental development. This included matters of cultivation, reclamation, exploitation, and the conservation of natural monuments.

Part Three addresses conservation during World War II and under German occupation, including the forced coordination and constraints imposed on conservation organizations, many of which initially assumed they would be spared. It further examines the point at which youth organizations began to adopt a more critical stance toward established institutions that had benefited financially from Nazi-led deforestation measures (more about this below).

Part Four explores the postwar period and the renewed efforts of younger members within conservation organizations to democratize structures that had previously been dominated by powerful individuals. It also considers new international connections to organizations such as the International Union for the Protection of Nature (IUPN), in which figures such as Westhoff played a role. As Mennen notes, this organization largely remained a network of individuals who were already acquainted with one another. In the period from 1945 to 1960, the book traces increasing collaboration between agriculture, land cultivation, and conservation organizations, particularly through the Commission for Contact between Agriculture and Conservation. The book further examines the relations of conservation organizations with the postwar Ministry of Defense, as well as large-scale engineering projects such as the Delta Works, both of which retain strong contemporary relevance. The period culminates in the Dutch Nature Conservation Act, which in the 1960s, as Mennen demonstrates, continued to embody tensions between conservation, agriculture, defense and, increasingly, transportation and recreation, which are, of course, still visible today.

A main strength of the book lies in its attention to regional developments and provincial dynamics which are frequently overlooked in broader national or international histories. The book further shows that conservation has consistently been intertwined with other land use concerns, including agricultural and infrastructure development, along with military interests. These connections continue to be highly relevant in contemporary debates. Mennen manages to point to these connections in an effective way, although these references are not always fully developed in the conclusions, which, partly due to chapter length, remain relatively brief. The book is also notable for its close collaboration with local organizations, which provided source material and support, such that their members are likely to find the work valuable for their own institutional histories.

Particularly significant is the analysis of the complex and sometimes uneasy relationship between Dutch conservationists and Nazi Germany during the occupation. At times, however, the discussion would have benefited from a more explicit examination of the political stakes involved. It is, of course, unreasonable to expect sustained engagement with works published and written in parallel. And the scope of Mennen's book necessarily limits the engagement with recent debates on Nazi sympathies by leading Dutch conservationists including Pieter van Tienhoven, as recently discussed by authors such as Frank Saris. The same goes for Dutch colonial conservation history, which appears only as a brief intermezzo.

This issue, however, does raise broader questions regarding what constitutes a political history of nature conservation and how it differs from other possible historical accounts and approaches. Despite Mennen's stated ambition to write a collective biography of Dutch conservationists, the focus remains on institutions, commissions, and regulations, rather than individuals. Readers learn relatively little about the personal lives, motivations, ideas, or intellectual influences of the largely male set of key figures discussed, and some remain only partially visible. This gap is also evident in some of the visual material, where (perhaps more marginal) individuals from the narrative appear in images without being identified in the captions.

Of course, a single book can address only a limited range of questions. Overall, Mennen's work effectively brings together a large number of examples and telling anecdotes with broader structural developments in the landscape of Dutch conservation. The five-page conclusion to this multifaceted and detail-rich study leaves substantial room for readers to draw their own interpretations from the extensive body of evidence and sources presented.

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