

**HEINRICH VEROMANN (1926 - 1991)**

**Lemming Rootsmäe, Tartu, & Raivo Mänd, Tartu, Estonia**



Heinrich Veromann

(\*) 29.10.1926 in Pärnu (Estonia)

(†) 14.10.1991 in Tartu (Estonia)

On Oct. 14th, 1991, on the eve of 65th birthday, died HEINRICH VEROMANN, an outstanding ornithologist and enthusiast of his field of science.

H. VEROMANN was born on Oct. 29th, 1926 into a photographer's family in the town of Pärnu (Estland) where he received his primary education. In the Summer of 1944 the 17-year-old H. VEROMANN was mobilized into auxiliary service of the German army. Having been taken to Germany, he fell into the hands of Soviet troops at the end of the war and spent two years in prison.

When HEINRICH VEROMANN returned to his native country in 1947, which was occupied by Soviet Union, he had to earn his living as a builder and a transport worker in several places until he settled down to native town of Pärnu again. Here he managed to get a teacher's post at the Young Naturalist's House, which certainly offered more satisfaction for the young man. During earlier years he had become keenly interested in nature, especially birds. Such an attachment had arisen on the extensive stretches of coast and rich-in-birds parks of Pärnu, and also when reading the vivid and emotional book "Pictures and Sounds from Estonian Nature" written by the nestor of Estonian ornithology Prof. J. PIPER.

Already in 1950 HEINRICH VEROMANN had established contact with the Naturalists' Society in Tartu and started dispatching the data of his ornithological and phenological observations. Later he made the acquaintance of Prof. E. KUMARI, chairman of the Society, and began making an active contribution to the activity of the Society. In 1956 H. VEROMANN delivered his first scientific reports at the meetings of the ornithological section of the Society. In 1957 he moved to Tartu and joined the Naturalists' Society. After acting shortly as an instructor at the Tartu Hunting Club, he was appointed, on the proposal of Prof. E. KUMARI, the director of the just restored Vaika Natural Reserve on the western part of Saaremaa Island. However, the following month he became a senior laboratory assistant at the Institute of Zoology and Botany at Tartu. At the same time he continued his interrupted education in the correspondence department of a local secondary school.

Since the low wages which H. VEROMANN received from the Institute of Zoology and Botany were not sufficient to support his young family, he was forced to find a new post. He became head of the restoration laboratory at the Ethnographical Museum. In 1969 he started working at the Young Naturalists' House of Tartu, first a teacher, later as director. Meanwhile H. VEROMANN had finished secondary school and entered, in 1967, Tartu State University in order to get philological education in the correspondence department. All that did not interfere in any way with H. VEROMANN's ornithological activity or break his relations with the Institute of Zoology and Botany and ornithologists. Indeed, in 1972 he returned to his previous workplace where he was given the post of a senior assistant in the laboratory of bird ecology. After graduating from the university in the field of German philology in 1975, he occupied the post of a junior research associate at

the Institute, and after defending his Ph. Dr. in biology in 1985, he became a senior research associate. H. VEROMANN's course of life has served as a good example of how enthusiasm and tenacity help one to overcome all difficulties and gain one's set aim.

H. VEROMANN's active participation in the work of the Naturalists' Society deserves to be mentioned separately. Already in 1960 he became a member of the commission of phenology of the Society and secretary of the branch of ornithology. He organized meetings of amateur observers of nature, ornithological observations and studies of the White Stork; he instructed training excursions into nature, popularized ornithology and bird protection in his lectures and in the press; he took part in the observations of the autumn migration of birds etc.. In 1966-1972 and 1977-1990 he was chairman of the commission of phenology, in 1974-1985 vice chairmann of the ornithological section. In 1986 H. VEROMANN was elected honorary member of the Naturalists' Society for his deserts in natural sciences.

With his more than 300 published papers H. VEROMANN was one of the most prolific authors among Estonian ornithologists. On these over 90 were scientific papers, the others being popular articles; he wrote three popular books on birds. He was also a coauthor of Estonian Red Data Book and the Estonian Encyclopedia, and the correspondent of the bulky ornithological handbook "The Birds of the Western Palearctic" published in Great Britain. By marking numerous international contacts H. VEROMANN contributed to familiarizing the achievements of Estonian ornithology abroad.

In the world of science H. VEROMANN was known, above all, as a researcher of the White Stork. He collected data on its abundance, distribution and ecology during more than 30 years, while he published 80 papers concerning the topic. He would frequently take floor in defense of his birds; he would call upon the public to count it. He established a network of correspondents who carried out observations; each year he presented the account of counting results. He made reports at many Baltic, All-Union and international conferences on the distribution of the White Stork, on the ecology and efficiency of its nesting. He published respective materials in a number of international ornithological journals. In his research H. VEROMANN did not restricted himself to Estonia but expanded the scope of research first to the other Baltic countries, then to the notheastern part of Soviet Union and last to the whole of Europe. His doctoral thesis which he defended in 1985, discussed the reproduction biology, dynamics of abundance and history of the population of the White Stork on the territory of Europe. After achieving wide recognition with his work H. VEROMANN was elected chairman of the research group of the White Stork of the Soviet Union in 1990.

HEINRICH VEROMANN gave also much attention to the migration of birds and to ornithophenological observations which he encouraged constantly. He summed up data on the arrival and migration of a number of bird species and cast light on the history of ornithophenological observations in Estonia. Of special interest for him was the migration of the Common Crane, to which he dedicated a dozen of articles.

Avifaunistic studies, too, occupied an important place in H. VEROMANN's ornithological activity. His first published papers in 1957 and 1958 discussed the bird fauna of the natural habitats of South-West Estonia and the Pärnu seashore park. Later he also studied the bird fauna of the cultivated landscape of Estonia, the Matsalu Nature Reserve, the Lahemaa National Park, the town of Tartu and several other regions. In the course of his studies H. VEROMANN discovered several bird species new in Estonia (e.g. Savi's Warbler, the Little Bunting). After his participation in drawing up the atlas of Estonian breeding birds he initiated, in the late 1980s, the idea of compiling the monograph "Birds of Estonia"; as the editor, he gathered the authors' collective. However, early death prevented him from seeing the completion of his work.

H. VEROMANN dedicated a number of articles to the protection of birds. He stood up repeatedly for raptors, the Starling and geese; he also gave instructions about feeding birds in winter, about treating injured birds and abandoned nestlings. But H. VEROMANN's work of life was popularizing ornithology as a popular science. He taught people to walk in nature with open eyes, to notice various natural and seasonal phenomena, to observe birds and their activity, migration, wintering. For this purpose he compiled a special notebook for bird observers. In his numerous articles H. VEROMANN has acquainted the reading public with birds and their way of life. This aim was also pursued by the handbook "Songbirds of Estonia" that he wrote in collaboration with L. ROOTSMÄE.

H. VEROMANN dedicated all his life to studying birds. Birds were his love and his joy, and he shared this joy with other people, encouraging them to learn more about nature and birds. He relied his hopes on young people by whom he was highly respected as an educator. Now, when we have lost H. VEROMANN, the light lit by him is leading people towards an understanding of nature and bringing joy into their hearts.

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