

The area of wooded meadows and other natural grasslands reached its maximum in the end of the 19th century (about one third of the mainland); the situation remained the same until 1940ies. Then the area of wooded meadows covered approximately 850 000 ha (18 per cent of the area of Estonian territory). The disappearance of wooded meadows intensified as a result of collectivisation that was followed by abandonment of manual labour. A wooded meadow left without mowing becomes completely overgrown with brushwood within 5-10 years.

At present the area of species-rich wooded meadows is about 500 ha in western Estonia and of species-poor and flooded wooded meadows over 300 ha in other parts of Estonia. Most of these are quite small, not bigger than 5 ha. In 1995-97 about 200 ha was mown, on Saaremaa Island 30 ha. In consequence, the area of our wooded meadows has decreased about thousand times within 70 years.