

Written by **Marta Barberis**  
Illustrated by **Marta & Marina Barberis**

Stories About Endangered Plants

# *THEFT ON THE APENNINES*



## About the book series "Stories About Endangered Plants"

Before you lie a children's book brought to life through the collaborative efforts of the COST Action ConservePlants. Comprised of dedicated researchers from Europe and beyond, ConservePlants is at the forefront of protecting endangered plant species. Our researchers are committed not only to their scientific work but also to sharing knowledge with people of all ages, especially children. And what better way to captivate young minds than through stories!

Within this collection, we proudly showcase the captivating tales of endangered plants, lovingly penned by our passionate researchers. These stories offer a unique window into the lives of these remarkable plants, providing valuable insights into their importance and the challenges they face. Each narrative is crafted to both entertain and educate, fostering a love for nature and promoting conservation.

Join us on an exciting journey of discovery as we explore the wonders of the natural world through these stories. Immerse yourself in the captivating narratives and vivid illustrations that bring these endangered plants to life and embark on a quest to protect and preserve the remarkable biodiversity of our planet.

Živa Fišer, ConservePlants Action Chair



This publication is based upon work from COST Action CA18201 - An integrated approach to conservation of threatened plants for the 21st Century, supported by COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology).

COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology) is a funding agency for research and innovation networks. Our Actions help connect research initiatives across Europe and enable scientists to grow their ideas by sharing them with their peers. This boosts their research, career and innovation.

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Stories About Endangered Plants

# ***THEFT ON THE APENNINES***

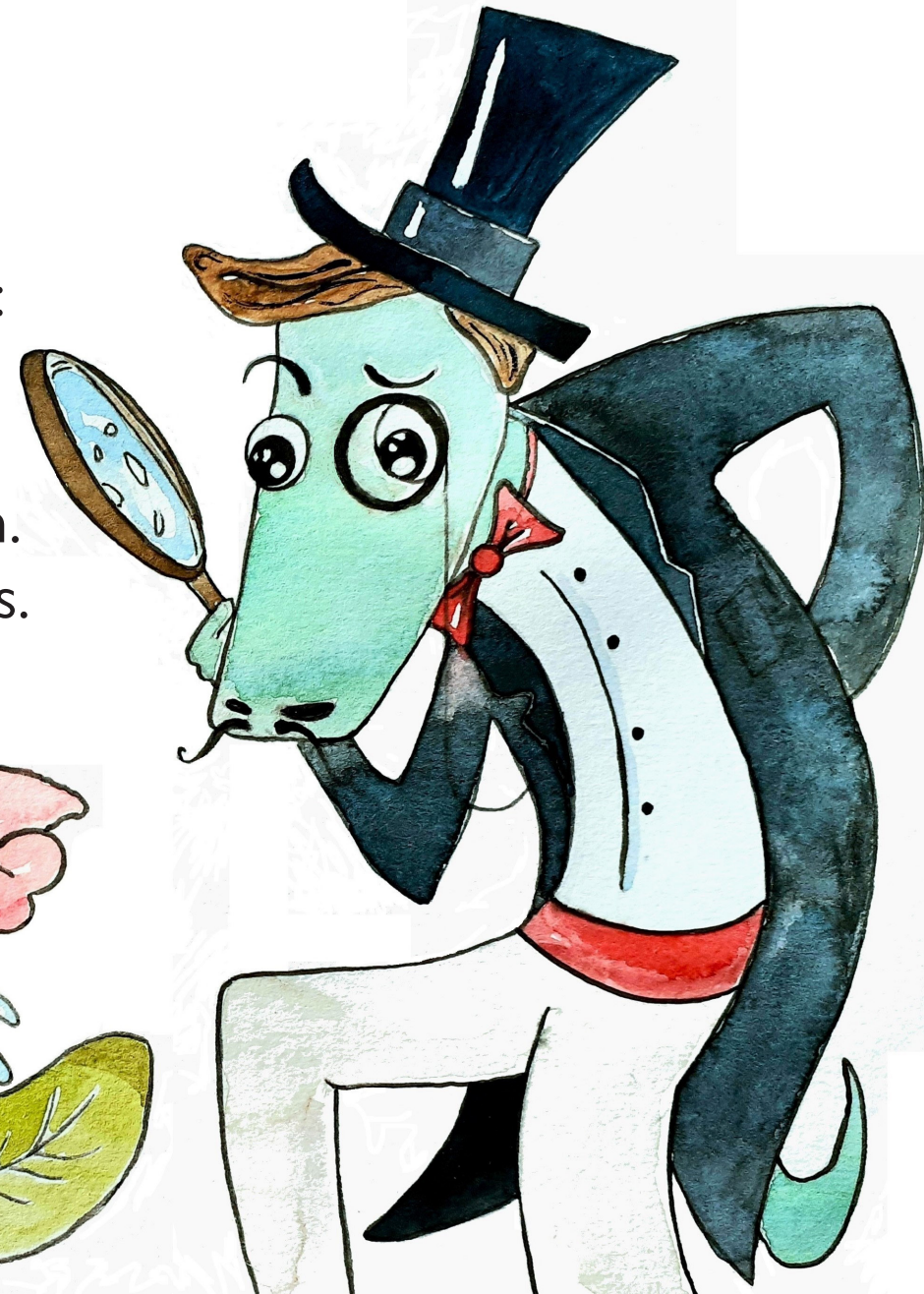
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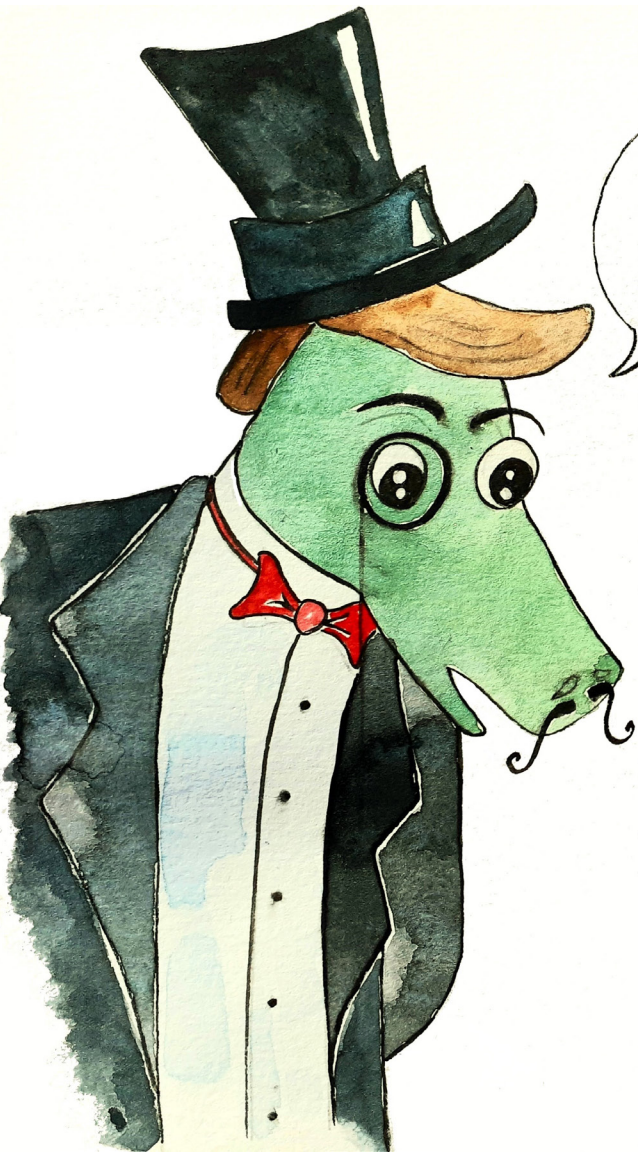
Illustrated by **Marta & Marina Barberis**

Mr. Lizard has got a new task:  
he will work from dawn till dusk.  
In the morning his home, he left  
to brightly solve a case of theft.  
"Goodbye, Darling," says his wife,  
as all the while he wipes her eyes.  
"Come back soon, and please don't cry,"  
says his love, waving goodbye.



On a rocky mountain face  
grows the Primrose, full of grace.  
"Noble Lord, my thanks accept,  
for some days I have not slept.  
Do you understand? I'm in great despair:  
my pollen is stolen, this is so unfair!  
It used to shine like a golden crown."  
The Primrose sobs with a worried frown.  
"Come on now, don't scrunch your leaves.  
Have you seen the suspected thieves?"





"Some respected, sleepy beetles  
were sunbathing on my petals."

"Have they left or have they stayed?"

"They were so kind as to come to my aid."

"Have you seen anyone else...?"

... Thirsty bugs on snow that melts...?"

"I have seen a long-tongued lady:  
glancing sneakily, she looked shady!"

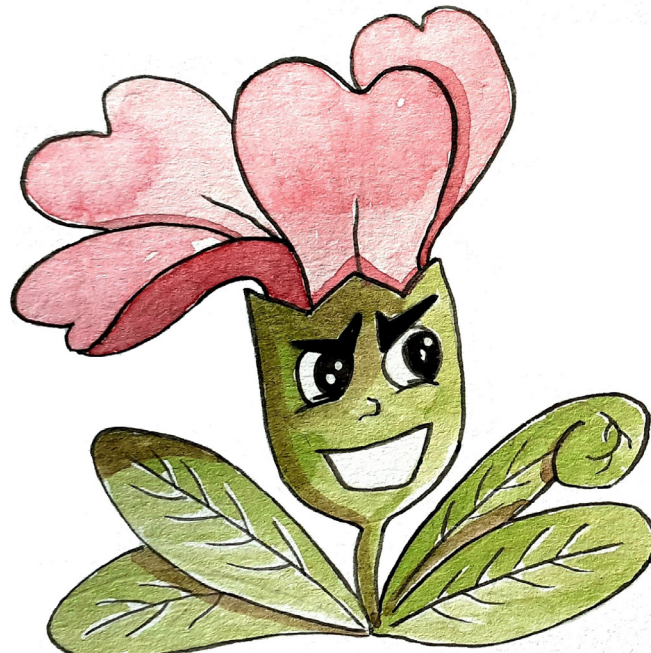
"Can you tell me where she is?"

"In the sky. Call her, Sir, please!"

In the distance, a silken cloth  
waves the Hummingbird Hawkmoth.

"Noble Lords, how can I help you?  
Would you give me at least some  
clue?"

"Did you take my pollen grains?  
I see them on your wing veins!"  
The moth checks, and she does rush,  
all of a sudden, her cheeks do blush.



"My gentle Sir, it is all a mistake,  
I did not mean to bring them away.  
I brought them there, to your Primrose twin,  
she wakes her leaf and shows her grin."  
All of a sudden, the Lady is pensive.  
"Was my behavior unforgivably offensive?"  
The Primrose falls silent and looks ashamed,  
he seems in pain for whom he has blamed.





The moth now begs with a nervous feeling,  
"Please, do say something,  
something relieving."  
"My Lady Hawkmoth, your  
job is awesome:  
carrying the pollen from  
bloom to blossom.  
Without your help, there  
would be no seed  
Please, take my nectar to  
fulfill your need.  
What can I say now? There  
was such confusion,  
there's only one thing I can  
say in conclusion...



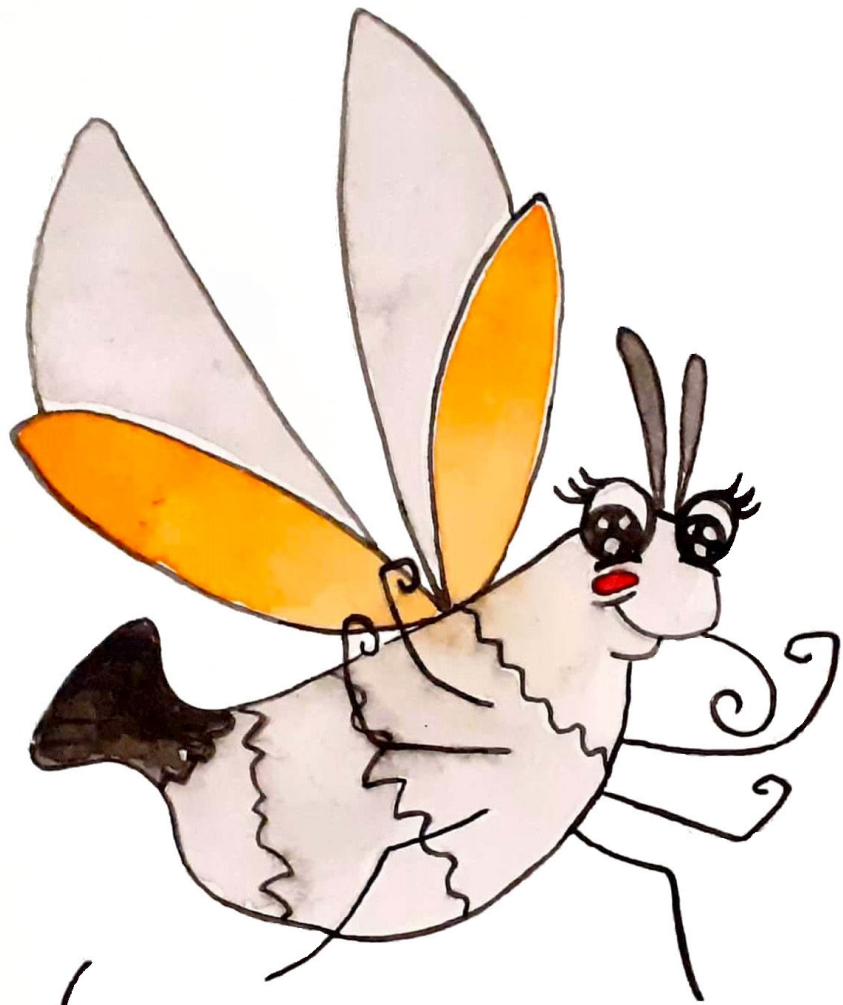






Photo: Giada Giacomini



Photo: Marta Galloni

## Scientific note

*Primula apennina* is a pink primrose species locally protected in the Italian regions of Emilia–Romagna and Tuscany. It grows on earth crevices between 1400 and 2000 m above sea level along the mountain crest of the Apennine mountains. Its flowers show two different morphs and produce seeds only if pollen is transferred from one morphotype to the other, something that happens with the help of insects visiting the plant in search of food. When insect pollinators approach the flowers to drink the nectar or feed on pollen, they involuntarily get dirty with pollen grains which they then bring to the next flower, ensuring seed production. Like many other species, flowers of *Primula apennina* are hermaphrodite, which means that are both male and female at the same time.

Even though pollinators seem to be scarce in the area where *Primula apennina* grows, botanists have discovered that the visits performed by the diurnal hummingbird hawkmoth *Macroglossum stellatarum* during migration are sufficient to ensure pollination and seed production. However, we don't have to lower our guard! The potential mismatch driven by climatic change between the flowering and the moth flight period still represents a potential threat for the species, so that monitoring actions to ensure its conservation are very important!

## About the author/illustrator

Marta and Marina Barberis are two of three sisters who grew up in the foothills of the Italian Alps. Both were attracted to arts from an early age and have found their expression in writing and drawing. Apart from making bookcases out of pallets, “Theft on the Apennines” is the first project which sees them collaborating. Recently, Marta completed a PhD in pollination ecology at the University of Bologna, and Marina found her real vocation in social volunteering. Other than Sara – the above-mentioned third sister without whom this silly biographic blurb wouldn’t exist – their family is composed of their elder beekeeping-dedicated parents and the bees.

A special mention goes to Camillo the Cat, who daily benefits from uninterrupted sessions of human therapy and is the



Photo: Fulvia Girelli

real head of the family (despite what Marta believes). Sometimes Camillo thinks he is a persimmon fruit and spends all morning sunbathing on the tree behind the house, looking regal in his role of responsibility.

These stories about endangered plants form a collection that is the final result of the project “Children’s book as an strategy for plant conservation” raised from the original idea of Sissi Lozada Gobilard, to whom Marta is very grateful for getting her involved. Marta is also very grateful to all the other authors and illustrators of all stories, and to people from COST Action CA18201 who contributed to make the project real. She also thanks her friends Robin Brown and Sarah Harrison for reading the first draft of “Theft on the Apennines” and checking the English language. Both Marta and Marina are also grateful for their reciprocal friendship and support as well as those of their sister Sara.”







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**Theft on the Apennines**

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Copy Editor: Amy Simmons

Design and Layout: Tina Vraneš

Published by the University of Primorska Press

Titov trg 4, 6000 Koper, Slovenia

[www.hippocampus.si](http://www.hippocampus.si)

Koper | 2023

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Free Electronic Edition

<https://www.hippocampus.si/ISBN/978-961-293-265-7.pdf>

<https://www.hippocampus.si/ISBN/978-961-293-266-4/index.html>

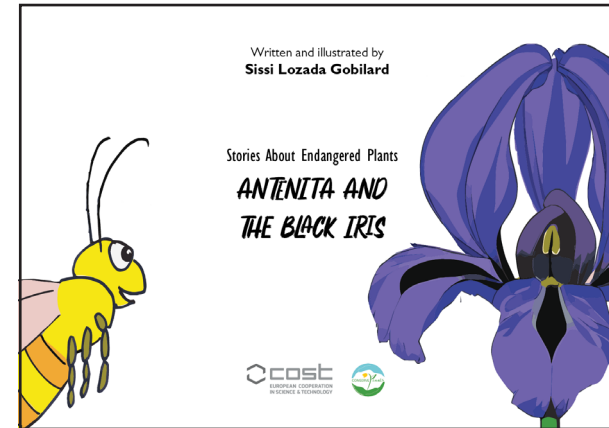
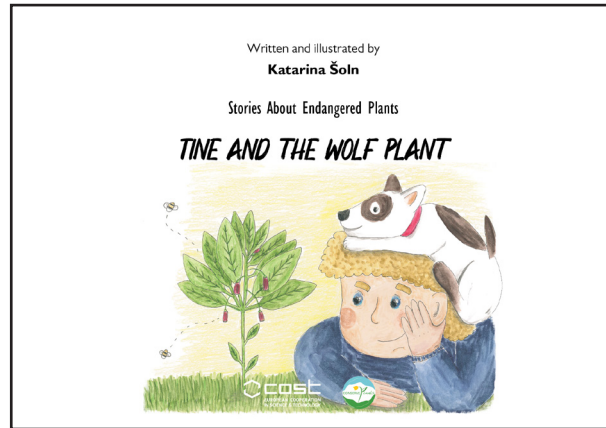
<https://doi.org/10.26493/978-961-293-265-7>



Kataložni zapis o publikaciji (CIP) pripravili  
v Narodni in univerzitetni knjižnici v Ljubljani  
COBISS.SI-ID 169464067

ISBN 978-961-293-265-7 (PDF)

ISBN 978-961-293-266-4 (HTML)



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