edited by Gianluigi Bacchetta

ENDEMIC FLORA of SARDINIA



ILISSO

Biodiversity, understood as species richness per unit area, is not evenly distributed across our planet but is concentrated in specific areas known as biodiversity hotspots. These hotspots account for only about 3% of the Earth's land surface and largely comprise coastal and insular areas, mainly concentrated in regions with equatorial, tropical, and Mediterranean climates.
The Mediterranean Basin, covering approximately 2.3 million km², is one of the most important biodiversity hotspots worldwide and ranks third globally, after Sundaland and the Tropical Andes, in terms of plant diversity. It hosts more than 25,000 native vascular plant taxa, approximately 50% of which are endemic.
Within this context, islands are considered geographical and ecological areas of particular importance for the conservation of plant diversity. Sardinia, in particular, forms part of the macro-hotspot of the Tyrrhenian Islands but can also be regarded as a distinct meso-hotspot, owing to its high density of endemic plants and its remarkable floristic uniqueness, both of which exceed those of the surrounding continental areas. This exceptional floristic diversity becomes even more apparent when species richness is considered relative to land area, including in comparison with species-rich equatorial regions. For example, when compared with Papua New Guinea (13,634 species over 785,753 km²), Sardinia (2,464 species over 24,089 km²) shows a floristic richness approximately five times higher per unit area (95.5 species/1,000 km² compared with 17.3 species/1,000 km²).
The proportion of endemic taxa in Sardinia is even higher than that recorded for the other major Mediterranean islands and is comparable to that of some tropical islands of a similar size, such as Hainan Island, as well as many small oceanic islands of eastern Polynesia.



Ophrys holosericea subsp. *chestermanii*

These figures highlight the remarkable levels of floristic diversity found in Sardinia, which deserve particular attention and call for conservation and protection policies that are currently lacking.
This is the background to the idea behind this volume – the first comprehensive publication aimed at the general public entirely devoted to Sardinia's endemic vascular flora. It includes a total of 343 endemic plant taxa, representing approximately 14% of the island's native flora.
We conceived this volume for a broad audience, making it available in different formats, both print and digital, and in both Italian and English. Its aim is to draw the attention of both the Sardinian and international communities to the biogeographical and conservation importance of Sardinia's endemic flora. In particular, it seeks to emphasise the responsibility shared by all citizens and institutions for the sustainable management of the island's floristic resources, especially those found exclusively in Sardinia, so that they can be passed on to future generations, wherever possible, in a better state of conservation than that in which we inherited them.



Ribes sardoum

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Malva lusitanica subsp. *pallescens*



Verbascum plantagineum



Allium parciflorum



Staphisagria requienii subsp. *picta*

On the cover: *Crocus minimus*