

LEONORA CAMUSSO

illustration portfolio



OCEANIA

SHORT-BEAKED ECHIDNA

Tachyglossus aculeatus

I am a myth!
In the legends of Ancient Greece there was a mysterious figure whose body was half-woman and half-snake, called Echidna. Someone thought well to give that name to me, even though I am not really a monster... I am not even Greek, since I live in Australia and New Guinea.

Let's just say however that I am definitely a bit of a mythical creature, since I have **nearly unique characteristics** in all the animal world.

A thorny matter
At first glance, what immediately catches the eye are the **long quills** that cover my body, much longer than the hairs mixed in with them. I do not use them to do harm, but I need them to **protect my body** from predators, above all, my most vulnerable parts.

If the predator does not give up, then I **hide in holes** in the ground and it is practically impossible to root me out.

I have five long claws.

Cold, I am not afraid of you!
When the weather turns colder I still manage to survive. I slow my pace and do not waste energy warming up but decrease my 'internal thermostat', which can go from a normal 33° C (your human temperature usually hovers around 36.5) to only 4° C!

At that temperature, I enter into a state of torpor that is not true hibernation, but, rather, a sort of energy conservation.

Toothless
As I get older I lose my teeth, but this does not stop me from eating. In fact, I have a sort of **very hard beak** that allows me to easily feed myself. I also have long claws, five on each leg, which I use for hunting my favourite foods: ants, termites, caterpillars and earthworms.

My **elongated nose** finds them thanks to my excellent sense of smell, while with my long, sticky tongue, I can capture them easily.

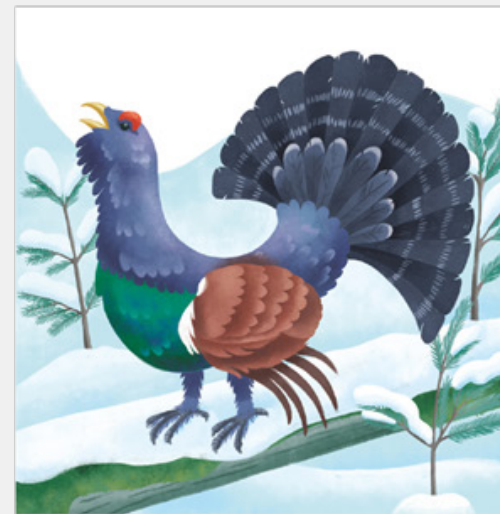
I live here!

This allows me to dig holes straight down in order to hide.

...a beak and a long tongue.

A brooding pouch
We are somewhat special mammals, because we **produce eggs!** These are secured inside a pouch where they hatch after about ten days.

The new-borns remain in this **protected place** until their quills harden. In this pouch, I do not have breasts but **small holes** which provide a nourishing milk to my young.



CURIOUS AND UNUSUAL ANIMALS

Illustrations for the book "Atlas of biodiversity, curious and unusual animals" - published by Sassi Junior 2021

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CURIOUS AND UNUSUAL ANIMALS - White-faced saki

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HONOURABLE MENTION IN
"UN LIBRO PER L'AMBIENTE" AWARD



Il rumore dell'onda
Alcune volte all'anno, quando la luna è nuova e piena, accade che, a causa di una **marea oceanica**, il fiume venga solcato da **una onda alta parecchi metri**. Questa provoca un **rumore gurgineo** e, spesso, disturba che giuocanti gli abitanti delle zone lina non i pochi semerari surfisti che tentano di cavalcarla! Quest'onda viene chiamata dai locali **Poro-ro** che tradotto significa "grande rumore distruttivo".

Grande e grossa
Nelle acque del Rio ruota sinuosa la **lontra gigante**. Una la sua **lunga coda**, che può raggiungere quasi i 170 cm, anche come **arma da difesa** contro i malintenzionati. Evidentemente però non l'ha portata usare abbastanza contro gli uomini, che per lungo tempo l'hanno **cacciata** per poter sfruttare la sua pelliccia scura e impermeabile, fino a **ridurre drasticamente il numero di esemplari**. Ora è una **specie protetta** e non è difficile osservarla nuotare con altri suoi simili.

Una creatura ad alta tensione
Nelle acque del fiume vive un **pece molto particolare** che è meglio non fare arrabbiare: l'**elettrone**. Infatti, possiede un'arma molto potente per difendersi e attaccare: delle **scariche elettriche** in grado di stupire e uccidere prede molto più grandi di lui! Vive nelle **acque ricche di vegetazione**, dove si può nascondere e dove prepara dei veri e propri agguati alle sue prede.

Niente veleno
A cosa potrebbe mai servire il veleno al serpente più grande del mondo? A nulla! L'**anaconda verde**, infatti, non lo possiede, ma utilizza i suoi **potentissimi muscoli** per **stritolare prede anche più grandi di lei**. Non ci sono prove, ma alcune leggende dicono che abbia divorato anche alcune persone!

L'anaconda è il serpente più grande del mondo

Albero goloso
A chi di voi non piace il cioccolato? Buono, eh? Ebbene, in queste zone l'albero **gui cacao cresce spontaneamente** e i suoi frutti, gialli e grandi come un pallone da rugby, hanno la particolarità di svilupparsi direttamente attaccati ai rami e ai tronchi. Prima di trasformarsi in una gustosa tavoletta, però, i suoi semi dovranno subire diverse lavorazioni.

Lo sapper che il cacao è ricivato da un frutto?

Victoria amazica
Come una regina
Nelle aree più calme del fiume vive una pianta regale: la **minifera più grande al mondo**. Scommetto che le sue foglie giallognole potrebbero sostenere il vostro peso! Il suo **fiume bianco** (che poi diventa rosa), invece, è **grande come un pallone da calcio**. Uno splendore per la vista di chi la osserva... da lontano! Per difendersi dai morsi degli abitanti delle acque, infatti, questa pianta possiede delle specie di spine.

Come foglie
Devo riconoscerlo: in natura ci sono animali molto abili nei travestimenti e la **tartaruga mata mata** è uno di questi. I suoi colori, il guscio scalogno e la colorazione fanno sì che rinasca a **confondersi perfettamente con l'ambiente nel quale vive**: le creano addirittura delle alghe sul dorso, che la rendono capace di mimetizzarsi con l'ambiente acquatico. Questa sua capacità di mascherarsi le permette di essere un'abile cacciatrice.

Da paradiso a purgatorio
La fauna e la flora che vivono in quest'angolo di mondo sono **rare ed esclusive**, ma spesso la loro unicità viene ignorata. Troppi di frequente questi tesori vengono **minacciati dal taglio indiscriminato delle foreste e dall'inquinamento delle acque** da parte dei moderni cacciatori d'oro, che riversano nel fiume tonnellate di mercurio, un metallo liquido che ha effetti devastanti sugli esseri viventi. Se vogliamo che questi luoghi tornino a riflettere dobbiamo fare di più e non lasciarci diventare terre sterili e prive di vita.

OCEANIA

Viaggiando nel tempo
Ci troviamo in **Nuova Zelanda**, uno stato formato da due isole principali. La natura crea spesso paesaggi incredibili che lasciano senza fiato. Qui possiamo ammirarci nelle prononza della terra in un complesso di circa **400 grotte** scavate quasi **30 milioni di anni fa** dalla forza dell'erosione dell'Oceano Pacifico. La mia specie all'epoca era quasi sicuramente già presente sul Pianeta, mentre l'uomo è arrivato più tardi. Vi porterò a conoscere una di queste grotte, la **grotta di Waitomo**, affascinante sotto diversi punti di vista.

È ora di uscire dalla Terra. Ma tranquillo non ti fanno il buio!

Acqua che trasforma
Questa grotta deve il suo nome a due termini della lingua locale: "wai", che significa "acqua" e "romo", ossia "cavità". Questo luogo, scavato dalle acque oceaniche, è strettamente legato all'acqua anche perché al suo interno scorre un **torrente di acqua dolce** che percorre buona parte delle sue stanze. Questo scorrere lento nel corso del tempo continua a **trasformare la grotta** giorno dopo giorno. Nell'incredibile storia del nostro Pianeta non c'è niente di **distruttivo!**

Mondi sconosciuti
Queste grotte sono rimaste **sconosciute fino alla fine dell'Ottocento**, quando per la prima volta un capo Maori e un inglese decisero di andare alla scoperta degli intricati labirinti sotterranei. Intrapresero il viaggio a bordo di una **sattera**, per poi proseguire a **predi** nei livelli più bassi. Rimasero ammucchiati da quanto videro, e ancora oggi **numerosi turisti** vengono appositamente a visitare questo **mondo sotterraneo** anche da molto lontano.

WAITOMO

Strane figure di roccia
Il lento e continuo gocciolio dell'acqua all'interno delle grotte forma delle **costruzioni davvero speciali**. L'acqua porta con sé anche dei **minerali** che si depositano nel corso del tempo e creano **sculture** che possono **scendere dall'alto**, rivestendo la volta della caverna, oppure **salire dal basso**. Può anche succedere che si uniscano a formare delle vere e proprie **colonne di roccia**. È molto importante **non toccare mai** le pareti delle grotte o queste sculture, perché trasferisce alla roccia una sostanza oleosa presente sulle mani, impermeabile, che non farebbe più depositare e mantenere da costruzione, **impedendo alla scultura di continuare a prendere forma** sotto l'azione dei minerali e del tempo.

Le sculture con le formazioni rocciose che pendono dall'alto, mentre le stalagmiti si formano dal basso

ECOSYSTEMS TO PROTECT

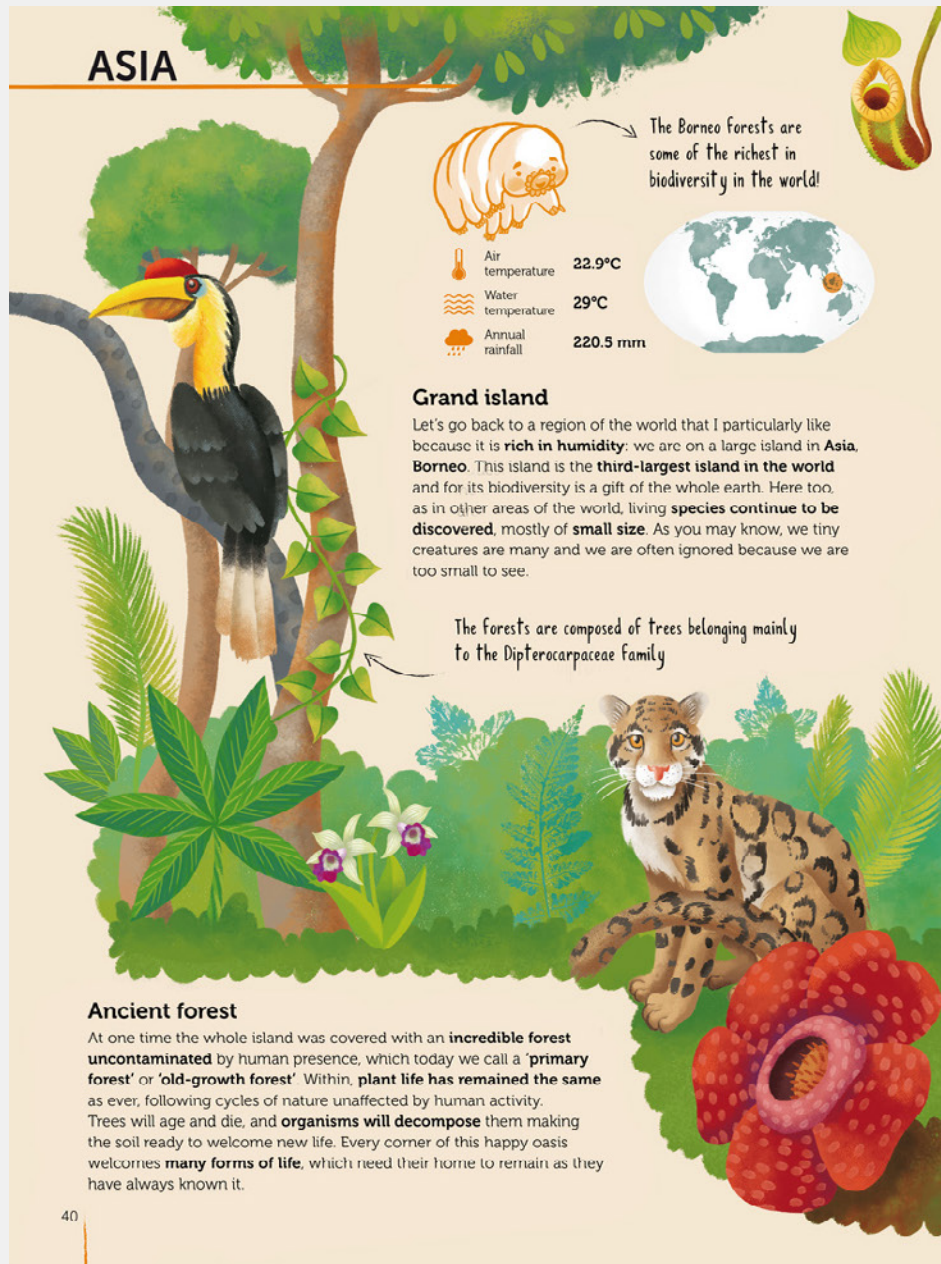
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ASIA



The Borneo forests are some of the richest in biodiversity in the world!

Air temperature	22.9°C
Water temperature	29°C
Annual rainfall	220.5 mm



Grand island

Let's go back to a region of the world that I particularly like because it is **rich in humidity**: we are on a large island in **Asia**. **Borneo**. This island is the **third-largest island in the world** and for its biodiversity is a gift of the whole earth. Here too, as in other areas of the world, living **species continue to be discovered**, mostly of **small size**. As you may know, we tiny creatures are many and we are often ignored because we are too small to see.

The forests are composed of trees belonging mainly to the Dipterocarpaceae family

Ancient forest

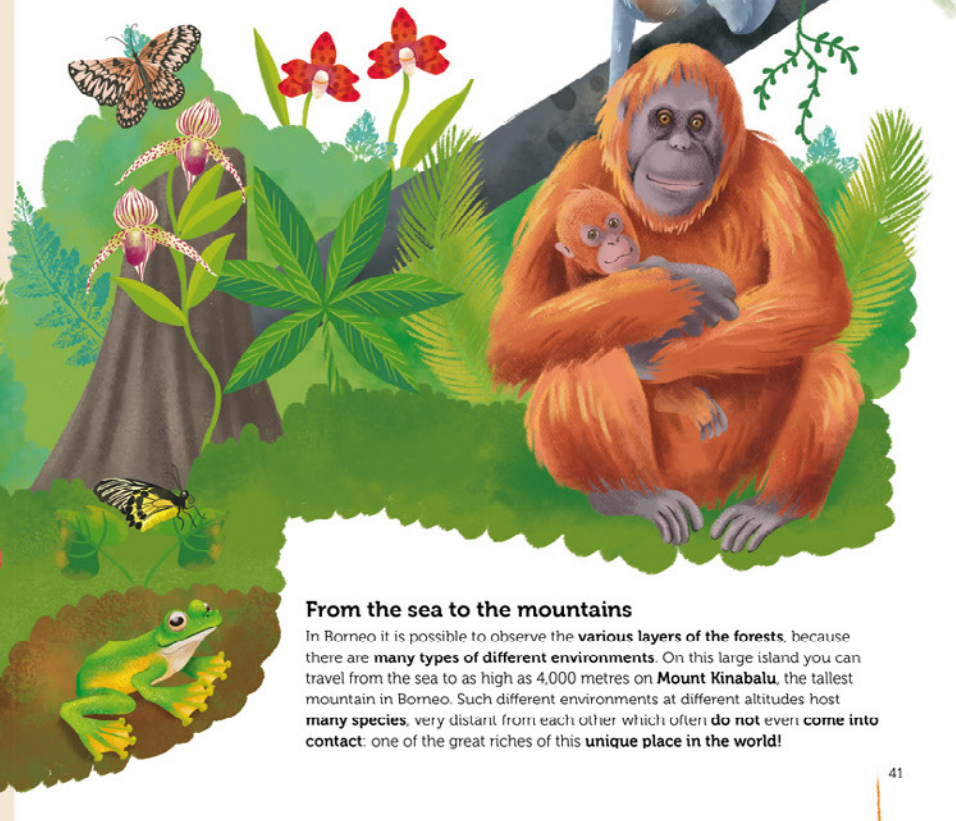
At one time the whole island was covered with an **incredible forest uncontaminated** by human presence, which today we call a '**primary forest**' or '**old-growth forest**'. Within, **plant life has remained the same** as ever, following cycles of nature unaffected by human activity. Trees will age and die, and **organisms will decompose** them making the soil ready to welcome new life. Every corner of this happy oasis welcomes **many forms of life**, which need their home to remain as they have always known it.

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FOREST OF BORNEO

Human greed

Humans have destroyed the balance of this idyllic and perfectly functional place. The discovery of **precious resources in the subsoil**, such as coal, oil, gold and diamonds, have attracted many people. **The island has never been the same since**. The forest has changed drastically. Many old-growth trees have been cut down to make way for large areas to be exploited. The **favourable climate** has attracted the interest of large industrial groups that have removed trees to make space for other **species to be cultivated**, especially for **palm oil**, used all over the world. Within a few years, this island has suffered **serious losses** that can never be recovered. Just think, one-half of the old-growth forest has already been **lost forever!**



From the sea to the mountains

In Borneo it is possible to observe the **various layers of the forests**, because there are **many types of different environments**. On this large island you can travel from the sea to as high as 4,000 metres on **Mount Kinabalu**, the tallest mountain in Borneo. Such different environments at different altitudes host **many species**, very distant from each other which often **do not even come into contact**: one of the great riches of this **unique place in the world!**

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BORNEO FOREST

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MADAGASCAR

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Inhabitant in peril
The "foliage" of the algae spread over the surface forming an intricate network that acts as a **mat** for a species permanently located here: the **sea otter**. Although the sea otter has become **rare**, it remains critical to the **good health** of the forest. The otter feeds mainly on **sea urchins**, one of the main culprits in the disappearance of the kelp expanses. A **docile** creature, it loves to bask **tummy up** on the surface of the water, turning over several times to collect air in its fur to float even better.



Sea wolf
Another species that counteracts the proliferation of sea urchins is the **wolffish**. The name suggests its importance at the **top of the food chain**, in fact, the wolffish is essential for regulating the equilibrium of the forest. It moves stealthily on the seabed and, thanks to the structure of its mouth, is able to feed on sea urchins **without suffering the stings** of their spines. Its numerous **sharp teeth**, which would scare anyone, allow it to successfully consume its meal.

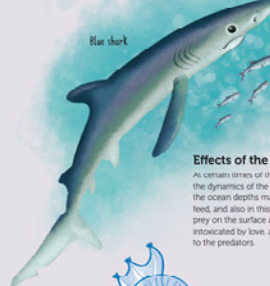


A good father
The most colorful fish found in the forest is the **Gambelli fish**, so called because its **orange colour**, which makes it very easy to spot, recalls the strands of the sodas and by Giuseppe Garibaldi. During the reproductive phase, the male turns into a **good gardener**, preparing a **red algae** refuge for spawning. If the female judges him good enough, she will **choose the nest** he built to lay the future offspring. Once the eggs have been set, the **male will take care of them**, keeping predators away and constantly oxygenating them.




The Gambelli fish guards the eggs in the nest for 20 days, until they hatch.

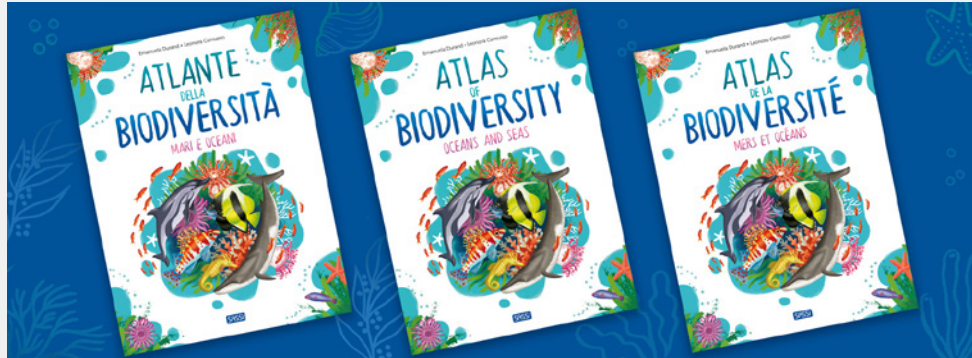
Raids from the open sea
It is not uncommon to encounter **unusual animals** in the forest, which arrive here driven by hunger or pass through during their migration. It is possible that, attracted by the **krill**, numerous **anchovies** approach in hopes of catching some. In turn these creatures attract larger animals, such as **sharks**, creating a recurring cycle of three in the food chain. In these zones in winter, you can spot the **grey whales** as they migrate a little farther south.



Effects of the moon
At certain times of the year, the **moon** plays an important role in the dynamics of the sea. By the full moon, the high tide brings from the ocean depths many **squid**, which usually show up at night to feed, and also in this specific case to **reproduce**. Such an influx of prey on the surface attracts several **other fish**, including **sele**, squid, intoxicated by love, are unable to defend themselves and fall victim to the predators.



Hold on to your seaweed!
Near the surface lives the **mudbranch**, small and transparent like a ghost, a shell-less mollusc, also known as a **lion mudbranch**. During the day it lives **anchored to kelp fronds**, allowing itself to be carried by the waves together with the algae. It travels only by **night**, from one branch to another. To keep predators away, it produces a **smelly substance** that sends many fish on their way.



ATLAS OF BIODIVERSITY - Oceans and seas

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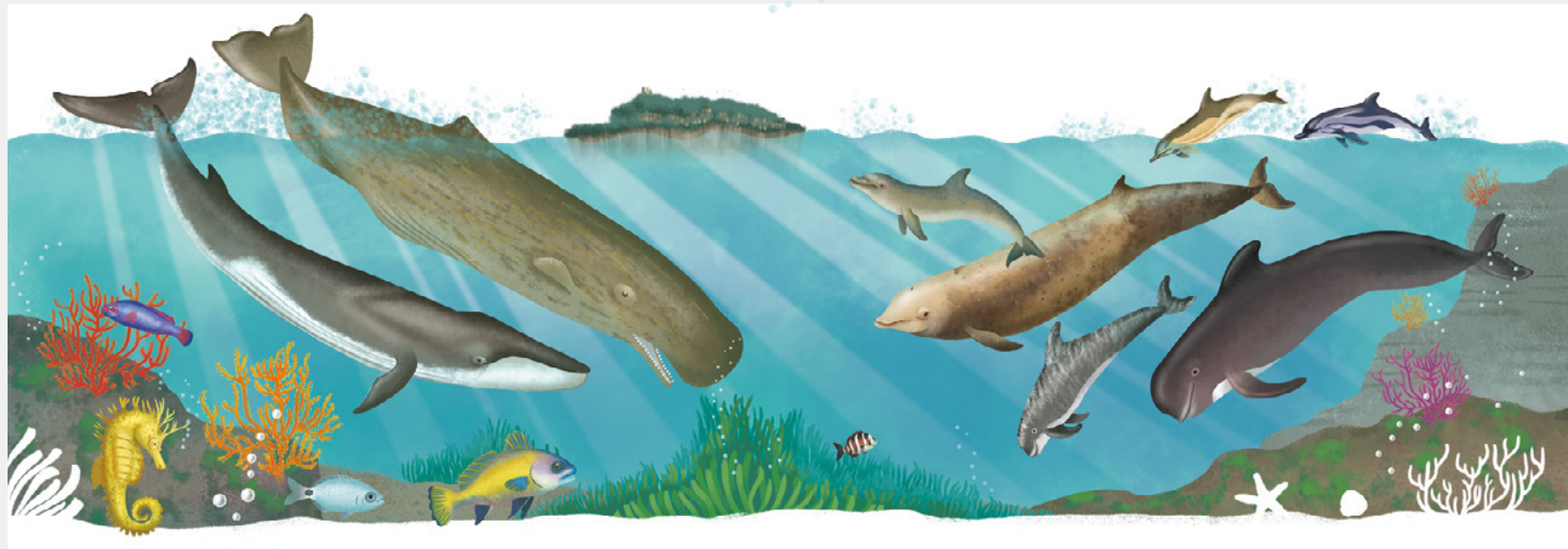
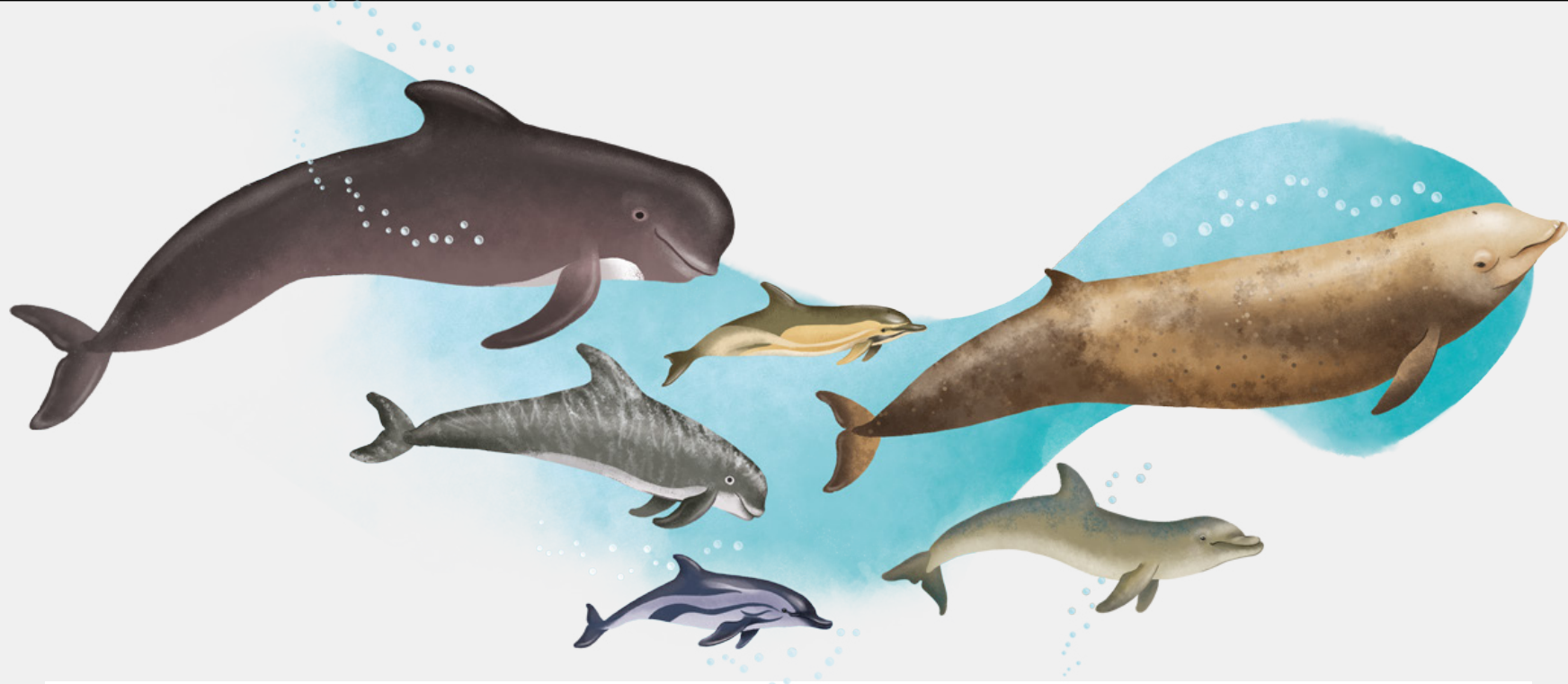
KELP FORESTS

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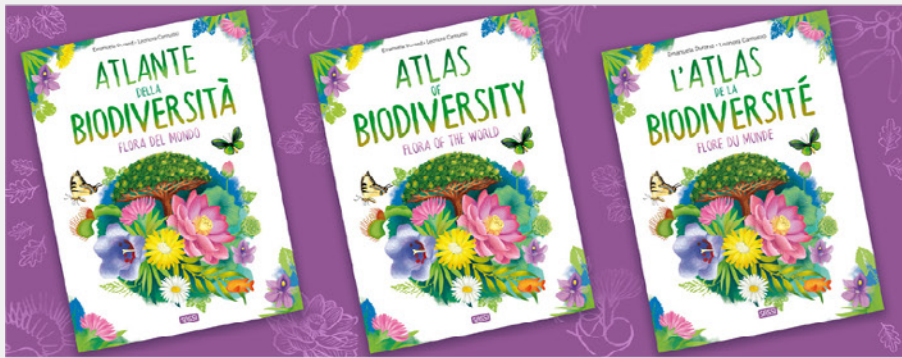
MEDITERRANEAN SEA: PELAGOS SANCTUARY

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AMERICA

'OHIA' LEHUA

Metrosideros polymorpha

Isolated
For those that live on an island without wings to fly off or feet to swim away, life can be challenging shaping both character and a spirit of adaptation. The 'ohia lehua is an **endemic species** that is exclusive to the Hawaiian Islands. Here it grows and prospers in many **different zones** along the coast, deep in the forests, on the steep slopes of volcanoes and even in peat bogs. It is really **everywhere** on the island so perhaps, for the 'ohia lehua, living here is not that complicated at all.

Different aspects
The 'ohia lehua takes **different forms** depending on its environment, from a tree of medium height to a few yards bush on the ground. It all depends on the **growing conditions**, the more comfortable the plant is, it can be taller and bushier. If conditions are stressful, it does not develop in height.

Pioneer
The Hawaiian Islands are volcanic, so **eruptions** often occur. During an eruption, lava and fire rise to the surface and during many of the eruptions that live here, in nature, some plants are better able to recolonize the scorched lands. These are known as **pioneer species**, and one of these is the 'ohia lehua. Thanks to its pioneer species, the steepest slopes of the volcanoes come **back on life** in a short time.

Flowers of 'many forms'
The 'ohia lehua flowers vary in shape and colour, though they most commonly bloom **scarlet red**. They are special, and what immediately catches the eye are the **stamens**, long colourful stamens with pollen on the ends. The petals of the flower on the other hand are always **hidden** within. We bees and other insects are very fond of this species, and the **honey** we produce is a delight for the island residents.

We are here!

Romantic legend
The greatest princess of a species and its usefulness, the greater in connection with the **local people**. A legend was born about this plant to explain its origin. The goddess of the **sea**, **Anaoi** in love with the water of 'ohia, transformed him into a **plant** when she discovered her love was not reciprocated. 'Ohia, in fact, was in love with an island girl named **Lehua**, who was a desperate girl over the loss of her beloved, begged the gods to be by his side. Pale, pining Lehua, transformed the girl into a **flower** to adorn the plant the warrior had been transformed into. Thus, Lehua was reunited with 'ohia, the 'ohia lehua flower named after the two lovers.

Many local birds feed on its leaves and flowers

Apoptose

The wood is very hard and used for constructing houses, musical instruments and canoes

OCEANIA

WOLLEMI PINE

Wollemia nobilis

Hidden and protected
The wollemi pine is **truly a rare species**, very few specimens exist. Despite the fact that humans are trying to conserve and spread it through cultivation, the exact location of the wollemi is kept **hidden** to protect it from too many visitors, often too curious and disrespectful of the places they visit. It is **guarded** as a great treasure to be protected, so this species from the ancient past will continue on into the future.

We are here!

Return to life
Until 1994 it was thought that the wollemi pine was a **species long extinct**, a plant of the past. In fact, the origins of the wollemi pine date back to 90 million years ago according to **fossil** remains. However, no trace of it remained to testify to its existence in modern times. Since 1994, an Australian forest ranger found some specimens in a **deep gorge** in Wollemi National Park, which is where the plant got its name. Given its interesting history, it is also called **dinosauro tree** and 'living fossil'.

A special appearance
The **bark** of the wollemi pine is quite special, furrowed and spined green when young and dark when mature. Its branches do not branch out. They are spaced with long **air evergreen needles** and end with a **pine cone**. Unlike the pine cone, it is not released its seeds, the branch it is attached to dies. The maximum height of the tree is approximately 40 meters. Its roots do not grow deep into the earth but remain on the **surface**, which makes it vulnerable to external droughts.

Protection in a gorge
Its chance at survival has a lot to do with its location, in a narrow, **deep-sided gorge** a comfortable habitat, sheltered from the winds and with the right amount of sunlight. The wollemi pine creates a **vertical surface** from its **branches** that fall to the ground and **decompose**, making the soil soft and moist, a perfect environment.

In nature it is believed that there are fewer than 100 specimens, living at the bottom of a narrow, steep gorge that is difficult to reach

Fossil

It was discovered in 1994. Until then it was believed to be extinct for a long time

Female

Males

FLORA OF THE WORLD

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10 IN SCIENZE

Illustrations for the book "10 in scienze, storia della vita sulla terra", published by Centro Studi Erickson 2020



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THE PERFECT POLLINATOR

Book project on pollinator animals



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A JOURNEY TO THE SEA: EEL MIGRATION

Illustrations inspired by 'Under the sea wind' by Rachel Carson



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PETRICORE

odore della pioggia sulla terra asciutta



LAMINETO

insieme di foglie galleggianti delle piante acquatiche che vivono in acque stagnanti



TERRARIUM SELVATICO

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MICORRIZA

associazione simbiotica tra un fungo
e una pianta superiore



CALABROSA

deposito di ghiaccio che si produce per la
solidificazione rapida di grosse gocce di nebbia



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FRESHWATER ANIMALS

Double spread page pond ecosystem: mallard, carp, newt, damselfly
Spot illustration: frog, gray heron



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LEONORA CAMUSSO



I'm Leonora Camusso, and I am an **illustrator** based in Italy.

I was born and raised in the mountains between Italy and France. When I was little, I spent my days wandering through meadows and woods with a few pencils and a sketchbook in my hand. It was then that I became deeply passionate about the natural world and drawing. Growing up, I studied illustration and animation at IED in Turin for four years. Later I explored other creative fields and worked in graphic design as well as illustration.

Now I live at the foot of the mountains, focusing on my career as an illustrator.

I work mainly for children's books, but I also create characters, infographics, and editorial illustrations for national and international clients.

I can't stop drawing and creating even for a minute. I'm always excited to work on new projects that allow her to use different skills, from my beloved watercolour to digital illustration and paper toys design.

My biggest passion is still animals and nature: that's why I try to learn every curiosity about it. I also love to discover and pass on folk tales and legends, so I founded a project to collect the stories of Alpine folklore.

If you can't find me in my studio, it's because I'm wandering through meadows and woods with my sketchbook in hand.

Essential things never change!

List of clients I enjoyed working with:

Milan Presse, Erickson, Mondadori, Giunti Scuola, Editrice La Scuola, Sassi Junior, SEI Editrice, Il Capitello, Rusconi-Theoria, Circonflexe-Rue des enfants.

Awards

Honorable mention "Un libro per l'ambiente" Legambiente Award 2022
Shortlisted Green Book Award 2022

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