

OPPORTUNITY MAKES A THIEF: ON THE FLORAL DILEMMAS OF PLANTS

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Summary

Pollination is one of the most important ecosystem services. It is believed to have a significant influence on the plants evolution. However, detailed analysis of plant-animal interactions shows that this relation is dynamic and may involve also cheating and floral theft. Floral characters attractive to pollinators appeal also to herbivores. Therefore, flower construction and functionality must be an evolutionary compromise between benefits from pollinators' visits and risks associated with parasites and herbivores. As a result, some floral characters serve double function at the same time supporting the attraction of pollinators and filtering out plant antagonists. Although the phenomenon of floral larceny is long studied there are still many essential information that are missing. Studies of the above mentioned processes would bring us to better understanding of the evolution of flowers, interactions of flowers with animal mutualists and antagonists and, in result, the enormous biodiversity of plant and animal kingdoms.