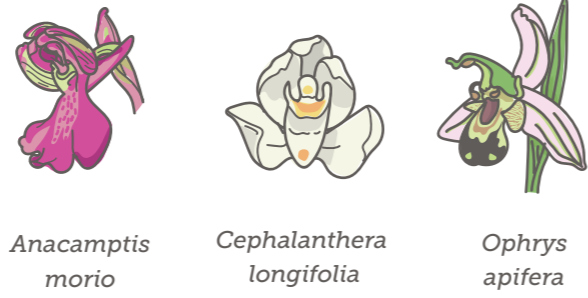
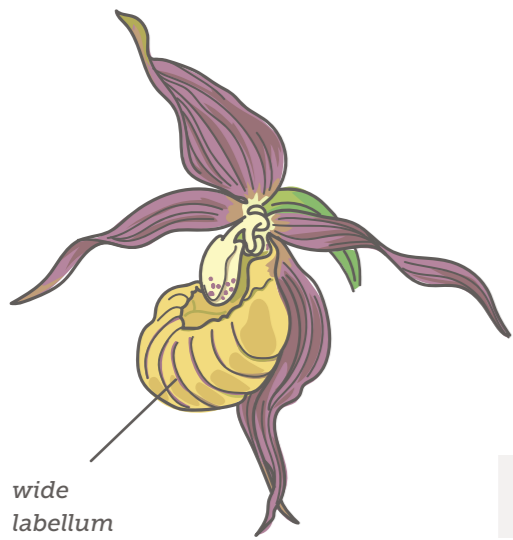
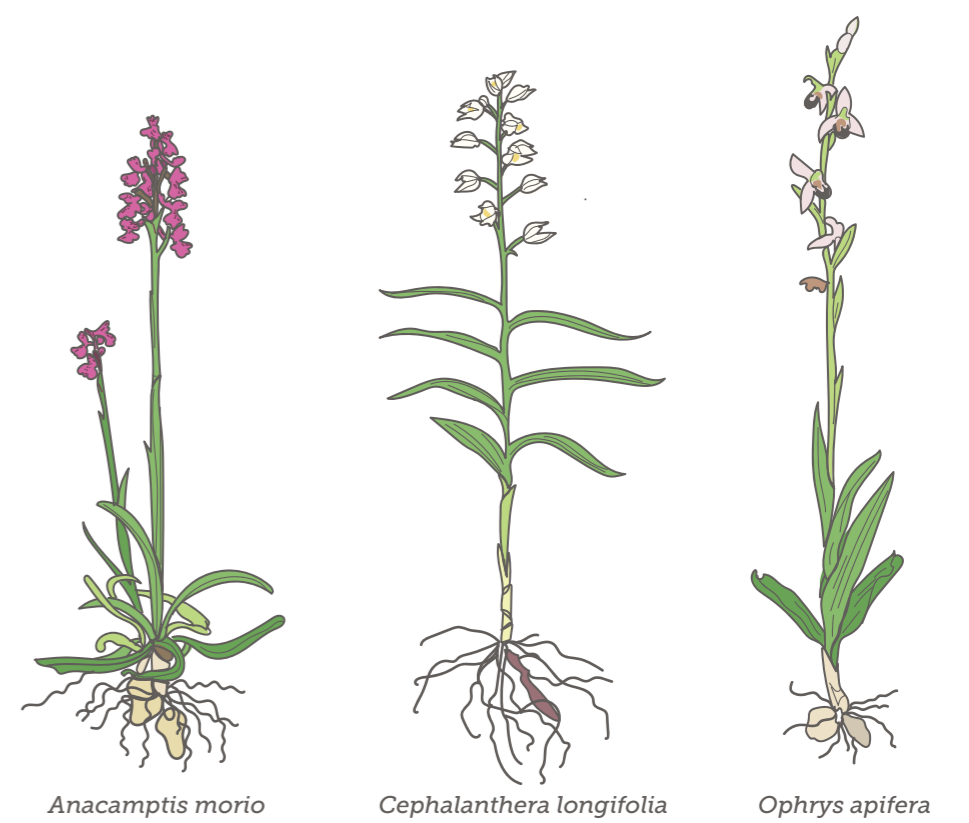
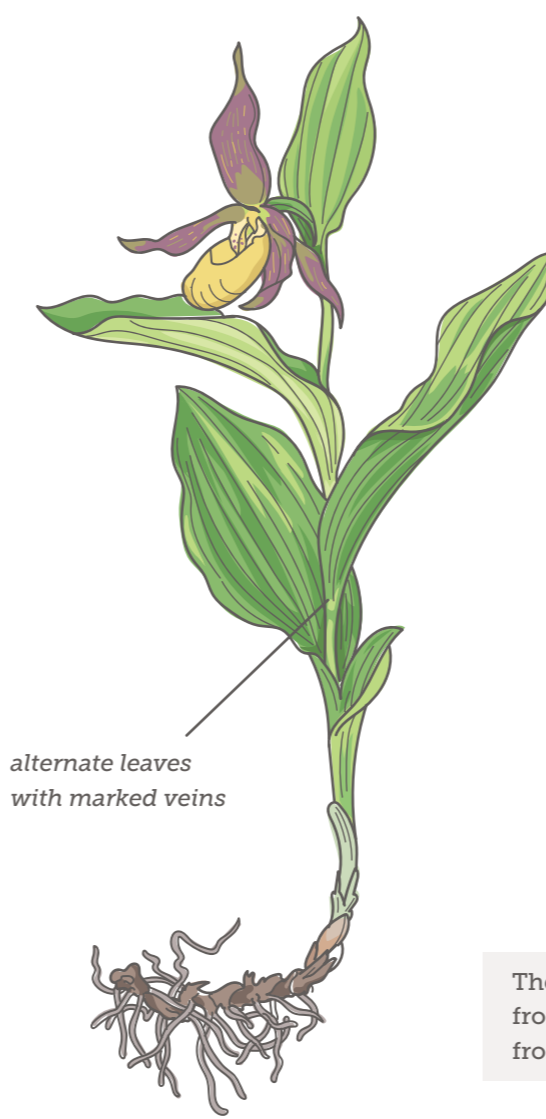


Lady's Slipper: a rarity to be protected

Cypripedium calceolus, also known as lady's slipper, is a very rare wild orchid, which was indiscriminately collected in the past for the beauty of its flowers, and therefore is strictly protected.

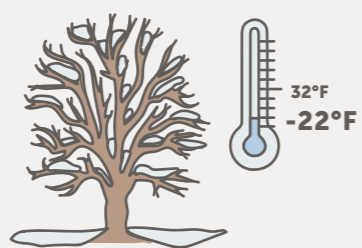


Its most distinctive feature is the large, **swollen labellum**.



The fact that *Cypripedium* has only **one flower per stem** also distinguishes this species from other orchids. Without flowers, it can be mistaken for other plants with a similar habit, from which, however, it differs in its **alternate leaves and pronounced veins**.

Identikit



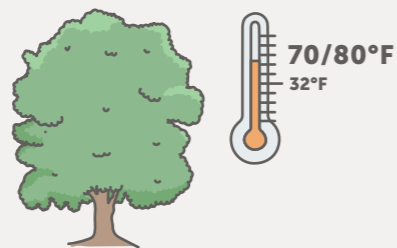
it withstands cold and prefers mild summers



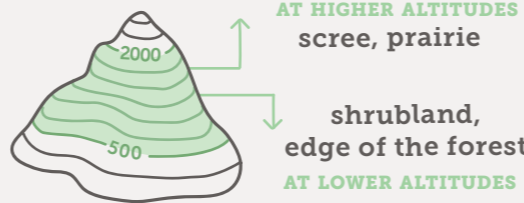
it likes the presence of water rivulets



often found in conjunction with mountain pine forests

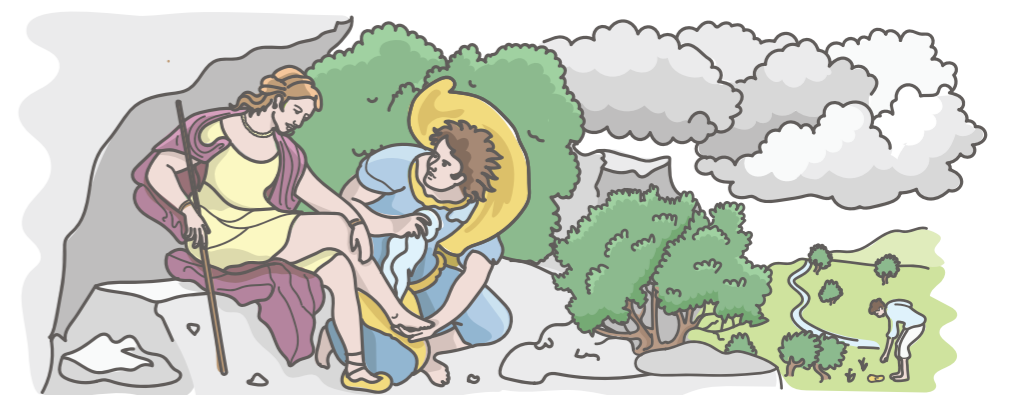


it prefers draining and calcareous soils



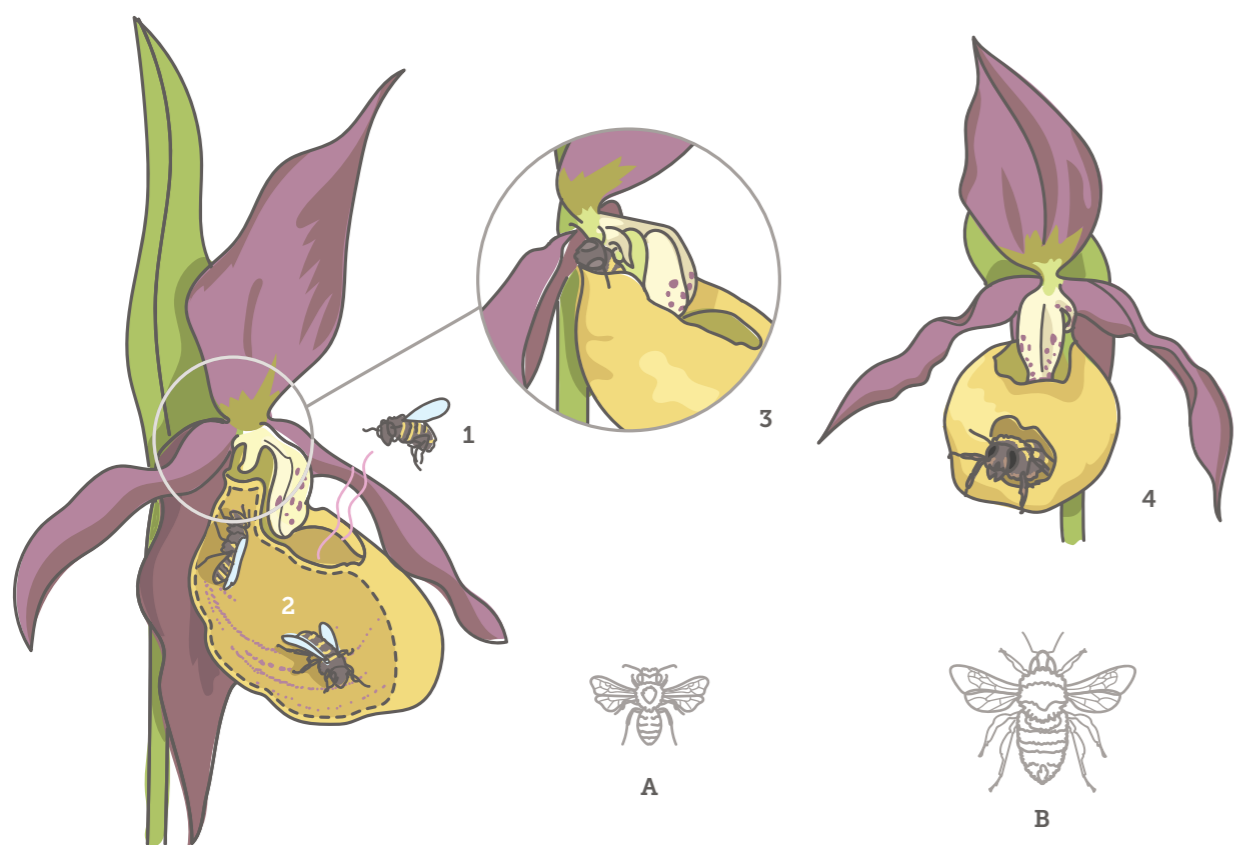
it grows between 500 and 2000 metres of altitude

Legend tells that Venus, during a walk with Adonis, was caught in a violent storm. They sought shelter, but she lost one of her slippers. A "mortal" man found it by chance and tried to pick it up. However, before he could grasp it, it turned into a flower: its **central petal, or "labellum", took the form of a slipper** and also retains its characteristic golden colour.



Seduced and deceived

The plant reproduces itself thanks to the work of insects. The Venus slipper is a nectarless species; therefore, it **tries to fool these small pollinators by attracting them with its showy flower**. It is a case of mimicry: the flower imitates the colour and scent of flowers that provide nectar. The showy yellow labellum also takes the form of a **safe haven** where insects can spend the night or shelter from rain and wind. The pollinating insects are small wild bees: attracted by the deception¹, they fall into the flower and get **trapped in the labellum**², which has its edges folded downwards. Their only escape route³ is via **two narrow openings that force them to crawl against the stamens, and to load up on pollen**. This sophisticated pollinator selection technique does not always guarantee the desired effect. **Many insects**, in fact, **cannot find their way out** of the labellum and, unfortunately, lose their lives. **Larger insects**⁴ with stronger mandibles than expected, such as bumblebees, for example, **"dig" their way out of the labellum**⁴.



I'll take care of you!

How is this species monitored?

After identifying suitable habitats and old reports, the research begins! It is necessary to find the population, count all flowering stems and young seedlings, mark the GPS point and describe the habitat in which it grows, and also note any other species presence, any threats or other field observations.

This makes it possible to assess the conservation status and threats to the species at a local level, as well as the most suitable actions for strengthening suffering populations.

Monitoring a rare species is a lot like a treasure hunt, which is not at all easy... even if you follow all the clues, some populations always escape the search. **Therefore your help is indispensable to improve our knowledge of this rare orchid**. Here are the clues you need: calcareous or dolomitic substrate, scree, mountain pine forest or conifer woodland, possible presence of springs or small streams of water. In general, it likes to have its back to the shade and the sun in its face.

If you should come across one or more specimens of lady's slipper, please, inform the park office by sending a photo taken with your mobile phone and indicating the location. Thanks for your help!

