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NOCTURNAL POLLINATION MEDIATED BY FLORAL SCENT

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Typically, bees are diurnal, but several species show nocturnal habits and initiate their foraging activity after sunset and/or before sunrise. The possibility to exploit floral resources by night or twilight could be advantageous for bees, because thus they avoid competitors in the flowers and minimize influences of enemies such as predators and cleptoparasites. We identified floral volatiles from nocturnal and crepuscular bees host plants. The composition of the floral bouquet varies among the plant species. In the bioassays we verified that nocturnal bees are attracted by a variety of compounds emitted by the flowers with nocturnal anthesis. We also recorded that nocturnal and crepuscular bees are effective pollinators of these species, including two crops of economic interest. We concluded that floral olfactory signals are important for the nocturnal bees to find the flowers. On the other hand, floral volatiles are important features used by the plants to attract and manipulate the nocturnal bees.

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