

PROJECT UPDATE: APRIL 2024

Saving the wild pollinators from the local extinction: Promoting the conservation of beneficial insects and bird species in Mbeya Range Forest Reserve (Mt. Loleza) in Mbeya

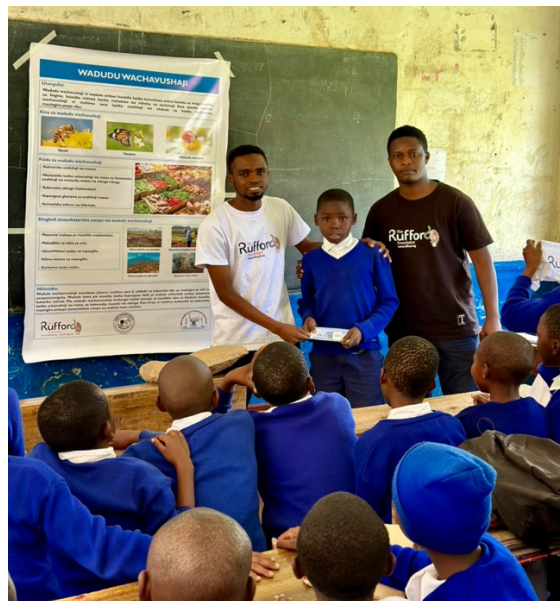
Summary

The conservation of wild pollinators in Mbeya Range Forest Reserve (MRFR) is of great importance for sustainability and maintenance of the diversity of native plant species in the Southern highland regions in Tanzania. Apart from pollinating native plant species and crops, the wild pollinators also serve as food for other small animals in the forest reserve. Nevertheless, the population of these wild pollinators in the MRFR has significantly declined in the past few years due to the ongoing human activities particularly agriculture that involve the use of synthetic chemicals such as pesticides. It is therefore important to sensitize communities around the MRFR on the benefits of conserving wild pollinators in the MRFR in order to ensure its continued health and productivity. This can be achieved through initiatives such as awareness campaigns, conservation education, habitat restoration, and creating incentives for communities around to conserve and protect pollinators from local extinction.

Activities implemented

(i) Conservation education in schools

The project team visited primary and secondary schools around Mbeya Range Forest Reserve (MRFR) to educate students and raise awareness on the critical roles that insects and birds play in ecosystems, particularly in pollination and maintenance of biodiversity. Through these interactive sessions and classroom activities, the project team was able to promote environmental conservation particularly on pollinators. Also, students were encouraged to form environmental and pollinators club which will be supported by the project in organizing activities such as tree plantations, field trips to conservation areas, pollinators books, hiking Mt Loleza etc.



Photos: Pollinators' conservation education to students

(ii) Construction and distribution of bee hotels

The project team was actively engaged in constructing and distributing bee hotels as part of their broader initiative to support pollinator populations. These structures (as seen in the photos below) were designed to offer safe nesting sites for solitary bees in areas that are highly disturbed by activities such as farming etc. Also, communities were trained on how to build bee hotels and their importance in the conservation of pollinators. By disseminating these bee hotels throughout the Mt. Loleza area, the project will not only provide refuge for these crucial pollinators but also raises awareness about the importance of biodiversity and conservation efforts in maintaining healthy ecosystems.



Photos: Bee hotels

(iii) Income generating small projects

The project worked with local communities to propose sustainable income generating activities that will help to cover for conservation and restoration activities post project funding. The local communities proposed beekeeping, and the project supported by donating beehives and training on beekeeping. These small income generating activities will help to ensure that conservation measures are economically beneficial to the communities around MRFR, thus encouraging community involvement and long-term sustainability of the project's objectives.



Photo: Project team with village leaders and members of the village environmental committee during handling of beehives