

Project Update: November 2023

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 sensitise 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) Project kickoff

The inception meetings were conducted between April and May 2023 to make the new project known to stakeholders and to plan and familiarise them with the new goals and objectives. It involved stakeholders from TFS, village leaders, local communities, etc.



Photos: Project inception meetings, with TFS zonal manager (left), the village office (right).

(ii) Identification of wild pollinators in MRFR

The project team surveyed the MLFR to collect different insects as well as bird identification. The goal was to establish a list of pollinators including solitary bees, beetles, butterflies, other insects and birds that are found in the MRFR. The project team also observed interactions between the pollinators and plant species and the information will be used to establish plant-pollinators networks that will help to understand the favorable species for the survival of these pollinators.



Photos: Insects and birds captured for identification of potential pollinators.

(iii) Conservation education and public awareness

The project team conducted meetings with village leaders, the environmental committee and village representatives to first assess their knowledge and perceptions towards pollinators and environmental conservation in general. The knowledge gap identified during this social survey particularly regarding the importance of pollinators will be used by the project team as the basis for designing the conservation education package that will be shared by the wider community through public meetings, flyers and educational videos.



Photo: Project team with village leaders and members of the village environmental committee during conservation education.

Next moves:

The project team continue with the following activities:

- Preparation of list of pollinators and plant pollinators interaction in the MRFR.
- Establishment of pollinator and environmental clubs in schools.
- Construction and distribution of bee hotels.
- Designing educational packages for conservation of pollinators in the MRFR.
- Planning for restoration activities and income generating small projects i.e., beekeeping.