

KIPEPEO

Butterfly Farming



ABOUT THE FILM

You have heard of wheat farmers, rice farmers, and even avocado farmers. Well, what about butterfly farmers? Yes, such a thing exists, and this is a story about the butterfly farmers of East Africa and finding out what they are doing and why. In the last 20 years, several butterfly centers have been set up in East Africa. These centers aim to show off these fantastic insects, help local communities, and support their mutual survival. Either for export or tourism, these centers earn revenue, and the money goes into the local communities too. The income helps communities live with the trees and forests that the butterflies need. They also raise wider awareness and understanding. Local farmers are trained to catch butterflies, raise the caterpillars, and care for their pupae.



STORY BRIEF

The establishment of butterfly farming in East Africa is a collaboration between conservationists and communities to promote the sustainable use of natural resources while providing extra income for local farmers. Farmers are trained to raise common locally occurring butterflies and sell them to a local center. The farmers collect female butterflies and look after them at their homes in special net cages. The butterflies lay their eggs which hatch in a few days. The tiny caterpillars feed voraciously, requiring a constant supply of their special food plant, keeping the farmers busy collecting these. After about three weeks, the now large caterpillars transform to pupae (orchrysalis), which are sold to the centers, where they arrange them in specialized cages and wait for them to emerge as butterflies. Visitors to the center are told about the butterfly life cycle and the farmers' process, and then they visit the large flight enclosure where the butterflies are flying around in a beautiful tropical garden.

Before Tanzania banned the live trade of wild animals in 2016, the centers used to export the pupae to butterfly centers in Europe. But now the center survives only on tourist visitors. While allowing the center to survive, tourism income supports much fewer farmers. Butterfly centers elsewhere in Tanzania that depended exclusively on export had to close as well.

Conservationists argue that income derived from the live display of these Tanzanian butterflies, both in local and overseas visitor centers, not only educates people about these important insects but also provides funds for local projects, supports supplementary livelihoods, and conservation. As the butterfly farms are located close to areas of natural forests, they provide an economic opportunity for local communities to protect and conserve the surrounding natural habitats instead of destroying them for agricultural purposes.



Butterfly

Butterflies are iconic invertebrates with fascinating life cycles. With around 19,000 species worldwide and about 1583 species occurring in Tanzania. They are very important to their natural habitats, because they are important pollinators, second only to bees and wasps, when feeding on plant nectar. Besides being a beautiful component of biodiversity they are an indicator of environmental health and change. During their life, butterflies need three basic things – host plants for the larvae, nectar plants for adults, and a healthy environment without chemicals.



Mwamvua Yussuf Vuai

Mwamvua is a butterfly farmer who has been raising butterflies for seven years. Butterfly farming has been very beneficial to her and her family, including the tuition for her children's school fees. However, the ban on exporting animals abroad has affected her business. She used to sell pupae to the Zanzibar Butterfly Centre (ZBC), but she no longer does so because the ZBC cut back on the number of pupae they purchased from the farmers, which had a direct impact on Mwamvua's income because she and her family were dependent on the butterfly farming.



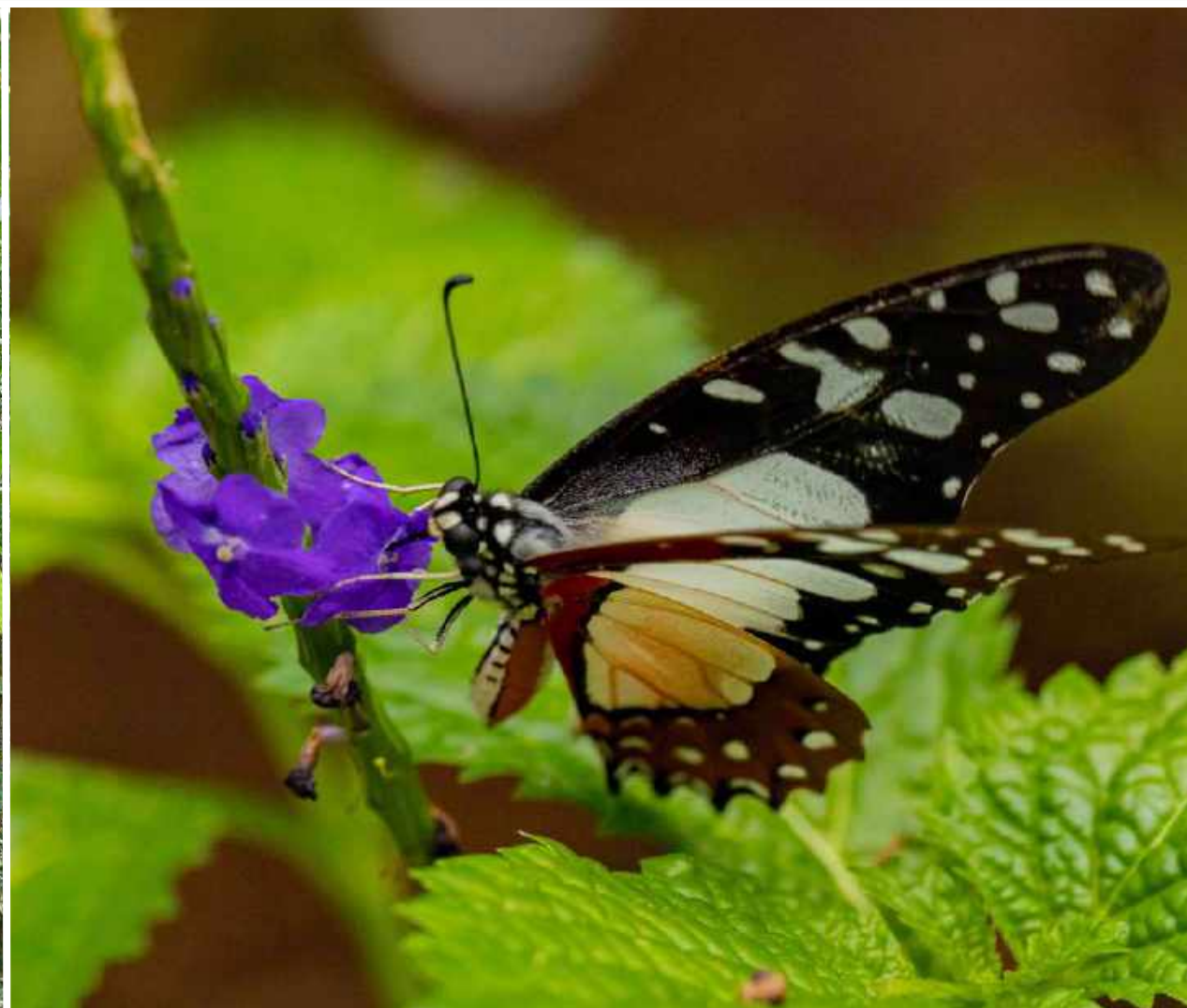
Mr. Simai Ali Vuai

Simai was a butterfly farmer, and that was his main source of income to support himself and his family. The income he earned from breeding and selling butterfly pupae used to be sufficient to sustain his family. However, due to the banning of the butterfly export business, which directly affected his income, he was unable to provide for his family's needs. As a result, he decided to transition to crop farming in order to generate an income to support his family and livelihood. The banning of butterfly exports directly affected his life and his family.

KEY CHARACTERS

ACT ONE

As a supplementary livelihood, butterfly farming is one tool for conserving the Jozani National Forest in Zanzibar since it puts a value on local species of both insect and plant. Jozani Forest is threatened by the developmental pressure of human population growth - communities looking to improve their economic well-being - and the unsustainable use of natural resources. Butterfly farming contributes to a package of conservation benefits for communities, such as revenue sharing, and other ecotourism activities, which adds to the overall set of green conservation related jobs and incomes that support forest conservation. The approximately 15 diverse jobs generated by butterfly farming represented significant income for the support of over 100 people, of whom are now looking towards agriculture and wood harvesting as a means of income, a practice in direct opposition to the conservation of the forest.



ACT TWO

As of 2016, due to the highly illegal and unsustainable market of live wild animal trade in Africa, and the world at large, the government of Tanzania banned wildlife trade, which included butterfly pupae exports. The ban affected not only the community around Jozani but also other parts of Tanzania where butterfly farms existed, e.g. Amani forest which prior to the ban, supported the jobs of more than 200 local people involved in the export trade.



ACT THREE

Some of the community members affected by the ban decided to go back to their old ways of making an income, which included charcoal burning and collection of poles for firewood. In 2022, the Tanzanian Wildlife Authority made an effort to lift the ban from 2016, but due to an extremely negative reaction by the East African Nation, the Tourism Minister, Pindi Chana, backpedaled. Certainly wildlife trade must be controlled properly, but in the case of the trade of butterflies, the economic and ecological advantages clearly outweigh the risks. Conservationists and the government had a clear goal of stopping the trade of live wild animals to save some unique species like pangolin, bird species, and reptiles. But as a result other trades have been affected and have directly impacted many community members nationally.

**THANK
YOU!**

