

## **Bees for Elephants**

**By Dr. Rich Reading, March 4, 2022**

Butterfly Pavilion's research team is in Tanzania working on our Bees for Elephants Program! Let's learn about the Bees for Elephant's Program by our Research and Conservation Director, Dr. Rich Reading!

Butterfly Pavilion began the Leading Environmental Action for Sustainability (LEAFS) initiative to develop conservation actions that benefit both local people and the planet. These projects include our work in Tanzania called Bees for Elephants.

Both elephant and bee populations continue to decline globally. People often kill elephants that raid their farm fields and homes. Such conflicts have proven difficult to address, especially given the strength and intelligence of elephants. One method that has shown promise is using so-called bee fences to keep elephants out of areas they are not wanted, especially agricultural fields. The concept is relatively simple. Since elephants have an instinctual fear of bees, farmers learn to become beekeepers and connect beehives with trip wires. Elephants that try to enter a field hit the wire, agitating the hives, and provoking the bees. This helps reduce raiding behavior in elephants.

As an extra benefit, local farmers can harvest honey, wax, and pollen from the hives in the bee fences and either consume these products themselves or sell them to others, thus enhancing their livelihoods. BP partners with the Katie Adamson Conservation Fund to train farmers in beehive fence construction in Tanzania. The project helps protect elephant populations by reducing human-elephant conflicts.