

# Butterfly Farming to Help Save Rain Forest

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Researchers at the University of Warwick's plant research arm Warwick HRI have received a £295,000 Darwin initiative grant to develop a butterfly farming industry in Guyana that will help support 5000 people in 16 rainforest communities and help save the rainforest itself.

The University of Warwick team will work with the Iwokrama International Centre for Rain Forest Conservation in Guyana. The conservation reserve around that centre and the surrounding North Rupununi District is a rich source of exotic butterflies that are sought after by many western butterfly farms and other institutions that exhibit collections of live butterflies. Each individual butterfly pupa that they can ship to one of these customers can be worth between 2 and 5 UK pounds.

The creation of a sustainable butterfly farming business would help preserve the local rain forest in two ways. Firstly the local population will have a sustainable business that allows them to turn away from other activities that would involve yet more forest clearance and secondly that butterfly farming actually needs to conserve the rainforest because that is the butterflies' preferred habitat.

The research will be led by Dr Doreen Winstanley and Neil Naish from Warwick HRI, the University of Warwick's plant research arm who already have experience of butterfly farming through their University spin out company - Warwick Insect Technologies Ltd. They will undertake a biodiversity survey of the butterfly community and their host plants within the Iwokrama International Centre for Rain Forest

## Conservation and Development Reserve.

The survey will work with the indigenous Amerindian communities within the reserve and the surrounding North Rupununi District with the ultimate aim of enhancing the livelihoods of the 5000 individuals in the 16 rainforest communities in the Iwokrama forest through the sustainable development of a low-tech butterfly farming industry. The butterfly farming will be set up as a co-operative within the North Rupununi District of Guyana.

Source: University of Warwick

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