



# Alliance for Tompotika Conservation Aliansi Konservasi Tompotika

NEWSLETTER

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## ALTO Launches New Law Enforcement Outreach Program

The endangered maleo bird has actually enjoyed full protection under Indonesian law since 1972. Unfortunately, however, few people--including law enforcement personnel themselves--have been aware of this fact. Little wonder, then, that laws protecting maleos and other endangered wildlife are rarely enforced.

Over the last six years, ALTO has worked closely with local villagers to increase voluntary compliance with laws protecting maleos, sea turtles, and other endangered wildlife. But this approach can only go so far, and it's time now to take the next step.

With the strong support of BKSDA, the government agency in charge of wildlife management, ALTO has just launched a new initiative pairing intensified public outreach with a special program to give Tompotikan law enforcement personnel the information and motivation they need to enforce wildlife protection laws. In the months ahead, ALTO will sponsor gatherings of law enforcement personnel, workshops on wildlife law, and other special programs aimed at raising the profile of endangered wildlife as a law enforcement priority. For the first time in Tompotika, a determined poacher may face not just obstacles, but also consequences!



Kevin Schafer

A fierce posture is not enough--maleos need police help to defend against human poachers.

## Not Just Charming-- Bats are essential for forests and fruits



© Merlin Tuttle / BCI www.batcon.org

The flowers of the durian tree open only at night, when they must be pollinated by a bat in order to produce fruit. Called the "King of Fruits," the durian contributes hundreds of millions of dollars annually to Southeast Asian economies.

may consume over 1000 insects such as mosquitoes--insects that otherwise might spread disease or damage crops.

Bats also play an essential role in maintaining the health of tropical forests. As agents of seed dispersal, bats not only spread seeds within healthy forests, ensuring that young seedlings will always be sprouting anew, but--more so than birds, for example--they are also key transporters of new seeds to speed natural recovery of large deforested areas. Additionally, their guano is a high-quality fertilizer that it is prized for human use and even sold commercially.

In Sulawesi, the critical role bats play in the health of rainforests is particularly important, for, compared to rainforests in other parts of the world, Sulawesi forests are especially rich in wild fruit trees such as figs. As a result, Sulawesi is something of a world-wide bat capital, with at least 62 species of bats, including 22 species of fruit bats (also known as flying foxes), many of which are found nowhere else in the world.

But sadly, at the moment, Sulawesi bats are in deep, well... guano. *(continued on next page)*

Did you know that bats are among the most important pollinators of fruit trees in the tropics? Mangoes, guavas, cashews, mangosteens, figs, avocados, wild bananas, and dozens of other delectable fruits come to being through the help of bats. And then there is the durian. For some, a single whiff of this huge pungent fruit is enough to make one cross to the opposite side of the road. But for millions of others in Southeast Asia, the durian is highly prized, and considered to be the pinnacle of tropical fruit-eating bliss. Yet without bats, there would be no durian.

Bats of the insect-eating variety are also key human allies--in one hour, a single bat



Kevin Schafer

Pallas' Tube-Nosed Bat, *Nyctimene cephalotes*. This and other fruit bats play a critical role in maintaining the health of Sulawesi's forests and fruit crops. And yes, that green and yellow are part of this fellow's natural coloring!

## Beneficial Bats, *continued from page 1*



© A few of the many fruits that rely on bats for pollination. Durian at top left.

Due to the high demand for bushmeat--especially in North Sulawesi--bats are captured all over the island, and transported by the thousands to markets in urban areas. Though few in Tompotika consume bats themselves,

lately there has been a sharp increase in hunting bats for the bushmeat market--and bats, which enjoy no legal protection, have been decimated. Mother bats bear only one pup each year, so their populations cannot rebound quickly.

So what is to be done? AlTo is delighted to have joined in a new partnership with Bat Conservation International, [www.batcon.org](http://www.batcon.org), in initiating a new Awareness Campaign module all about bats. Initially focusing on the Taima village area, which hosts the key Tangkuladi Island bat roosting site, AlTo staff will distribute newly-created brochures, stickers, and booklets, and hold informational meetings and dramas. With a little encouragement, we hope fewer Tompotikans will choose to hunt them, and more will take heed of the benefits--and the charms!--of bats.

The Alliance for Tompotika Conservation/ Aliansi Konservasi Tompotika ("AlTo") is dedicated to conserving the unparalleled natural and cultural heritage of the lands and waters surrounding Mt. Tompotika, Sulawesi, Indonesia. Effective, innovative, and efficient, AlTo protects endangered species, tropical rainforests, and coral reefs while promoting the dignity and self-sufficiency of local communities in a changing world. In Tompotika and everywhere, AlTo believes that the quality of our human lives is bound up to the health of our natural environment and our relationships to it.

AlTo is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization in the United States and a registered Yayasan in Indonesia, made possible by your donations. Thank you for your support!

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Butterfly by AlTo Conservation Coordinator Anim Alyoihana

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## Training Local Professionals

In the Alliance that is AlTo, we believe that conservation is most effective when people from all over the world join together, bringing their various skills and deepest commitments together to protect natural treasures that the whole world values. But the greater the skills and commitments of local folks in a given area, the stronger and more enduring will be the conservation successes--so a lot of what AlTo does is focused on building knowledge, skills, and wonder in our local staff and partners.



Conservation Coordinator Anim Alyoihana is "tested" on proper relocation of a sea turtle nest, while Director Marcy Summers scores and apprentice Vivi looks on.

Given that our local staff often come to us with no formal conservation backgrounds--the only prerequisite for apprentices to our field programs is a love of nature and desire to help conserve it--we spend a lot of time in training. It starts simple: how to fill out a data sheet, use a GPS unit, conduct a turtle beach patrol. But as our staff build skills and our programs become more varied and complex, those trainings are becoming more involved.

This past April, for example, AlTo staff were trained in how to safely move a nest of sea turtle eggs from one location to another, how to handle (if necessary) turtle hatchlings, and how to look after weak or injured ones in temporary care. Taima villagers who guard at the maleo nesting ground used role-plays for training in how to handle pushy visitors who don't speak Indonesian. Staff learned how to check and re-check data entry on a computer to ensure its accuracy. And as always, we spent time developing and refining new ideas and approaches for our outreach efforts. Training our staff and partners isn't just fun, and it doesn't just help us do our work better. It's strengthening the future of conservation in Indonesia--and in the world.



Noval Suling

AlTo staff worked together to carry out this Sea Turtle Awareness Campaign meeting, then critiqued each other to find ways to improve. The kids hold AlTo sea turtle posters and stickers.

## News Briefs

**New MoU with BKSDA** After a period of discussions, ALTo is delighted to announce that we have just signed a new Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Balai Konservasi Sumber Daya Alam (BKSDA), the Indonesian provincial government department responsible for wildlife management. The MoU, signed by ALTo and the new head of BKSDA Central Sulawesi, Pak Syhabuddin, authorizes all ALTo's sea turtle conservation activities for five years, through to 2017.

**Maleo Numbers Continue to Grow** Sometimes if we just remove the "killer threat," nature will take care of the recovery. Since ALTo's partnership with Taima village halted maleo egg poaching at the Taima nesting ground in 2006, the number of adult maleos returning to the site to nest has steadily increased. In 2011, that number was about 4112, up from 1312 in the first year of the program. So: the number of adult birds coming to nest has *more than tripled!* Warm thanks to the International Conservation Fund of Canada for its faithful and generous support of ALTo's maleo and other programs.



**No Taste for Maleo Eggs** Not only are maleo numbers growing, but so are signs of growing support for maleo conservation. ALTo conducts lots of public outreach and awareness activities in Luwuk, the area capital and gateway city to Tompotika, where maleo eggs are still sold as status symbols or souvenirs. Recently, a well-dressed lady showed up at the ALTo office, bearing four carefully-wrapped maleo eggs. She explained that she had heard of ALTo's efforts to protect the maleo and discourage egg consumption, and she wanted to turn these eggs over to us in hopes that they could be reburied. They were a gift, she explained, and although intended

as a coveted luxury for her, now that she knows of the maleo's plight, she would rather they became chicks!

**ALTo on Indonesian National TV** Word of ALTo's international partnership to save the maleo is spreading all over Indonesia. In April, the popular Indonesian news show "Dunia Kita," ("Our World") featured a 7-minute spot on ALTo's successful bid to reverse the decline of Sulawesi's endemic maleo bird in Tompotika. The piece was aired all over the country, and prompted letters from interested folks nationwide. You can find it on ALTo's home page: <http://tompotika.org>

**Do Your Part to Save Maleos and Sea Turtles - In Person!** Space is still available in ALTo's November 2012 trip to work with villagers to paint two large wildlife-themed wall murals. Contact ALTo for details.

## Keeping You Informed, and ALTo Fed

You, the friends and supporters of the Alliance for Tompotika Conservation, are why it all happens in Tompotika--no chicks or hatchlings would see the light of day, no schoolkids would wonder at a turtle's journey if it weren't for you. We want to make sure we use your funds wisely, but in this world of increasingly complex communications, our choices for reaching out to you are myriad. Paper? Electronic? Frequent short reminders? Fewer, more in-depth communications? Here's how we've chosen to do it:



Sandesh Kadur

- Three times a year, we produce this newsletter. It is printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper by an environmentally-conscious local printer. It's our pleasure to mail it to you via the U.S. Postal Service. You can read it when and where you wish--no computer, internet, or electricity required. One ALTo family tell us that they pass it on to their doctor's waiting room when they're done. Or, you can receive it via e-mail--just let us know.
- In addition to our thrice-yearly newsletters, on the alternate months we produce a shorter electronic update which is sent via e-mail only. If you'd like to receive it, please make sure we have your e-mail address.
- Past newsletters and other information can also be found at our website, [www.tompotika.org](http://www.tompotika.org), which is graciously created and maintained by star volunteer John Cornelison of Vashon Software.
- We try to respect your time and attention. While keeping you well-informed, we aim to minimize the number and maximize the quality of the communications we send you. We try to avoid the chatter of excessive e-mails and four-page fundraising letters, and we never share your contact information.
- We will, however, come to you twice a year to ask your financial support. You won't get six reminders, you won't get address labels or a plush toy, but you will get the priceless warm feeling of knowing that you're making a difference. We hope you will thoughtfully consider your giving, and give generously in line with your values. Since this Alliance was born six years ago, you have done this, and ALTo has had enough--it's a system that works! *Thank you.*
- We are delighted to receive your financial support by whatever means you prefer to give it, but we think checks are the most delightful of all, for with checks, 100% of your donation goes straight to our programs, whereas with on-line giving, 2.5% - 5% will be taken out in fees by financial services companies. Here on the ALTo team, we're proud of our very low overhead; your check helps keep it that way.



Sandesh Kadur



## The Faces of ALTo: Sea Turtle Hatchlings

Noval Suling



Newly-emerged Olive Ridley hatchlings are headed to the surf in Teku village.

Right now, it is the height of the sea turtle hatching season in Tompotika. In our main sea turtle conservation villages, Taima and Teku, late afternoon or nighttime signals the hour when, if you're lucky, suddenly you'll look down and the beach will be transformed by a stream of baby turtles, each smaller than your palm, that begin to erupt one by one from a single spot in the sand. Within moments, the beach is alive with furious activity, as the hundred or so baby turtles emerge from their sandy nest and make their way like so many wind-up toys across the beach to the ocean surf. There the headlong rush will continue as they swim toward the open ocean, coming to rest at last among rafts of *Sargassum* seaweed, where they will stay and grow. Then in twenty years or so, if they're lucky enough to have made it so far, the females will return to Tompotika beaches to lay their eggs and start the cycle anew.

The good news is that lately, more adult and baby sea turtles are getting lucky. Before ALTo started work there, almost all sea turtle eggs in Tompotika were dug up and consumed, and many adults were captured and killed for their shells or meat as well. Now, however, that is changing--and not just in Taima and Teku where ALTo has field programs. Last month, ALTo's Outreach Specialist Atu Durant gathered a group of a dozen young boys playing on another village beach and gave them an impromptu version of the educational sea turtle pep talks that he gives every day in Tompotika schools. The kids were amazed--they had no idea that sea turtles were so cool--or that they were protected by law! In response to their new-found awareness, and completely on their own initiative, two of the boys quickly disappeared, then returned from their nearby homes. Each was holding a turtle hatchling that he had picked up on the beach earlier this season and was keeping as a pet. Now, they wanted to set them free. With great pride, each boy set his hatchling on the sand, and the group cheered as the babies made their way to the surf. On that day, everybody felt lucky!



This tiny hatchling has regained enough strength to swim. With as little as 24 hours of TLC, a hatchling too weak at first to walk or swim may recover enough to be released. Hatchlings should be released on the beach to orient themselves on their way to the surf.



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