



Alliance for Tompotika Conservation Aliansi Konservasi Tompotika

NEWSLETTER

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Essential Ecosystems: Government declares Taima a new national conservation area

Before 2006, Taima village was just one of countless unknown rural Indonesian villages that happen to harbor one or more important features for biodiversity, often in a state of overexploitation and decline. But in September 2013, the federal government of the Republic of Indonesia, to be echoed by the local *Kabupaten* (Regency) government, declared maleo bird and sea turtle habitat in Taima an "Ekosistem Esensial," or essential ecosystem for conservation. As such, Taima joins only six other locations nationwide recognized this year as key conservation sites that are outside of the current national park and protected area system.

Along with the new designation, a committee has been formed with a mandate to advise on continued conservation management of the site, and ALTO was appointed as a member. The designation is proof positive: the Indonesian nation, and the world, are watching. Tompotika's natural heritage matters. We want it preserved.



Sandesh Kadur



Maleos and sea turtles nest in the same "essential ecosystem" beach area in Taima village.

Pulau Tangkuladi: New island sanctuary for bats and sea turtles

For a few years now, ALTO has been working with locals in an effort to protect Tangkuladi island through a conservation lease--and on September 25, that was accomplished! It's a red-letter day for Tompotika's bats and sea turtles.

Pulau Tangkuladi, a 7-ha (17 acre) uninhabited island 1.25 km (<1 mi) off the coast of Taima village, is a critical day roosting site for thousands of fruit



bats. These bats leave the island every night to forage in Tompotika's forests, where they play an essential role in maintaining forest health and recovery through pollinating trees, spreading seed, and providing fertilizer. The island is also important for nesting sea turtles, who haul themselves up on its shores to lay their precious clutches of eggs, away from many of the worst terrestrial predators, such as dogs, pigs, and humans.

For an hour or so around dusk, the sky between Tangkuladi Island and the mainland is like a dark, moving river of thousands of flapping fruit bats. The bats leave their island home every evening to forage in the forests of Tompotika, returning the next morning to roost through the daytime.

Pulau Tangkuladi has never been much visited or used by humans, but its lands are owned privately by eight different Taima families. And in recent years an ominous threat has arisen: Tangkuladi's bats have become the hapless targets of commercial bat hunters. Though locals themselves rarely eat bats, they are considered a prized delicacy far away in North Sulawesi, where residents have a special yen for bushmeat of all kinds. And among Tangkuladi's eight landowning families, some have taken to hunting bats for sale to the bushmeat dealers. Despite the recent extirpation of many Sulawesi bat populations, such uncontrolled hunting is still legal and bats currently have no official protection.

But the situation had become critical. Bat mothers give birth to only one pup per year, and their populations can neither grow quickly nor withstand intensive mortality. If Tangkuladi's bats--which have already been decimated--were to escape near-complete extirpation, something needed to be done to stop the hunting and (continued on page 2)



These flying foxes are among as many as five bat species found roosting on the island.

Noval Suling

Kevin Schafer (L and R)

Island Bat Sanctuary *(continued from p.1)*

protect their roost site as safe.

Now, thanks to a great deal of persistence on the part of AITo and the supportive landowners, some creative financing, and an equal measure of luck, the hunting families have agreed to stop hunting and AITo's lease of the island has been signed. The cruel rows of lines and fishhooks with which bats were captured have been removed, and regular patrols will ensure that they are not re-installed.

But our work is not done. This lease will only cover a trial period of two years, and will have to be renewed to protect the bats in the long term. In addition, only Tangkuladi is-

land will be protected--other nearby islands, where bats also roost, may continue to be hunted.

This new conservation island, however, is a huge boon not only for bats, but for imperiled wildlife in general, for the long-term goal of establishing conservation landscapes in Tompotika, and for building local capacity to protect and manage them.



Noval Suliting

On Tangkuladi island, bats will no longer be captured for sale to distant bushmeat markets.

The Alliance for Tompotika Conservation/ Aliansi Konservasi Tompotika ("AITo") is dedicated to conserving the unparalleled natural and cultural heritage of the lands and waters surrounding Mt. Tompotika, Sulawesi, Indonesia. Effective, creative, and efficient, AITo 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, AITo believes that the quality of our human lives is bound up to the health of our natural environment and our relationships to it.

AITo 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 AITo Operations Manager Anim Alyoihana Lanusi

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News Briefs

Clean Water for Taima

As part of the agreement with Taima village for our collaboration on the maleo conservation project, AITo has been working on a comprehensive plan to provide

clean, fresh water for residents throughout the village, which spans a linear distance of more than 10 km (6 mi). The first phase of this project, just completed, has been to repair and upgrade three major neighborhood wells. Where previously, these wells were open, crumbling, and often contaminated, they are now capped, renewed, equipped with pumps, and secured. And popular: like an office water cooler, the new wells have become a prime village meeting place!



The cap, hand pump, skirting and drain channel make this well far cleaner and more efficient for all users.

New Maleo Projects

Back in 2006 when it started, AITo's maleo conservation project was the only one of its kind anywhere in the region. But now that AITo's Awareness Campaign has been spreading the word for a few years, and the field program has been so successful in turning around the maleo's decline in the area, a great deal of new atten-



Kevin Schafer

Natural hatching: A newly-hatched maleo chick emerges from the sand at the AITo-Taima protected nesting ground.

tion is being paid to this iconic endangered bird of Sulawesi. Even corporations are paying attention. In the past year, both Donggi-Senoro LNG, a natural gas processor, and JOBS Pertamina, an oil and gas company, have begun new maleo projects as part

of their Corporate Social Responsibility efforts. Neither of these projects focuses on protecting wild maleos in their natural habitat, which AITo believes is the most effective conservation strategy. But, having been invited to provide advice for both projects, AITo welcomes the new attention for the maleo. We're committed to doing all we can to advance effective maleo conservation not only in our own projects, but throughout the island of Sulawesi.

Tompotika Bird Guide Delayed

It's hard to believe--especially since about a third of Sulawesi birds are found nowhere else in the world--but there is currently no field guide to the birds of Sulawesi in print and available anywhere. Given that fact, a year ago AITo began an effort to produce a bird guide for the Tompotika region. Originally slated to be completed this May, due to circumstances beyond our control the bird guide has been delayed. We apologize for this and will keep you posted on its progress.

The Law is On Our Side: Officials Take a Stand for Maleos and Sea Turtles

Last year, ALTo began inventing a new outreach program. Having been working to conserve maleos, sea turtles, and other protected wildlife for a few years, we found that many folks would support conservation--and cease poaching of maleo and sea turtle eggs and adults--simply after learning that these marvelous animals are endangered and such poaching violates the law. For some, however, stronger inducements are required, and this was the genesis for our new Law Enforcement Outreach program. Prior to its inception last year, few KaDeses (village heads) and even fewer police had any knowledge of Indonesia's strong laws protecting endangered wildlife, let alone experience or motivation to enforce them.

So, last year, under the leadership

of Senior Advisor Duncan Neville, Outreach Specialist Andi Faisal Alwi, and others, ALTo began researching

precedents and developing a new outreach program targeted specifically at those most directly responsible for enforcing laws in a key section of the Tompotika region: that is, KaDeses, Camats (district heads), police, and other government officials. The program began with intensified public informational outreach and a series of workshops for law enforcement officials, in which ALTo and its government wildlife management partner BKSDA facilitated law enforcement personnel in working together to develop their own criteria and procedures for wildlife law violations. ALTo also developed resources to give officials all the information they needed to understand and enforce the law.

Now, the results of these efforts are starting to emerge, and they are exciting indeed! Last month, coinciding with the close of this year's sea turtle nesting season, ALTo staff completed interviews with the two dozen participants at last year's workshops. To a person, the KaDeses, Camats, policemen, and other officials who attended the workshops reported that the program had greatly increased their own concern about the plight of endangered wildlife. Many then went on to educate their citizens, often through informal talks, such as at mosques and weddings. Due to these efforts, they feel, along with the billboards provided by ALTo, poaching of sea turtle eggs and adults has visibly decreased. (The numbers bear this out--see below.) One KaDes ordered release of captured adult turtles, on two separate occasions. Another caught a poacher digging turtle eggs, and demanded the poacher instead bring the eggs to an ALTo-sponsored hatchery. One official brought a copy of ALTo's calendar--which clearly states the law--to his uncle, who lived on the beach and specialized in turtle egg poaching. Learning of the law, the uncle announced he was quitting poaching and moved inland!

Importantly, these community leaders also reported that they enjoyed the learning process and the camaraderie with their peers--so much so that, as the program continues next year, several heads of new villages have asked to be included!



The KaDes of Binsil Padang, Haswan Sangintang (L), tells ALTo Senior Advisor Duncan Neville (R): "I'm grateful to ALTo for the workshops and the billboard. Now my community is aware. There's no more egg taking."



The streets of Tompotika: In preparation for next year's elections, many of Tompotika's main roads are peppered with billboards advertising political candidates (top). But in 16 key villages, ALTo's maleo and sea turtle billboards provide a refreshing change. Officials call the billboards "handsome," "very helpful," and "surprising and inspiring."



The KaDes Toweer, Aswin Asamin, patrolled beaches himself to prevent poaching.

Great News for Tompotika Sea Turtles!

In Tompotika, the sea turtle nesting season has just ended for another year, and the news is terrific: the number of sea turtle nests that were protected, babies that successfully hatched, and hatchlings that safely reached the ocean is up--way up! With some nesting results still to be analyzed, the total number of live hatchlings successfully saved from three locations is more than 3719 this year--that's an 83% jump over our previous best total (2030, in 2011).

These numbers do not likely reflect an increase in the overall sea turtle population--that will take years. But they do reflect--as noted above--a *major reduction in the incidence of egg poaching* in the locations where ALTo works. And that means a much brighter future for turtles and humans!



Pandji Kresno



The Faces of AlTo: Roma of Taima, Conservation Hero



Robin Moore

Roma at home. "Let not our grandchildren ask us, 'The maleo bird? What's that?'"

He holds no formal office or position, but it's easy to spot Roma as a key community leader in Taima village. Since before the new AlTo-Taima maleo conservation program began in 2006, and continuing through more recent collaborations on behalf of sea turtles and bats, Roma has been a dedicated promoter of conservation within his village. Without Roma's tireless and effective advocacy, much of what AlTo has accomplished in partnership with Taima could not have been achieved.

And now global luminaries, including Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck, are lining up to tip their hats to Roma. In August, 2013, the Walt Disney Company's Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund (DWCF) named Roma one of 14 Disney Conservation Heroes worldwide. Most of the other honorees are from Africa or South America--Roma is the sole honoree from Indonesia. The award, which was split between Roma personally and Taima village, includes a medal, a cash prize, and a collection of t-shirts and other DWCF logo items. At a village meeting, the Camat, head of the Tompotika district of which Taima is a part, hung the medal around Roma's neck and spoke of how the award shone a global spotlight not only on Roma personally, but on all of Taima village and its conservation efforts. "This," he said, "is something to be very proud of."

Roma has held several salaried conservation-related positions: as one of the first maleo nesting ground guards, as the first AlTo-Taima maleo program Coordinator, and as the keeper of the AlTo-Taima sea turtle hatchery. But the Conservation Hero award is given not so much for these positions, but for the countless services he has provided to conservation over the long term, without pay, and on his own initiative. For over 7 years, Roma has strongly advocated for conservation--not exploitation--of the endangered maleo bird, which was on the brink of disappearance when the AlTo-Taima collaboration began in 2006. From his home on Taima's beachfront, Roma has played a key role in discouraging poaching of sea turtles and in supporting the enforcement of protection laws. He's taken time from his fishing livelihood to join AlTo birding trainings, out of pure curiosity about the natural world around him. And lately, Roma has been a strong village ally in promoting AlTo's efforts to obtain a conservation lease on Tangkuladi, the Bat Island. Alongside his wife, Ata, and their two children, Roma is a living model for Taima and for the world--a true Conservation Hero for our times.

