



# Alliance for Tompotika Conservation Aliansi Konservasi Tompotika

NEWSLETTER

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## Festival! AlTo's 2nd Tompotika International Maleo and Sea Turtle celebration wows villagers

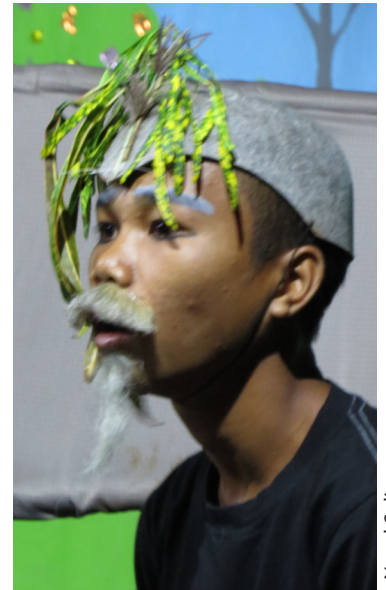
Titayanto Pieter



It's a full-scale, all-village, all-ages, all-free, all-fun come-one-come-all celebration of Tompotika's irreplaceable natural heritage. AlTo sponsored the first Tompotika International Maleo and Sea Turtle Festival in 2015, and in late 2016, we held the second one: a day of conservation-themed activities crowned by a pair of dramas put on by local high school students, including, this year, a stage adaptation of Dr. Seuss' *The Lorax*.

Here's how Festival works: like a traveling circus--this year we brought Festival to six different villages throughout the Tompotika region--AlTo rolls into town the night before, and sets up a colorful field and stage, usually on a soccer field right in the middle of the village. Then at mid-day, people start arriving. Kids get their faces painted, or sit down to make lanterns for the parade, or color sea turtle and maleo coloring sheets. Grown-ups check out the educational booths, compete for "save the maleo" stickers by tossing a ring onto the neck of a maleo statue, or just happily look on. As the number of Festival-goers grows, juggling workshops start

*(continued on p. 2)*



Noval Suling

*"I am the Lorax! I speak for the trees!"*  
Native tropical rainforests are the foundation of terrestrial biodiversity in Tompotika.

Noval Suling



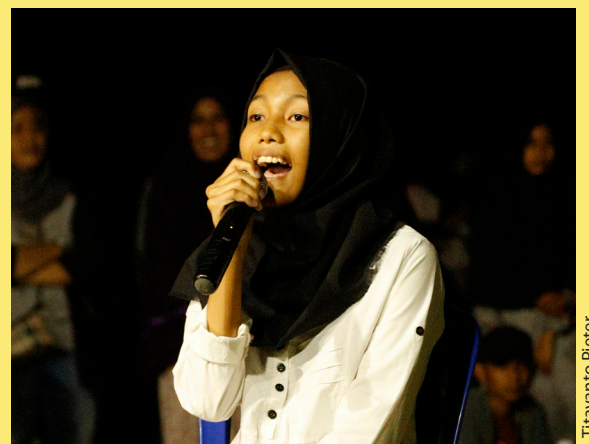
**Festival: a great big YES!** The day's activities include conservation-themed physical games, drama, visual arts, and much more--all activities intended to support the kind of **life**--for humans and non-humans--that AlTo wants to promote.

## Jackoustik: Contest sparks the creation of new music for conservation

When AlTo US Board member Dr. Jack Barbash died of cancer in late 2015, it was easy for his friends and family to identify what they wished to honor in a memorial activity: the abundant energy of Jack's daily activities, the brilliant focus of his mind, and the joy of his great heart had been wrapped around music and nature conservation throughout his sparkling life. It seemed obvious, therefore, to honor him by facilitating more of these two things that Jack loved in a place--Tompotika--to which he had devoted so much time.

Thus, a music contest--dubbed "Jackoustik" by AlTo's Indonesian staff with a play on the word "acoustic"--was born, and held for the first of what we hope will be many times, in association with AlTo's recent Festival. The contest was open to all, in all parts of Tompotika: soloists or ensembles of all sizes, all

*(continued on p. 3)*



Titayanto Pieter

*"Listen to the voice of nature that calls you to sing."* A band member in the Jackoustik Music for Conservation contest pours her heart into her plea.



## Topotika's 2nd International Festival Celebrates Conservation (continued from p.1)



Noval Suling (both photos)

**Making education fun** - Village children flock to Festival, where they are enthralled by displays of nature photos by local photographers and informal talks on conservation topics by really cool older kids.

what's causing their endangerment, and what can folks do to conserve them? The second, a rendering of Dr. Seuss' classic *The Lorax* on stage and in the local dialect, aimed at inspiring them to want to try. The students--who were drawn from all over Tompotika--quickly "got" Seuss' conservation message, and brilliantly adapted it to Tompotika's natural and human environment. Seuss' fantastical animal characters--birds, fish, etc.--were named to echo real Tompotika species, the Lorax and Onceler were made culturally fitting, and the book's deforestation story was all too familiar. As the trees came

up, huge group games are organized, and a percussion ensemble, through which villagers make music from plastic trash bins and old car parts, lends background music to the festivities. After a brief break at dinnertime, villagers return to the field in greater numbers yet for the evening program. Local dignitaries give welcome speeches and exhort the audience to heed the conservation call as villagers gather by the hundreds. Free entertainment--this is the most exciting community event of the season!

At each location, a dozen Tompotika high school students--under the leadership of Australian and American drama coaches Nick Fury, Ross Brown, and Mik Kuhlman--then performed two shows. The first, an original comic drama about maleo birds and sea turtles by Mik Kuhlman, focused on these two popular but

poorly-understood Tompotika flagship species:



Titayanto Pieter

Drama Coaches Mik Kuhlman (front, applying make-up) and Nick Fury (rear, looking on) help the cast prepare for the shows. For most of the Tompotikan students, this was their first experience performing.

down faster and faster, the crew of forest-destroying factory workers paused--that is, to take selfies! And when his conscience and the Lorax tweaked him, Onceler justified the destruction because "business is business." But audiences fell silent at the end when, in each village, a local child



Noval Suling

**Yakis-Makis are losing their home.** Where Dr. Seuss wrote of the "Brown Bar-ba-loots," AITo's stage production featured "Yakis-Makis"--a play on the native "yakis" macaques. Like the real thing, these Yakis-Makis are social, intelligent, playful, utterly charming--and endangered by deforestation and other human activities.

stepped up to catch the very last tree seed from a now-humbled Old Onceler. As he has realized: "Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not."

That message, written in 1971, is every bit as pertinent now. Time will tell how human hearts, minds, and behavior may yet change. But to look around the faces at Tompotika's recent Festival, somehow "cares a whole awful lot" seemed like just about all of us. ~

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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## Jackoustik: Music for Conservation *(continued from p.1)*



Titayanto Pieter



Noval Suling

Nine finalists performed, while audiences of several hundred, including Drama Coach Ross Brown and AITo Board members Dr. Djoko Iskandar, Dr. Barita Manulang, and Nenny Babo, took in the Jackoustik music.

kinds of acoustic instruments, and people of all ages. The requirements were simple: contestants had to compose and perform an original piece of music, and it had to be on a conservation theme. And because at 1000 mi<sup>2</sup> Tompotika is spread out and transportation can be difficult for locals, the contest was held twice in the two major Tompotika districts, Bualemo and Balantak.

Teens and young adults made up the majority of the contestants. They were an enthusiastic bunch: soloists accompanying themselves on the guitar as well as bands of 2-5 members, including guitars, harmonicas, and percussion of various kinds. They sang beautiful, simple melodies and multi-part harmonies, their lyrics (translated here from Bahasa Indonesia) ranging from bouncy (“C’mon, together let’s save the Maleo...”) to plaintive, (“Many living creatures are always going extinct, for humankind is destroying their Nature...”), to poetic (“Look at the wide woodland, that adorns this life, come let’s preserve it...”). Winners in each district received cash prizes and a beautiful new guitar.

These Jackoustik participants proved to audiences what Jack himself knew, and his life demonstrated: nothing inspires like music. “Love this, our Nature, as we love ourselves, and take care of it... with full hearts.” ~



Steve Caldwell

**Jack in Sulawesi.** Dr. Jack Barbash was a fantastic pianist and a committed conservationist who truly “walked the talk.”

### More Kids’ Books Delivered through the Tompotika Children’s Library Project

The project began in late 2015, when teacher Adolof Radjah in AITo’s partner village of Tanah Merah said, “Our children have no books. Do you think you could help us get some?” After discovering very few children’s books available in the Indonesian language--and with the enthusiastic support of our donor community-- the AITo team has since selected, purchased, translated, and delivered over 180 books to Tanah Merah’s school. The fifty-five titles selected to date include some of the best



Marcy Summers

In addition to receiving books from the Library Project, children from Tanah Merah village also hosted AITo’s Festival company and helped out with the drama preparations. Here, kids pore over translated copies of *The Lorax* before seeing it performed in Festival.

children’s picture books in existence-- and all help reinforce conservation values. It’s creating young conservationists, book by book--and best of all, the kids are loving it! ~

### New Research Program to address never-before-studied maleo questions

Under endorsement of the Indonesian government and led by AITo Director Marcy Summers, the AITo team has just initiated a scientific research program to gain much-needed knowledge about maleo breeding biology and habitat use. The research program, which also includes collaborators Dr. John Tasirin of Sam Ratulangi University, Manado, Indonesia, and Dr. Philip McGowan of Newcastle University, U.K. should yield answers to questions that have never before been researched, such as: How many eggs does a female maleo lay in a year? or, How far do they travel from the nesting ground? With the help of some local “experts” --(poachers!)-- the



Vhivhi Tan Oga

**Male Red-Purple-Blue-Silver.** AITo staff members Marcy and Pandji place color bands on a newly-captured maleo. This bird weighs 1.65 kg.

AITo team has caught and placed color bands on eight maleos to date. The pattern of colors allows recognition of individual birds. ~



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## The Faces of ALTO: looking closely reveals hidden faces



Martin Mandák

**Wallace's Stripe-Faced Bat** (*Styloctenium wallacei*). Until visiting Czech naturalist Martin Mandák discovered this individual in Tompotika a few months ago, the scientific community did not know this species occurred in the region. Rare and declining fast across its range, this striking fruit bat helps maintain tropical forests by pollinating trees and dispersing seeds.

You've heard it here before: Tompotika--and the island of Sulawesi, Indonesia, of which it is a part--is a treasure-trove of biodiversity. That's true of many areas in the world, especially in the tropics. But in Sulawesi's case, the biodiversity is truly unique. More than two-thirds of Sulawesi's mammals, about a third of its birds, and most of its reptiles and amphibians, for example (exact figures are difficult to state, as new species keep being named) are found nowhere else in the world. And those that are known are often, well... *weird*. Sulawesi's largest mammalian carnivore, for instance, is neither cat, nor dog, nor bear, but civet (Sulawesi giant civet). There's the babirusa--like a cross between a pig and a deer, with huge forehead-piercing curved tusks. There's the world's largest marsupial possum (bear cuscus), which may roost in the same tree with one of the world's smallest primates (tarsier). And, as on many islands, there are lots of Dwarf-thises and Giant-thats. In short, Sulawesi is like a carnival fun-house of *life*.

But here's the thing: compared to other parts of the world--even to its sister Indonesian islands such as Borneo and Sumatra--Sulawesi is very little studied. The fact is, we are simply ignorant about a great deal of the wild nature that is there. So, one of the great delights of the past decade of ALTO's existence has been participating in the discovery of new species in Tompotika. As described in previous newsletters, to date at least 9 or 10 brand-new species have been discovered in Tompotika: frogs, geckoes, shrews, and more. These new "faces" were previously completely unknown to science. But another red letter day in ALTO's love affair with Tompotika happens each time a species known only from elsewhere is found in Tompotika as well. And as we humans start to play closer attention within the myriad wild nooks and crannies of Tompotika, more and more of these occurrences are happening. Recently, new types of butterflies, fishes, and bats--many of them rare or endangered--have turned up in Tompotika. We already knew Tompotika was a special place, worth working to protect. But among the benefits of preserving what is there is getting to

keep on looking more closely. We're being rewarded with glimpses of new faces, new neighbors we didn't know we had. ~