



Alliance for Tompotika Conservation Aliansi Konservasi Tompotika

NEWSLETTER

VOL. V, NO. 2 JUNE 2010

Food, Farms, and Forests: *How Organic Farming is Saving Tompotika's Rainforests*



Farm family in Tompotika. As part of the new Forest Preserve, ALTo now owns the forested land visible behind this family's hut. Organic farming training will enable these farmers to grow more food on land they already cultivate, so they won't need to clear new areas of forest.

customs of Indonesian farmers and the characteristics of the places they farm. In April, ALTo sponsored the first set of four farmers from Tompotika to receive an intensive three-week training at The Learning Farm. In this (*Continued, next page*)

For many Tompotikans living near ALTo's new Forest Preserve, the issue is simple: they just need to eat. The typical pattern goes like this: a family cultivates a few hectares of land and subsists from its yields. But with steep, erodible slopes and infertile soils, a given patch of farmland in this area is usually exhausted within a few years. So folks move on to "slash and burn" a new patch of rainforest, which allows them to eke out a few more years' yields, but soon, once again, the soil is gone or exhausted. The cycle continues, and, patch by patch, Tompotika's rainforest disappears.

It's time to break that cycle. Protecting Tompotika's priceless tropical rainforest is at the core of what ALTo does, and that's why the ALTo team is busy protecting a 10,000-hectare swath of Tompotika's forest in the new Preserve. But just as the forest needs to stand, its human neighbors need to eat, and no scheme for protecting the forest will endure if the people on its borders are hungry.

Enter organic farming. ALTo has just formed a new partnership with The Learning Farm, a non-profit based in Java and dedicated to teaching organic farming techniques specifically tailored to the

Maleo by Big Antono, WCS



**First
International
Maleo Conference
March 24-26, 2010**

***ALTo Partnership Honored:
Taima Village Wins
The Maleo Award
for Outstanding
Conservation***

see page 3



Intact forest in the new Tompotika Forest Preserve. Photo: Robin Moore



Newly planted "slash and burn" field. Under the old system, this field would be exhausted within a few years.

Organic Farming Saves Forests *(continued from p. 1)*

training, Tompotika farmers learned how to conserve soils to prevent erosion in their fields. They learned how to increase yields by making high-quality, non-toxic fertilizer from free, abundant local materials such as crop residues and animal manure. They learned how to manage water efficiently in order to keep their fields sufficiently moist but not flooded by heavy rains. They learned how to use companion planting and crop rotation to keep plants happy and discourage pests. And a great deal more: **all the essentials to empower Tompotika farmers to embark on an enormously promising new path towards sustainable livelihoods.**

With the new skills and knowledge they've gained at this training, these Tompotika farmers will be able to increase yields, halt soil erosion, gird themselves against flooding and drought, and grow the food they need to feed their families indefinitely, on their *existing* agricultural land. **Just as AIto is preserving and stewarding the forests of the new preserve, these new organic farmers will be preserving and stewarding their soils in a way they have never been able to before**, so that they can grow crops continuously on their farmlands without having to clear new forest and start over every few years.

This is just the beginning. The four farmers who've just completed their training are keen to return to Tompotika, implement what they've learned, and start spreading it to other farmers. AIto will help with additional trainings, demonstration plots and follow-up. But AIto also hopes to train farmers in other forest villages, as well as those in coastal areas, where organic farming know-how can provide villagers with new food sources where certain old ones, like sea turtle or maleo eggs, need to be replaced. As the new practices spread, Tompotikans' overall nutrition should also significantly improve. In the training just completed, **the farmers were excited to bring home seeds of several vegetable varieties--such as broccoli and red beans--that, though common, they've never yet grown in Tompotika** and therefore rarely have access to.

All over the world, people are waking up to the necessity of re-tooling our food supply and eating habits, community by community. **In Tompotika, AIto is blazing a trail to show how building a local, sustainable food supply for people in the developing world can be directly linked to protecting our precious and irreplaceable forests and wildlife.** That's a good thing for the whole planet!



Tompotika farmer Amrin tends a bean plant at The Learning Farm.

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, innovative, 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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Wildlife Art Cards Available

Last August, 12 Tompotika high school students created beautiful paintings and drawings of Tompotika's endangered species, which AIto then assembled into the 2010 *Our Heritage, Our Future* youth calendar. Calendars are still available, now at the special mid-year price of \$5 each. And so popular has been the students' artwork that it's now available in notecards as well.

The cards are printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper and come in a package of 6, each card featuring a different species by a different youth artist. The card insides are blank, and envelopes are included. **A pack of 6 cards is \$12;** see insert for ordering info.

Recognizing Success: AlTo's partner Taima wins The Maleo Award

Maleo numbers have tripled

On March 24-26, 2010, more than 70 maleo conservationists and researchers from all over the world gathered together in Manado, North Sulawesi for the First International Maleo Conference. With a large portion of the conference's funding and organizational effort coming from Dutch conservationists, the conference included virtually everyone in the world who's involved in research or conservation of the maleo bird (*Macrocephalon maleo*). And whereas the remarkable maleo is found only in Sulawesi, the fact of its evolutionary uniqueness and global importance for conservation was much in evidence.

The entire AlTo staff team and two board members attended the conference, and AlTo's two presentations--one on our Awareness Campaign and one on our maleo field conservation program in partnership with Taima village--were both very well received. **AlTo is the only organization with an active and ongoing maleo education and outreach effort, and our school-based program has reached over 4500 children and adults in 120 schools--all the schools in Tompotika and a few more besides.**



Roma, representing Taima village (center right, tipping his AlTo hat) accepts the Maleo Award on behalf of his village. Also pictured are AlTo Indonesian Board member John Tasir (left), co-honoree Ramoy, and conference organizer and maleo researcher Marc Argeloo of the Netherlands (right).



Maleos by Sutrisman Labuna, 17

But for AlTo the conference highlight was witnessing **Taima village--our community partner in the maleo nesting ground protection program we've collaborated on since 2006--honored with The Maleo Award for Outstanding Conservation.** Taima village shared the award with Pak Ramoy, who expertly runs Wildlife Conservation Society's maleo hatchery in Tambun, North Sulawesi. The leap that Taima village took in 2006 to partner with AlTo to protect its imperiled maleo nesting ground--and to continue this protection ever since--has just been recognized for the bold and visionary conservation action that it was and is. Best of all, that action has yielded results! While, sadly, the maleo is in decline elsewhere, **Taima is unique in documenting an increasing population: the number of adult maleos returning to the nesting ground to lay eggs has tripled since the project began in 2006.**

The glow of success that the AlTo team brought home from the conference only got brighter a few days later when all returned to Taima. A village meeting was called to announce the award, and villager Roma, who attended the conference and whom Taima recently elected as their official maleo liaison with AlTo, held up the award. **"When the world thinks about the maleo bird, they think about Taima village!"** he proudly declared. Villagers clapped, called, nodded, and grinned their approval. Then the group spent some time taking stock of their participation in the maleo program: where we've been, where we're at now, where we're going. Resoundingly, they reaffirmed their desire to continue working with AlTo on protecting the maleos at their nesting ground.

And once again, it was striking how far we have come. When the maleo project began in 2006, most of villagers' discussion on the subject centered around economics. *We can earn more money as guards than we're getting from selling eggs,* they reasoned. At that time, there was little talk from villagers about other reasons why the maleo might be worth conserving. But now, less than four years later, that has all changed. At the meeting, people spoke of their pride in their avian mascot, of their excitement at seeing chicks and juveniles, and of how they want maleos to be here for their grandchildren. Roma seemed to sum up the sentiment. **He held up the cash award in one hand: "This is useful, a benefit for our community," he said. Then in the other hand he held up the Maleo Award certificate, "But *this* is my real reward."**



Nearing Extinction?

AlTo's 2010 Eco-Service travelers will soon be departing to help usher in new trash management practices in Tompotika--and, we hope, make scenes like the above a thing of the past. See next newsletter (Oct '10) for a report.

Please, Give. Hate getting fundraising reminders? So do we, and we don't think they're a good use of resources. We've committed to doing our part by coming to you only twice a year to ask your support for all the work that AlTo does on your behalf. We won't waste your and Nature's resources on reminders. In turn, we count on you to do your part by responding when the request comes. So please, return the enclosed envelope with your check today, or donate on-line at www.tompotika.org.



The Faces of AITo: A Scientist and His Discoveries

Peter Dunwiddie



Dr. Djoko T. Iskandar is right at home in the forests of Tompotika.

No one has a faster hand. To collect frogs in the field for identification and examination, AITo Board member Dr. Djoko T. Iskandar doesn't use a net or other tools, he simply reaches out and catches them with his lightning-fast hand. The expert in his element is impressive indeed: as he steps slowly along within a shallow stream bed, headlamp scanning streambanks and boulders in the dark of night, not even the fastest nor most well-camouflaged frog will escape his curious grasp.

Dr. Iskandar, or Pak Djoko as he is known to all, is Indonesia's foremost herpetologist. Pak Djoko was born in Bandung, Indonesia, one of five children, and although his long and distinguished career has taken him all over the world, he still lives in Bandung with his wife Liliana, with whom he has raised two sons. Pak Djoko is a professor at the Institute of Technology Bandung (ITB), received doctorates there and in Montpellier, France, and has been honored with Indonesia's prestigious Habibie Award as well as numerous other distinctions. Equally at home in the field and the lab--where the painstaking examination and statistical analysis of a particular species group may take five years or more--Pak Djoko also devotes a great deal of his time to conservation. **"Biodiversity is**

on fire, and someone has to step forward," he says. Having helped out with countless conservation efforts over the years, not all of which have borne fruit, Pak Djoko appreciates that AITo doesn't just talk, but actually gets things done. **"What I like is a serious follow-up,"** he says.

Correction: Now that the final results have been analyzed, it appears that Pak Djoko's team--which included his students Umilaela and Anggah Rahmansyah plus AITo Conservation Officer Agustian Laya--did not discover three new species in their rapid survey of Tompotika reptiles and amphibians last year, as announced in the Oct. 2009 AITo newsletter. They discovered FOUR! A frog previously thought to be a juvenile has turned out to be **another species brand-new to science!** The new frog has been named *Occidozyga tompotika*. That brings to seven the number of known reptiles and amphibians found only in Tompotika. What's next: with your support, first-ever mammal surveys, and more...



Frog in hand: *Hylarana mocquardii*

Peter Dunwiddie



New Tompotika gecko species: *Cyrtodactylus batik*

Umilaela

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