



# Alliance for Tompotika Conservation Aliansi Konservasi Tompotika

NEWSLETTER

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## Organic Farming for Healthy Forests: The training comes home

One of the major threats to Tompotika's native rainforests is so-called "slash and burn" agriculture, wherein local folk cut and burn patches of forest to grow crops, but due to low soil fertility, high erosion, and subsequent declining yields, move on in a few years to clear new forest patches. Another threat to the forest, small-scale illegal logging, can come from local folks' simple need for cash, which a few nice rainforest logs can bring.

Organic farming techniques--which allow farmers to grow more food, more cheaply, on their existing agricultural land, while building up rather than depleting the soil--help address both of these threats. Organic farming also helps build every community's need for food security and self-sufficiency--(continued on p.3)



A women's group in Sampaka village sets out seedlings in their newly built and amended organic garden beds.

## Turtle Evolution:

### *Hatchlings by the thousands from re-vamped program*

On launching its sea turtle conservation program in 2008, ALTO had one overarching goal: to help build the desire and skills to conserve sea turtles and their coral reef habitat among local Tompotikans. Sea turtles and their eggs are fully protected under Indonesian law--it is illegal to take, harass, kill, or trade in sea turtles or their parts--but the law is rarely enforced, and for local Tompotikans, hunting and harvesting of sea turtles and their eggs has been a matter of course, despite their endangered status and dwindling numbers.

In 2008, that started to change, and ALTO introduced a school-based turtle conservation awareness campaign, as well as field-based turtle protection programs at key Olive Ridley, Green, and Hawksbill sea turtle nesting beaches near Tompotika's villages of Taima and Teku.



An Olive Ridley hatchling makes its way to the surf on Teku beach. Photo: Noval Suling

With full participation of villagers, a beach patrol program was initiated in which teams of villagers and ALTO staff patrolled the beaches each night, safeguarding nesting females which came ashore to lay their eggs, and using one of three methods for protecting the eggs. In those first years, we wanted to discover what would work best: could we ensure the safety of nests left in place (the best scheme overall, provided eggs can be protected), either by a) concealing their locations; or b) putting protective cages over them? Or, were eggs best protected by c) relocating them to another place where the nest could be more easily guarded against human or natural predators?

After three seasons of experimenting with these methods, ALTO staff and villagers came to the reluctant conclusion that it is not currently feasible to adequately protect turtle nests left in place: the dangers from monitor lizards, dogs, and especially humans--who may come from far away, by land or by boat, to poach turtle eggs--are simply too great.

So, in the 2011 season, villagers and ALTO designed new approaches--two different approaches in Taima and Teku, based on villager preferences. In Taima, villagers opted to create one common, guarded hatching (Continued on p. 2)

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Ibu Erwin receives the first prize for turtle conservation in Teku village, on behalf of her husband Pak Erwin, who successfully hatched out 155 hatchlings from 4 nests. Congratulating her are (L to R): Teku village head Pak Ilham, ALTO Director Marcy Summers, ALTO Conservation Officer Ipan Djano, and Teku community leader Pak Syotu.

**Sea Turtles**, *continued from p.1* area, where individuals received a reward for relocating turtle nests. In Teku, villagers each chose their own, various locations, and held a contest to protect the eggs through to hatching; they received larger rewards based on the number of successful hatchlings. Nightly beach patrols continued to safeguard females who came ashore.



Awareness Campaign

The results? Villagers say they are much happier with these new approaches, and the data agree. Though these represent only part of the 2011 season, Taima villagers successfully hatched out over 1220 hatchlings, while those in Teku hatched over 510. AITo staff also hatched over



Noval Suling

Success! Olive ridley hatchlings reach the water.

300 hatchlings from a protected area near their camp. That's over 2000 turtle babies that, a few years ago, would likely never have seen the light of day. And in 2012? Much more of the same, plus outreach to law enforcement.

**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!**

**Contact Us:**

Marcy Summers, Director  
Alliance for Tompotika Conservation (AITo)  
21416 - 86th Ave SW  
Vashon Island, WA 98070 USA

+1 206 463 7720

[info@tompotika.org](mailto:info@tompotika.org)  
[www.tompotika.org](http://www.tompotika.org)



Butterfly by AITo Conservation Coordinator Anim Alyoihana

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**The Benefits of Conservation: Clean Water for Taima village**

For five years now, AITo has been partnering with Tompotika's village of Taima to protect the nearby communal nesting ground of the endangered maleo bird. In this partnership, local villagers are hired as guards--protecting sea turtles and bats as well as maleos--but AITo also provides specific benefits to the entire village as a kind of "thank you" from the international community for villagers' conservation efforts. Those "conservation community benefits" to date have included such things as reading glasses, building materials for repair of the village mosque, a bicycle for maleo guards to get around on, trash receptacles, and other items. But recently, villagers and AITo have agreed to tackle a larger and more vexing problem that affects everyone in the entire village: fresh water.



Agus Laya

Many meters of piping between the pump house and the village needed to be installed or repaired.

Taima is located right on the coast of Tomini Bay, in the Pacific Ocean. The underground water table is very high, and if a well is dug, it will hit water within a few meters, but that water will be salty--only somewhat less salty than the ocean itself. Major streams or sources of fresh surface water are all far away. So, since the beginning, Taima residents' options for obtaining fresh water have been limited.

But now, that is changing: AITo has begun work with Taima to develop a new, reliable source of clean, fresh water for the entire village. As a first step, AITo has facilitated the repair and revival of a community well and pump, which was installed some time ago but has not functioned for several years. This well, placed inland from the coast, provides cleaner, fresher water than most household wells, and with a new pump and piping provided by AITo, now everyone in the village--including many who previously had no water at all--can access it. That's a huge step forward for all!

This well, however, is but an imperfect interim measure. Over the coming months, AITo will sponsor a regional water expert to do a comprehensive assessment of the needs and opportunities for fresh water in Taima, to be followed by implementation. Rainwater collection? Well water treatment? Long-distance piping? Though we do not yet know its path, the future flow of fresh water into Taima is full of hope, thanks to the maleo!



The new pump brings water from the distant pump house right into the village center.

Agus Laya

## *Invest in your values...* time now to double your gift to AlTo

Here in the non-profit partnership that is AlTo, we are very lucky. We have a small but committed group of supporters who like what we do.

They like it that AlTo is *community-based*:

...everything we do, we do in full partnership with the people who live in the places where we work

They like it that AlTo is *effective*:

...as in our partnership with Taima village, which has reversed the decline of the endangered maleo bird

They like it that AlTo is *efficient*:

...we have a very low overhead, and get a lot done with our resources

They like it that AlTo is *joyful*:

...the world is full of difficult stuff. We bring people together, celebrating nature, creating art, and affirming what's good about all life.

This is the deal:

You have values and ideals about what a greener, healthier, more just and joyful world might look like. But you also know that **you need to join with others to help make your values a reality beyond your own backyard.**

The AlTo alliance is about matching you up with other folks in a very special part of the world who share your values and have invited your partnership in making them a reality.

**With your donation to AlTo, you say "Yes!" to that invitation, joining with others who are investing in their values, putting them to work in the world, and making a difference. It's that simple.**

And now's the time to give. Once again this year, **a few very generous AlTo donors have offered to match every contribution made between now and December 31st.** That means your gift of \$50 becomes \$100; \$150 becomes \$300, and so on...

**So please make an investment in your values today.** Please use the form on reverse and the enclosed envelope, or donate on-line at [www.topotika.org](http://www.topotika.org). **Thank you!**



### Tompotika Kids' Wildlife Art Cards Available

*"In all things of nature there is something of the marvelous." - Aristotle*

With its Giant Civets, Bear Cuscuses, Red-knobbed Hornbills, and Tarsiers, it must have been Sulawesi that Aristotle was contemplating when he made that statement!

Just in time for the holidays, a new series of notecards has become available, featuring these and other Tompotika endangered wildlife as brought to life in the art of talented Tompotika high school artists. The cards are printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper and come in a package of 6 different images, blank inside.

Cards are available for \$12 per pack, or, from now until Dec 31, **get a free pack with your donation of \$125 or more.** See reverse for ordering details.



## Organic Farming, *continued from p.1*

--something increasingly important in our changing world.

ALTo's efforts to spread organic farming know-how began last year when four Tompotika farmers took part in a three-week intensive program at a specialized organic training farm in Java. This year, those four--Sukraba, Made, Amrin, and Evan--have served as resident leaders, while ALTo brought the trainers to Tompotika. Full-time trainers Pak Sunyoto (below left) and Pak Yulianus (below right), under the direction of organics expert Pak Miftah Zam Achid first assessed farmers' needs in two communities--Sampaka and Tanah Merah--on the northern flanks of Mt. Tompotika, immediately adjacent to the Tompotika Forest Preserve. Then, while the trainers were on a reconnaissance visit designing a program to best speak to the needs these farmers identified, members of a third community--Benteng--approached ALTo to ask if the training could be extended to them as well--a request to which we were only too happy to oblige!



Tanah Merah village community leaders Pak Adolof (center, with bucket) and Pak Sem (left, striped shirt) help construct a compost pile, using layers of local materials.



Noval Sulung

Senior organic farming trainer Pak Sunyoto (L) and 2010 training alumnus Pak Sukraba (R) prepare a graft on a cacao tree.

The four-month organic farming training program began in mid-July, will conclude in November, and is offered free and open to all comers. One major focus of the training is on teaching farmers how to make compost, in both solid and liquid forms. In this region, few farmers were already familiar with how to make and use compost to improve soil fertility and texture; most instead have tended to focus on purchasing chemical fertilizers, when they can. But fertilizers and other chemical inputs are expensive and hard to obtain in these remote areas (not to mention other possible drawbacks), and much of the time farmers have been used to simply going without--with the result that, in the poor local soils, yields are often unimpressive. Compost can be made with locally-abundant materials that cost nothing, such as green weeds and coconut hulls, so if indeed it helps, it could be a wonderful thing.

But even making compost takes time and energy, so the villagers and trainers decided to take an experimental approach to education in organics, to be able to see just how well the various organic techniques work--or don't. For example, the best compost, trainers believe, includes animal manure to increase nitrogen content. But in Tanah Merah village, unlike many other villages, residents have not, to date, been accustomed to keeping domestic stock such as goats or cattle, which produce manure; we would have to import manure to include it in this compost recipe. So, three separate types of growing beds were prepared: one with compost including imported manure, one with compost without manure, and a third control bed which would grow with no compost at all. Would the manure compost grow better than the one without? Would compost of any kind make any difference?

The trainings are big events in their communities. In Benteng, the district head made attendance a requirement, and over 60 people--nearly every household!--showed up. In Tanah Merah, schoolchildren have gotten involved, and are visiting regularly to measure progress in the three types of differently-composted beds. A group of interested college students has even requested permission to join some of the trainings--traveling from the city four hours away to do so! And though final results won't be in until November, one thing already seems very clear: organic farming techniques can make a big difference in the livelihoods of the people of Tompotika--a difference that can sustain both people *and* forests!



Organic farming trainer Pak Yulianus (center, green shirt) demonstrates how to make liquid compost starter in Tanah Merah village.



Robin Moore

## Coming Soon: "Tripods in the Mud"

What happens when the world's most talented photographers aim their lenses at nature? Well, as anyone who has seen a top-flight nature magazine or film documentary knows, a kind of magic is brought to the eye. This November, ALTo is thrilled to be hosting an international team, including photographers from iLCP, the International League of Conservation Photographers ([www.ilcp.org](http://www.ilcp.org)), who will donate their time, traveling to Tompotika to document the region's unparalleled natural heritage and help promote conservation. See future newsletters for the results!



## The Faces of AlTo: The Tarsier, Miniature Marvel

In “The Faces of AlTo,” we highlight some of the “personalities”--both human and non-human--who inhabit Tompotika and make up the AlTo family. One such is the tarsier--one of Sulawesi’s most charismatic, if diminutive, residents. The tarsier is actually a primate--tarsiers share a distant ancestor with us humans--but looks more like a cross between a squirrel and a frog. And Indonesia’s island of Sulawesi could be called the world capital of tarsiers--there are at least 8, and possibly 16 or more, tarsier species found on Sulawesi. In fact, although there are tarsiers in Tompotika, because they have never been surveyed, we are not even certain what species they are--most likely *Tarsius dentatus* or *T. diana*, but possibly even a new, as-yet-to-be-identified species. (AlTo hopes to sponsor a tarsier survey in the not-too-distant future.)

With a body about the size of your fist and a long, distinctive tail, tarsiers spend the day in family groups in large hollow trees or dense clumps of vegetation, emerging at night to leap from tree to tree in low branches, foraging for insects and small vertebrates. Contrary to the accusation sometimes leveled at them, they do not eat fruit, and when found among banana or papaya orchards, are not stealing but are actually benefiting the crops by consuming insects. But in Tompotika, they are heard more often than seen. At dusk and dawn, when tarsiers are just starting and closing their day, tarsier family members call to one another in a high-pitched, whistling call. Though they may all sound similar to the human ear, each group of tarsiers has a distinctive call, and, for example, tarsiers in North Sulawesi will not respond to a southern tarsier recording.

As fascinating as they are, our scientific knowledge of tarsiers remains very limited. In Tompotika, until we learn more in a targeted study, tarsiers can benefit from AlTo’s Conservation Awareness campaign, in which schoolchildren easily fall in love with these irresistible Sulawesi natives, and from our forest protection efforts, which preserve the irreplaceable woodland home of these miniature marvels of nature.



Robin Moore

A tarsier family group gets ready to emerge for the evening.



Alliance for Tompotika Conservation  
21416 86th Ave SW  
Vashon, WA 98070 USA