



Alliance for Tompotika Conservation Aliansi Konservasi Tompotika

NEWSLETTER

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No Bats, No Durian:

ALTo's new Bat Awareness Campaign is off and flying

In recent newsletters, we've reported on the precarious position of bats in Tompotika — and for that matter, in all of Sulawesi. Though they play a critical role in the health of native rainforests through pollinating plants, dispersing seeds, and more, Tompotika's bats are increasingly threatened by hunting for the bushmeat trade.

Unfortunately for the bats, their critical role in sustaining Sulawesi's forests and fruits is largely unknown and unappreciated. So, with the help of a small grant from Bat Conservation International, ALTo has recently launched a new unit in our ongoing Conservation Awareness Campaign. Aided by colorful stickers, brochures, books, and games, Tompotikans are repeating the slogan, "No bats, no durian," and realizing that many plants they treasure, including the prized durian fruit, cannot exist without bats.

ALTo's Awareness Campaign reaches about 1000 kids and adults each month. Other upcoming events that will help raise awareness for bats are a field survey in March and a visit by world-famous bat photographer Dr. Merlin Tuttle in September.



Leslie Brown

Did you know? A Tompotika 5th-grader learns fun facts about bats through ALTo's program.

The Pride of Tompotika

Conservation villages celebrate their wildlife in two beautiful new mural paintings

Never having seen a mural painting before, many villagers were quite quizical. But as the ALTo team gathered, first in Teku/Toweer village, and then in Taima village, marking out a chalk grid on the big blank wall, setting out paints and brushes, and readying the scaffolding, large crowds gathered with a distinctly festive air.



Mark Kinney

Completed Taima mural. The banner across the top translates, "Conservation Village Taima." Across the bottom are hatching sequences for sea turtles and maleos.

about what natural features they'd like to see depicted. Pacific Northwest-based Miller Paint Co. donated paints. Lisle International chipped in some financial support. The teams got going... and within a week, two fantastic murals came to life in Tompotika, celebrating the rich and unique natural heritage of this region, and the villagers who've committed to working with ALTo to protect it.

As village leaders emphasized when describing the project to others, each mural was strongly rooted in its particular village. In addition to sea turtles, which occur in both villages, each mural depicts unique combinations of animals and features that occur only there. Taima village, for instance, is the maleo bird "capital" of the region (perhaps even for all Sulawesi), and also the daytime roost for a rare fruit bat colony. Teku/Toweer, on the other hand, features a brackish-water lagoon that harbors some of the region's last remaining crocodiles.

The murals come at a good time, when local governments are trying to increase the area's profile (*continued on next page*)

Six visitors from the U.S. had come to join ALTo staff and numerous schoolchildren in creating the Tompotika region's first-ever large wall murals — each on an exterior school wall in one of ALTo's conservation partner villages. Over the course of the previous year, mural artist William Forrester had designed the two murals in an iterative process, getting input from local villagers



Mark Kinney

Visitors and schoolchildren worked side by side to create the two murals.

Mural Paintings, (continued from p. 1)



Mural Artist Will Forrester puts final touches on a Tonkean Macaque while AITo Conservation Officer Aspin finishes up the bats.



Teku schoolkids took a good look at their native vegetation, then painted it.

for eco-tourism. An official from the government tourism ministry who came to view the works in progress remarked, "These murals are so beautiful, people will come not only for the nature, but just to see the paintings!"

For the AITo group, it was hard work, but tremendously rewarding. The group divided into two painting teams, with Forrester leading the Taima team and wildlife artist and AITo veteran Sandra Noel heading up that of Teku/Toweer. For both teams, the routine was similar each day: start painting soon after sunrise at 6 am, break for lunch about noon, rest for an hour or two after lunch, then return to painting until dark at 6 pm.

The days were hot, and with no electricity for lights, fans, or other comforts, soon after dinnertime the visitors were ready to sleep.

Each morning during the school day — which in Tompotika runs only until noon — schoolkids would join the group to help with the painting. And throughout each day, small crowds of villagers came and went, to help or just to watch.

In the space of week, each team had completed an entire 10 X 20-foot mural. A sampling of all Sulawesi's creatures, great and small, were lovingly

depicted: shown are maleo birds and sea turtles, buffalo-like anoas, hornbills, gremlin-like tarsiers, marsupial cuscuses, tiny geckoes and hermit crabs, and much more. "It's like a gorgeous, permanent billboard advertising this area's wonderful wildlife," remarked one of the visitors.

When the murals were complete, each village had an unveiling ceremony, in which the big plastic tarps — which had shielded the painters from the sun all week, and then served as curtains — were dropped. There were dignitaries, speeches and refreshments. In Taima village, an official from the district government spoke of her gratitude that Taima was protecting the maleo and other wildlife, and how this mural would give their village an added attraction. In Teku, a group of children offered a celebratory dance performance. A speech offered by one young girl closed the event: "On behalf of the primary school of Teku/Toweer village, we'd like to thank AITo for making our school so beautiful."



A community effort: the unveiling ceremony for Teku/Toweer's new mural draws a crowd.

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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Wista Lamato, 17



The Painters: AITo staff and visitors, only two of them professionals, suddenly all became artists, discovering pleasures and talents many of them didn't know they possessed.

Enforcing Wildlife Law: Progress in Planning — and in Action

For the AITo team, it happens all the time. Through word-of-mouth or casual inquiry, AITo staff learn of someone keeping a sea turtle in their back yard for later sale for meat or shell. Usually the turtles are caught while a fisherman is out fishing, and he sees it as an opportunity for a little extra income. Most ordinary people — and even the police themselves — simply don't know that it's illegal under Indonesian law. Until recently, upon hearing of such turtles — or maleos or other protected wildlife — AITo staff simply did what they could to persuade the captor to release the animal, but there were no consequences, and the practice continued.

Now, that's starting to change. Last year, AITo launched a new program of outreach to law enforcement personnel, with the



Agustian Laya

Ten regional law enforcement officials came together in November in Balantak for a workshop to craft a strategy for increasing enforcement of wildlife laws.

goal of encouraging law enforcement to become powerful allies in the effort to conserve protected wildlife. The program began, first, with high-profile outreach events to ensure that all members of the community — and not just children, who



Agustian Laya

AITo Director Marcy Summers examines a captive hawksbill turtle the team has located. Workshop officials released the turtle the next day.

hear about it in AITo's school-based programs — are aware that maleos and sea turtles are fully protected under Indonesian law. Then last November, 2012, AITo convened a workshop, asking law enforcement officials themselves, from many different government agencies and jurisdictions, to help craft a strategy for revved-up enforcement.

Workshop participants were enthusiastic, and discussed their respective agencies' roles as well as a number of case studies. Among their conclusions: national laws should be reinforced by the establishment of locally-based regulations forbidding capture of protected species, trade in sea turtle and maleo eggs, and other common — but illegal — practices.

In March 2013, a follow-up workshop will take these recommendations to the next level. But meanwhile, the group did not wait to take action. A few days before, officials from BKSDA confiscated and released a green turtle from a fishing boat. And, directly after the workshop, a convoy of all ten workshop officials arrived in the next village by car and motorbike to preside over the release of a hawksbill turtle — much to the surprise, and fortunately, the delight — of crowds of villagers!



Agustian Laya

I Nyoman Ardika, official from the government wildlife agency BKSDA in the Tompotika region, releases a captive green turtle that his agency partnered with AITo to locate.

Keeping Maleos Connected: AITo launches new effort to protect critical forest corridor

The endangered maleo bird lays its eggs in a communal nesting area on Tompotika's coast, but adult maleos spend most of their time in native rainforest many miles away. Although able to fly, maleos generally migrate on foot, and they need corridors of natural vegetation in order to travel between their forest habitat and the nesting ground. Human disturbance in these corridors, such as the development of settlements or plantations, can cause maleos to abandon the nesting ground.

That's why AITo has recently begun an effort to expand the protected corridor around the maleo nesting ground near Taima village. Working with local landowners and government, in the months to come AITo hopes to expand protection of the area which maleos currently use to travel to and from the nesting ground from the current 40 hectares to about 100 ha (250 acres). With the help of GIS expert and star volunteer Jesse Langdon, we're using satellite images and landscape analysis to identify key lands, then



Kevin Schafer

A camera trap captured a maleo pair visiting this spring in the maleo corridor.

will work with locals to achieve their permanent protection. It's all part of a larger whole: by protecting both the nesting ground and its forested connections, we'll protect not only the maleo, but many other species that depend on natural forests as well.



Landscape surrounding maleo nesting ground. AITo hopes to protect more of the natural forest in lower half of photo.



The Faces of ALTO: I Ketut Sukraba, Cacao Farmer

Ask I Ketut Sukraba why he shifted to organic farming at his small cacao plantation at the base of Mount Tompotika, and he answers easily. “If the environment is healthy, the air is healthy, the water is healthy, the people are healthy,” he said. “It’s about health all around.”

Pak Sukrabo, as he’s called by his friends, was one of four ALTO-sponsored farmers from the Tompotika village of Sampaka who traveled to Java in 2010 for an intensive 3-week training in organic farming and gardening. He then assisted ALTO in organizing a 4-month organic farming training for dozens more farmers at home in Sampaka in 2011. Through these experiences, he’s become a voice in his village for the importance of healthier farming practices. He’s also become an advocate of related projects in the region, including ALTO’s efforts to purchase privately owned buffer lands that surround the Tompotika Forest Preserve.

“We really want to help support ALTO’s work for conservation, because it’s helping the environment,” he said, when asked why he’s become a champion of the organization. Sukrabo, 47, a slight man with a warm and easy smile, is originally from Bali, but moved with his wife to this area 18 years ago. They have three children.

Pak Sukrabo and his wife grow other crops, such as rambutan, bananas and pineapples, but cacao is the bread and butter of their small but thriving farm. Before attending ALTO’s organic farming trainings, Sukrabo used chemicals — pesticides and fertilizers — on his crops, but now he no longer incurs those expenses. Smiling, he acknowledges that organic techniques are harder. “But it’s still good. It’s worth the trade-off.” Since shifting to organic techniques two years ago, he hasn’t seen a significant change in yields. “I’ve not been doing it long,” he explains. But the leaves on his cacao trees look healthier, and he’s confident his crops will be more abundant and his soil healthier over time. Indeed, one could hardly find a more passionate advocate for the importance of organic farming in Indonesia.

“There is something that I’d like other Indonesians to know — that organic is the healthy way,” he said, looking earnest. “And with greater health, Indonesia will progress.”

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Mark Kinney

Pak Sukrabo, flanked by some local village children, under a rambutan, a popular native fruit tree.



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