



# Alliance for Tompotika Conservation Aliansi Konservasi Tompotika

NEWSLETTER

VOL. X, NO. 2 AUGUST 2015

## On the Tarsier Trail: Volunteer with Tompotika's first scientific tarsier survey

In a place as remote as Tompotika, part of our job in protecting wild nature is figuring out what's there in the first place. The tarsier is a case in point: we know there are plenty of these tiny gremlin-like primates in the forests of Tompotika, but no one has ever studied them to know exactly what species they are. Across Sulawesi, in fact, there are at least 8, and possibly as many as 16 or more different species of tarsiers, but which of these species the Tompotika tarsier belongs to nobody knows. It could possibly even be a brand-new species hitherto unknown to science!

It's time to find out. From **25 Jan - 10 Feb 2016**, a small intrepid group will travel to Tompotika to do just that, and **you can join** them. Led by renowned tarsier expert Dr. Myron Shekelle, on this 17-day expedition we'll start in North *(continued on p. 2)*



This tarsier family is preparing to leave their daytime roost tree for the evening's foraging.

Robin Moore

## Raising Awareness Spreading the conservation message in Tompotika

The Indonesian word is *sosialisasi*. It refers to the process of taking a particular idea or message and spreading it out amongst the people--to everybody, at all levels of the community. *Sosialisasi* captures just what we're talking about with words like "outreach," "awareness-raising," and even "campaigning," all in one perfect word. And this, ultimately, is our task in the ALTO alliance--every bit as essential as our field-based conservation efforts if endangered species and habitats are to be conserved in the long run.

So how to accomplish it? How do we plant and nurture the seeds of an enduring conservation ethic, helping to change people's minds, hearts, and behavior towards wild nature? ALTO has a multi-faceted approach.

**Get 'em when they're young.** The core of our outreach program is our school-based Conservation Awareness Campaign, which has been at work since 2007. Through this effort, ALTO's trained Tompotikan staff have been in every one of the over 100 primary, middle, and high schools in the Tompotika region at least once, and are currently reaching about 1500 kids per month. Thanks to a government program that pays school fees, most Tompotika kids do go to school, at least at the primary level--but for those who don't, ALTO staff also gather them for outreach sessions as they play in groups in the villages. *(continued on p. 3)*



*Every classroom a poster, every kid a sticker.* These schoolkids now know all about the maleo and what imperils it.

Sheherazade



*It's the happening thing.* As ALTO staffer Noval makes a sea turtle presentation in one class, other kids leave their recess to peer in from the window.

Sutrisno Durant

## Tarsier Survey Trip (continued from p.1)

Sulawesi, where you'll get a good look at tarsiers in a population already habituated to humans. You'll learn to analyze their distinctive calls and watch their astounding leaps through the forest understory before we move to Tompotika to seek out their wilder cousins.

To assist with this survey, you don't need any special scientific skills. What you do need is a spirit of adventure and flexibility, a fondness for hanging out in the woods, and a desire to contribute to scientific knowledge and conservation. **For more information, contact Sheila Eckman at [sheila@tompotika.org](mailto:sheila@tompotika.org).**

**Dates:** 25 Jan - 10 Feb 2016 (17 days)

**Cost:** \$3200, not including international airfare (\$100 discount for those registering prior to Oct 1, 2015.) Price includes all in-country travel, food, accommodation, and survey equipment.

**Group details:** The trip will be led by AITo Director Marcy Summers and AITo's wonderful local staff, with Dr. Myron Shekelle heading up the scientific survey. Accommodation is based on double occupancy, and group size is limited to 10 people. ~



Surisman Labuna, 17

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!**

### 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)



Wista Lamato, 17

 This newsletter is printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper. Please let us know if you would prefer to receive it by e-mail.

## Shameless Advertising

Direct conversations about conservation--hearing people's views, discussing issues, and responding to questions--are the heart of AITo's outreach program. But it's also extremely important to reinforce the conservation message in lots of different ways. To that end, AITo has facilitated

the installation of a large new billboard in 16 different locations across Tompotika and in the gateway city of Luwuk.

The billboard pictured at left is in fact an example of the second design in a series, the first set of billboards having been on display 2013-14.



Noval Suling

**"C'mon, let's save sea turtles and maleos before they're extinct".** The new billboard incorporates local design preferences and the regional dialect to promote conservation.

Response to the first set of billboards from village leaders, community members and government officials was so positive that, when the time came to come up with a fresh design, local leaders enthusiastically took part in a group brainstorming process to determine the content and look. The billboard also features the endorsements and logos of four separate government agencies with whom AITo works.

Whereas the billboards can be seen throughout Tompotika's rural areas where the actual poaching of maleo and sea turtle products takes place, a critical pathway for traffic in such products, especially maleo eggs, is the Luwuk airport, where travelers often attempt to transport the eggs as souvenirs to other parts of Indonesia. Two other AITo out-

reach programs target such travelers: when passing in or out of the airport, passengers see informational displays. And, through a partnership with local travel agencies, airline tickets purchased locally have information about the laws prohibiting the taking or transporting of maleo eggs printed directly on the ticket. The goal for Tompotika these days: wherever you go, you can't miss sea turtles and maleos.



Sheherazade

**"Do you know about the maleo?"** A display at the airport warns travelers not to purchase eggs of this endangered bird.



## Raising Conservation Awareness (continued from p. 1)

The program is very popular: teachers and school heads are always delighted to make time for AITo's interactive presentations, and kids engage eagerly. Every kid gets some kind of take-home [sticker, brochure, bookmark, etc.], but the ones who



Keith Brofsky

**Emphasize the good stuff.** AITo's outreach programs stress the joy and fun to be found in being in and caring about nature.

answer questions correctly, such as, "What do maleos need next to their communal nesting ground?" [natural forest], or "What should you do if you find a sea turtle nest?" [leave it undisturbed] get a special prize. Ordinary kids have school notebooks featuring Barbie or soccer or film stars; these extra-brilliant kids get a super-cool AITo-designed maleo notebook [printed on recycled paper, of course!]. Since its inception, AITo's school-based Conservation Awareness Campaign has presented modules on maleos, sea turtles, bats, Sulawesi endemic species, forests, and trash/marine plastic debris, with new topics, curricula, presentation materials, and take-home items renewed and refreshed regularly.

ties are essential for bringing the conservation message to people of all ages. AITo's Tompotika International Maleo and Sea Turtle Festival, for instance, which was reported on in the March 2015 newsletter, drew crowds of over a thousand people in some villages. AITo also takes part in periodic public expositions and educational fairs in the nearby city of Luwuk or beyond. City dwellers may never have seen a maleo bird, but they drive an active luxury market for maleo eggs, which, despite their protected status, are popular as a souvenir or status item.

**What good is it?** The feedback AITo staff receive from outreach efforts can be both challenging and very rewarding. For example, from surveys we've conducted, we know that locally almost no-one was aware of maleos' threatened status prior to AITo's outreach work. This 5th-grader's question is typical of the early attitude of many: "What good is a maleo? Why should we save it?" But so is this response from another student, after being part of AITo's efforts at *sosialisasi*: "Because the maleo is like no other bird. We humans must have a conscience. If the maleo goes extinct, Sulawesi won't have its Faunal Pride anymore."~

**Spreading it far and wide.** The school-based program forms the core of AITo's outreach efforts, but other activities



Novai Sulung

**Sea Turtles, Maleos, and Bats, oh my!** At a community expo outside the Tompotika region, AITo's booth drew crowds, and was voted "best booth" by expo organizers.

### "More Research is Needed.."

It's a phrase commonly included in just about any paper in a scientific journal. And, human knowledge being limited as it is, one can almost always fairly claim it! But when it comes to the maleo bird, conservationists, policy-makers, and academics have long wagged their heads murmuring this phrase with particularly acute dismay, because many of the most basic questions related to maleo biology and ecology have simply never been studied. No one knows, for instance, how many eggs a maleo female will lay each year, and how many of them usually hatch under natural conditions. How far do maleo pairs travel to visit their communal nesting ground? Do they always use the same one? And where do they go in between? How widely do they range in their natural forest habitat when not breeding? And, in increasingly fragmented landscapes, what kinds of obstacles--such as roads, plantations, and settlements--are they willing to cross without giving up on their journey to the nesting ground?



**Enigma no more?** With AITo's new research plan, we hope that some of the age-old mysteries of maleos' lives--such as how often a female lays an egg--will be illuminated.

The maleo's evolutionary uniqueness makes these and many other similar questions particularly compelling. But the answers are needed for more than just to satisfy our curiosity--they are critical for conserving maleos for the long term and across large landscapes. So, together with our local partners, the AITo team is in process of donning the mantle of research; a multi-year research program begins in the coming months. We'll be reporting results in the newsletter as they become available. Stay tuned! ~



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



## The Faces of AlTo: The Anoa, buffalo of the jungle

Buffaloes and jungles? Not the first things one usually thinks of together--but then, that's Sulawesi for you: the critters there are nearly always a little weird, and mostly found nowhere else. Witness the Anoa, a waist-high dwarf buffalo found only in Sulawesi's deepest jungles. Its nearest living relative is the domestic water buffalo--that workhorse of East Asia, friend to farmers. But the anoa is anything but domestic--talk to anyone who has met an anoa in the forest and he will tell you that the anoa is wild and rather fierce; if you plan to go looking for them, best to have good tree-climbing skills.

In the scientific community, two species of anoa have been recognized: *Bubalus depressicornis*, the lowland anoa, and *B. quarlesi*, the mountain anoa, but recent genetic work suggests that anoa taxonomy may be more complex than this. What is certain is that all anoas are classified as Endangered on the IUCN Red List, they are in decline, and they're

already gone from most of their former range in Sulawesi, due largely to hunting along with loss and fragmentation of their native forest habitat. In Tompotika, anoas are still present, but here, too, they are gravely threatened by illegal harvest--via snaring or through hunting with dogs.

Sulawesi's largest herbivore, the anoa is a solitary creature, quietly roaming the jungles browsing its favorite leaves and forbs. Many anoas have white spots on their chins and necks, but no one knows why.

Most local Tompotikans simply don't know that anoas are protected, and that hunting them is illegal. They may have noticed that anoas have become very rare, but don't often think about the fact that extinction will be the inevitable result if humans don't start behaving differently. To that end, AlTo has recently teamed up with Pt. Defiance Zoo and Aquarium (PDZA) of Tacoma, Washington, USA, to design a new outreach program featuring the anoa. Successfully hosting two anoas in their collection is a source of pride for PDZA--but the goal of the new collaboration is to foster an even greater pride in anoas--and a motivation to protect them--among local Tompotikans. Is that not the coolest thing ever? To have the world's only fierce dwarf jungle buffalo for your neighbor in the wild woods behind your house?



Courtesy of David Slater [www.djsphotography.co.uk](http://www.djsphotography.co.uk)



Courtesy of David Slater [www.djsphotography.co.uk](http://www.djsphotography.co.uk)