



Alliance for Tompotika Conservation Aliansi Konservasi Tompotika

NEWSLETTER

VOL. XII, NO. 3 NOVEMBER 2017

Of Hunters and Hunting: How and why Tompotikans hunt endangered wildlife

It's no secret: hunting by humans is decimating much of Indonesia's wildlife. In Tompotika, even in areas where native forests remain relatively intact, forest-dwelling species like anoas, babirusas, and many others are declining rapidly due to illegal hunting and other forms of take. But why do people hunt? Are they just hunting for subsistence? Do they know which species are endangered and protected, and which are okay to take? Preventing the extinction of the region's unique wildlife depends on understanding these dynamics.

And the best way to understand hunting, according to the ALTo team, is to talk with hunters themselves. In fact, ALTo staff have spent quite a lot of time with hunters from villages all over Tompotika. It is hunters, after all, who tend to know the forest better than just about anyone else, and as ALTo staff aim to know Tompotika's forests, hunters are our



Edible trophies. Former hunter Yudin holds the bills of two threatened Red-Knobbed Hornbills that another hunter left hanging prominently on a branch in the forest.

best teachers.

Here is some of what we've learned: hunting is done exclusively by men. Most learn from their fathers or older relatives. Some track down their quarry with dogs, but the most

(continued on p. 2)

Our Actions Matter: outreach in remote villages spotlights deep jungles and their wildlife

Humanity is destroying forests in Indonesia faster than anywhere else in the world. And with those precious disappearing rainforests go climate stabilization, flood control, water purification, and myriad other free "services" that people depend upon--not to mention habitat for countless other animal and plant species who cannot live anywhere else. Among these are the anoa, a dwarf forest buffalo, and the babirusa, a unique relative of the pig. Both of these marvelous creatures play essential roles in the forest ecosystem, both are iconic species found only in Sulawesi, both are among the Indonesian government's top-25 species for conservation priority, and both are imperiled by the twin threats of forest loss and hunting.

To prevent their extinction, there is no time to lose. So, in recent months, and thanks to financial support from the International Conservation Fund of Canada, Pt. Defiance Zoo and Aquarium, and GSMP/Action Indonesia, ALTo has organized a collaboration with two other local Sulawesi conservation organizations to create and deliver an intensive



What do you suppose they're for? Gifted outreach leader Billy (right), flanked by ALTo officer Ahmad, shows students how the male babirusa's tusks grow in an opulent curve.



We all need vast, healthy forests. Gone from most of its former range, the endangered anoa now persists only in pockets of remote forest dotted across rural Sulawesi.

outreach program about Sulawesi's forests and the irreplaceable wildlife of the deep jungle interior.

Here's how it works: the project's Core Outreach Leader, North Sulawesi native Billy Lolowang, joins with the local staff of Tasikoki Wildlife Rescue & Education Centre in North *(continued on p. 3)*

Courtesy of David Slater www.djsphotography.co.uk

Hunters and Hunting (continued from p.1)

widespread method for capturing wildlife is by setting snares. Few Tompotikans have guns; when an animal is captured in a snare or held by dogs, the hunter generally uses a spear to kill it.

Take the endangered anoa, for instance. After an anoa is captured, it is generally eaten. Former hunter Yudin



Dave Tosh

Proof of the kill. Even the most active anoa hunters get, at most, one or two anoas per year; anoa is an infrequent but prestigious quarry.

says he would give away a lot of the meat, or sometimes sell it. Another hunter, Emus, told us he would try to sell the meat, but in his village many don't like the gamey taste. An anoa is a large animal with a lot of meat, they explain, so even if it only a portion of it sells, you can get a lot of money. Peddling it from a motorcycle is the easiest way to sell it.

Do hunters go out targeting specific species?

Yes, often. For instance, (continued on p.3)

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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News Briefs

New Research Turns Up Little-Known Bat Species

There's great news for Tompotika's bats lately. Firstly, AITo's former Education and Outreach Specialist, Sheherazade, or "Sera," earned a scholarship to pursue a Master's degree at University of Florida, and is now in her second year. Bats are Sera's great passion, and now this talented, committed young Indonesian conservationist is gaining great skills and training, and already putting them to work on behalf of the bats of Tompotika. Secondly, while pursuing her research program on the pollination services bats provide, Sera has discovered that the bats populating a little-studied Tompotika daytime roost site belong to a species--the Gray Flying Fox, or *Pteropus griseus*--that has previously not been known from this region and about which very little is known at all. This is an exciting find--it adds to the list of rare bat species recently discovered in Tompotika, it paves the way for further research on this species, and it provides further justification for AITo's efforts to protect important bat roost sites.



Silvi-MX

Former AITo staffer Sera shows off her find: a rare Gray Flying Fox

Sea Turtle Hatchlings: More Healthy Babies This Year

Three species of endangered sea turtles nest on Tompotika beaches: the Olive Ridley, the Green, and the critically endangered Hawksbill turtle (sadly, a fourth species, the Leatherback, was last seen nesting in Tompotika about 20 years ago). Until AITo began working with local communities to halt poaching of these turtles' nests, nearly every sea turtle egg was taken and consumed--the turtles were headed for local extinction. Now, however, locals team with AITo staff to patrol and protect two major nesting beaches, and baby sea turtles have a chance at survival.



Marcy Summers

A brand-new Olive Ridley hatchling, just emerged from the nest, succeeds in reaching the Tompotika surf.

Happily, numbers from the 2017 season are up. After a few challenging years in which, among other things, a new road was built across their prime nesting beach, the number of live hatchlings reaching the ocean in 2017 more than doubled over the previous year, to 2169. This is also a four-fold increase from 2011, when AITo began stepping up outreach efforts to villagers and law enforcement in key sea turtle areas. ~

Outreach for Forests, Anoa, and Babirusa *(continued from p.1)*

Sulawesi, Conservation Buton in Southeast Sulawesi, and the Alliance for Tompotika Conservation (AITo) in Tompotika to bring our focused, week-long outreach program to schoolchildren and adults--especially hunters--in villages nearby to where anoa and babirusa still survive, in each of the three regions of Sulawesi.

The program starts in the schools. For the first day or two, the team focuses on forests, and why they're so important to both people and wildlife. Next, anoa and babirusa are presented as rare creatures that depend for their survival on large tracts of undisturbed forest--and that are currently being hunted to extinction. Most kids and adults in these villages know these species; many have eaten them; and some have even hunted them themselves. In all these programs, ex-hunters play a central role (see accompanying article). After the schools, the



Billy Lolowang

In their own words. At the conclusion of the program in each village, kids and adults gather to celebrate their forests and rare wildlife with songs, poetry, speeches, and more.

team does an evening of

similar outreach to adults in the village, especially inviting hunters. And finally, each village closes with a forest- and wildlife-focused celebration for all: leaders give speeches; kids perform songs, dances, and poetry; and posters, notebooks, and stickers are distributed to reinforce the conservation message going forward.

In a few months' time, a formal assessment will attempt to measure the impact of this program on villager attitudes and behavior. But this much is already clear: villagers have warmly welcomed the program. And now, there is palpable hope. We humans have the power to change our ways, that anoa and babirusa may not disappear, but may live on and thrive in deep, green, healthy forests. ~



Sandhy Bawotong

Classroom by classroom. Thousands of kids in villages near the most intact forest habitat, in three regions of Sulawesi, have now taken part in the outreach program.

Hunters and Hunting *(continued from p.2)*

deer--an introduced, non-protected species--are a common favorite target, but most hunters will take other species, such as anoa, opportunistically. And, importantly, for virtually all hunters interviewed, hunting is not their sole livelihood--all have farms or other income-generating activities. In fact, ex-hunter Yudin describes the motivation for his former activity this way: "It was like my art. I liked to hunt to practice my skills. It was a hobby."



Sandhy Bawotong

Yudin explains with a picture: "In the old days, when humans were few and animals were many, hunting was okay. But now, there are many people, and few animals, and we must stop killing them before they're wiped out forever."

Most hunters in these remote areas have no idea that anoas, babirusas, and many other species are endangered and protected by law. The evidence of their own eyes tells hunters that these species are rare and declining, but most do not know that hunting them is actually illegal. Thus, for many, simply becoming aware that a species is protected by law, and realizing that it could disappear completely, is enough to prompt them to stop hunting it.

Yudin Dilao and Aga Mengkesu, for instance, are two former hunters that have joined with the AITo team to conduct the anoa and babirusa outreach program in Tompotika. Both willingly gave up hunting anoa and babirusa after getting to know AITo staff some time ago. Yudin supports a wife and three children, and says he continues to sometimes hunt deer, but less now, and not the protected species. Aga, a single man, still enjoys going to the forest but no longer hunts; he now focuses more on his clove and durian orchard. When talking to other hunters, these two have unique credibility--they have walked in the hunter's shoes, and now have chosen a different path. They and their peers have the power to change history. Addressing a group of his peers, Aga spoke simply and eloquently: "If you are hunting anoa and babirusa, I invite you to stop. These animals have become rare. Let them not disappear. I invite you to stop." ~



Sandhy Bawotong

There's a small red one and a big black one. Ex-hunter Aga describes types of wild anoas to enthralled schoolkids.



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The Faces of ALTO: Simon Purser, ALTO's New Program Director

During the last eight years, if you happened to be an endangered wild animal being smuggled through North Sulawesi for the illegal pet trade or an Asian traditional medicine shop--say, an orangutan, a crested cockatoo, a sun bear, or one of many other species--this man has been your best friend. While at the helm of Tasikoki Wildlife Rescue and Education Centre in North Sulawesi, Simon Purser has built not only a caring and efficient haven for over 400 rescued or confiscated animals, but he has also done a tremendous job of encouraging and supporting local Indonesian authorities to improve enforcement of Indonesia's wildlife crime and trafficking laws. But that's about to change: beginning in December, Simon will shift his focus to field-based conservation and law enforcement outreach in Tompotika, as ALTO's new Program Director.

Born in England, Simon has spent most of his adult life living outside the U.K., in Europe and Asia. A committed vegan, fluent in several languages, and concerned with all aspects of how humans can learn to live more sustainably on this planet, Simon left a career in industry to pursue his love of wildlife, first as a volunteer at a rescue center in Thailand and soon making himself indispensable at a number of similar posts elsewhere in Asia. But it's animals in their wild habitat that he now most wants to help. To do that in today's world, Simon well understands, will require us humans to care, think, and behave differently, and his dream is to be able to help Indonesians come to better value and protect their own spectacular natural heritage.

Simon is particularly keen to work in the Tompotika region because it is such a "hotspot" of unique species. He appreciates ALTO's approach of pairing habitat-based field conservation with intensive outreach efforts: "I've seen the impact of awareness-raising, and how people can be won over," says Simon. Something of a fanatic, even Simon's hobbies--such as scuba diving, sustainable building design, and vegan cooking--follow the environmental theme. Simon and his wife Angela D'Alessio will be based in Tompotika's gateway city of Luwuk, where there is one additional thing they look forward to. Durian fruit--which has become rare and expensive where they've been living in North Sulawesi due to the decline of the bats needed to pollinate durian trees--is cheap and abundant in Tompotika. And durian is something Simon is quite possibly even more passionate about than environmentalism. ~



Courtesy photo

Simon Purser, ALTO's new Program Director, fondly dubbed "Mr. Google" for his encyclopedic knowledge of all things environmental.