



Alliance for Tompotika Conservation Aliansi Konservasi Tompotika

NEWSLETTER

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Saving Bat Island:

Tangkaladi Island lease renewal protects bats, sea turtles—and rainforests—for another ten years

We've all heard how important it is to preserve tropical rainforests, the "lungs of the planet," Earth's essential carbon sink. We all also know that myriad wondrous plants and animals depend on rainforests for their home. But did you know that rainforests, in turn, need wildlife? Maintaining our planet's tropical forests means more than just making sure the trees remain standing: healthy forests need healthy wildlife populations as well.

That's where bats, and ALTo's Tangkuladi Island preserve, come in. The rainforests of Tompotika need fruit bats, or flying foxes, to perform essential ecosystem

services such as pollinating rainforest trees, spreading seeds, and fertilizing the soil. Every night, bats fly throughout the forest,

(continued on p. 2)



Noval Sulung



Adarsh Raju

Densely inhabited - but not by humans. Offshore of Taima village, Tangkuladi island is the safe daytime home for several species of bats essential for maintaining rainforest health. Sea turtles, including Critically Endangered hawksbill turtles, nest safely on its beaches thanks to ALTo-villager protection.

For its own sake: Villagers renew and deepen their commitment to maleo conservation

Readers of this newsletter know that the past year has chalked up tremendous successes for recovery of the endangered maleo bird through ALTo's field-based programs. Our flagship Taima-Libuun nesting ground has marked a **four-fold** increase in maleo numbers since ALTo's beginning, with a record **108** birds seen at once. At our newer Kaumosongi location, numbers have **more than doubled**. And in July, we reported on the purchase of a third maleo nesting ground site, Panganian, where establishment of an exciting new sanctuary for maleos and other wildlife is underway. But these successes in the field are only part of the story: equally important is building conservation support and participation amongst the local people who live and work near these sites.

What will the neighbors think?

Just how deep that conservation support runs was tested recently, when the conservation lease for ALTo's flagship site at Taima-Libuun came up for renewal. Villagers partner in guarding the site every day, and the lease payments have supported a wide variety of community benefits in the village, but nevertheless, automatic renewal was not a given. Supporting the con-



Ahmad Nur

More land for maleo. Om Um, center left, with ALTo staff (L to R) Agus, Marcy, and Pandji at a boundary marker for the land Um has recently donated to expand the protected maleo nesting area.



Kevin Schafer

Doing a happy dance. Maleos in Tompotika are thriving, and have just received a resounding vote of confidence from their nearest human neighbors.

servation program means villagers choosing to give up the long-standing tradition of taking maleo eggs—a tradition which, although illegal, had gone on for generations prior to the start of the ALTo partnership in 2006. Would villagers continue to choose the path of conservation? The great news for maleo: the answer was a resounding "Yes!" In a survey conducted prior to the contract *(continued on p. 3)*

Bat Island lease renewal (continued from p.1)

carrying out these forest-maintaining services for free as they forage for food. But come the morning, the bats need a place to go and rest. Tangkuladi Island, a 7-hectare (17-acre) island owned by ten private landowners from Taima village, is where they choose to spend the day, hanging from branches by the thousands in noisy, social clumps. But until AITo's Tangkuladi conservation lease and collaboration began in 2014, hunters were decimating these bats, sending them with great cruelty and waste to distant bushmeat markets. For the past five years, however, Tangkuladi has been a safe haven for bats, nesting sea turtles, and other wildlife. Bat numbers on the island have burgeoned, which benefits forests throughout the region, as well as a variety of fruit crops, including the prized durian fruit.



Adarsh Raju

A nightly spectacle. Every evening at sunset, tens of thousands of bats—the black specks in this photo—leave their roosts on Tangkuladi Island for the mainland rainforests of Mt. Tompotika. Healthy bats means healthy forests.



Adarsh Raju

A healthy, diverse community. These Black Flying Foxes (*Pteropus alecto*) are only one of several bat species that roost together on Tangkuladi island.

Last month, villagers opted to renew the AITo Tangkuladi partnership for another ten years.

It's a win-win-win-win: everything is linked together, and it's all part of an integrated whole. In AITo's Forest Preserve area on nearby Mount Tompotika, AITo prevents logging, but it's the bats of Tangkuladi that keep those forests healthy. Meanwhile, villagers are happy to participate in the patrols that keep Tangkuladi safe, to ferry visitors to witness the remarkable spectacle of the nightly bat migration, and to receive the benefits to their fruit crops. Everyone on the planet benefits from the healthy rainforests. Oh, and just sitting and watching those bats enjoy their lives is fun, too. ~

The Alliance for Tompotika Conservation/ Aliansi Konservasi Tompotika ("AITo") is dedicated to conserving the unparalleled natural and cultural heritage of the lands and waters of the Tompotika Peninsula, 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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Ipan Djano

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Law Enforcement - No Longer Just Talk

AITo's public outreach efforts inform and remind folks of laws protecting wildlife and nature, and why they're important. In our experience, for many people this is enough—in most cases folks prefer to comply with the law once they're aware of it. For a few, however, stronger inducements are needed, and that's where law enforcement comes in. But until recently, laws protecting wildlife and nature have seldom been taken seriously, even by law enforcement officials themselves. A few years ago, AITo began outreach to law enforcement officials, and now there's a momentous milestone to celebrate: for the first time in Tompotika, a violator of environmental laws was



Robin Moore

actually detained! In this recent case, a man suspected of repeatedly using destructive bomb-fishing techniques that destroy coral reefs was caught in the act, captured, and not just warned, but actually *detained* for several days by authorities. Word of the event spread quickly, and, importantly, villagers voiced approval.

The tide is turning. The next step—prosecution—is bound to follow soon. ~

Conservation for its own sake (continued from p.1)

renewal, 94% of households expressed support for renewal. Subsequently, at the public meeting for the formal decision, the only points of disagreement were not whether or not the partnership should be renewed, but concerned the amount of the lease payment and use of the funds. The village of Taima once again has declared itself as firmly in the corner of conservation.

It's not all about money

But it would be a big mistake to assume that conservation is all about economics, even in "poor" villages in the developing world. Over the years, AITo's outreach efforts have emphasized the wonder, cultural pride, and—put simply—*love* that Tompotika's human residents feel for their maleo neighbors, apart from any utilitarian considerations. It has touched a chord. Although no one disputes that economic benefits from the conservation partnership are welcome for villagers, it's clear that the motivation for conservation nowadays runs much deeper than just economic considerations. For instance, concurrently with the contract renewal, Taima resident *Om Yusman "Um" Riba* opted to simply donate approximately 1 ha (2.5 acres) of land he owned in the forest abutting the maleo nesting area. His gift was made contingent on inclusion of the land in the conservation area. "I don't use this land," he said, "and it would be better if it were made safe as part of the protected maleo area." Remarkably, Um requested no monetary compensation for his gift.



Robin Moore

Bringing the maleo back at Kaumosongi. When he was a child, "This was *the* main place for maleo in the area," says Village Head *Pak Aswin Asamin*. "I want our village to be known for maleo again."



Noval Suling

Well-supported. Once nearly extirpated, the endangered maleo has recovered at two Tompotika nesting sites, thanks to locals' choices to end the illegal taking of their eggs.

Meanwhile, some miles down the coast at Tower and Teku villages, villagers have not even requested monetary lease payments for the Kaumosongi conservation area, as at Taima. Instead, when asked if they would like any kind of assistance in thanks for their partnership in conservation, villagers requested help with equipment and procedures for better trash management, and a large public statue of the maleo. At a well-attended recent meeting, villagers were thrilled to hear AITo's report that maleo numbers at Kaumosongi have more than doubled; the question of "what's in it for us?" never came up.

For humans to build a healthier relationship with the rest of Nature going forward, Nature has to matter for its own sake, and not just for how humans deem it useful at any particular moment. A more expansive, more loving attitude is needed. And in this, the unassuming villagers of Tompotika are setting an example for the whole world. ~

"We got an upgrade!": AITo staff give presentations at conferences

A critical part of AITo's mission is to "build capacity"—that is, to help local Indonesian and especially Tompotikan citizens not only to care about nature, but also to acquire the knowledge and skills to protect it. That means being able to speak and write clearly and publicly about AITo's work at regional scientific conferences. Recently, three of AITo's most able and committed staff members—Conservation Programs Coordinator Agustian Laya, Field Program Manager Pandji Kresno, and Assistant Field & Research Manager Vivi Tan Oga—have done just that. In July, Vivi gave a presentation about AITo's successful "low-intervention" model for protecting maleos at a conference sponsored by Profauna Indonesia and entitled *Keep Wildlife in the Wild*, while in August, Agus and Pandji presented similar information at the *International Conference of Wildlife Trade and Utilization in Wallacea Region*.



Sandhy Bawotong

Tomorrow's Conservation Leaders AITo staff (L to R) Agus, Vivi, and Pandji. "At first I was nervous," said Pandji, "but then I gained confidence, and felt proud."

"It was a fantastic experience. People were shocked to see the photos of all those maleos," Pandji reported. "They were very supportive of our approach," Vivi explained. "Presenting at the conference gave us motivation to learn and study more," echoed all three staff members. "Until now, I've been used to presenting in front of schoolchildren for our Campaigns. But a big conference is different," said Agus. "We feel like we've received an 'upgrade,'" added Pandji, using the English word.

AITo staff like Agus, Pandji and Vivi are the future of conservation in Indonesia; with your help, more "upgrades" like these are in their personal futures. ~



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The Faces of ALTO: The Bear Cuscus: Mystery, *Gravitas*, and... Cuteness



Meldy Tamengge

It's a marsupial. It may look like a bear, but, like its cousin the koala, the Bear Cuscus is slow, gentle, and vegetarian. The female carries her young in a pouch.

The native Sulawesi rainforests that ALTO is working to preserve are precious not only for storing carbon, producing oxygen, regulating rainfall, preventing landslides, and the like. Behold reason number 14,672 for saving Sulawesi's rainforests: the resident Bear Cuscus, *Ailurops ursinus*. Like so many other weird and wonderful creatures, the Bear Cuscus is found only in Sulawesi, it is imperiled, and it is a mystery—almost nothing is known about its ecology and habits.

About the size of a large raccoon, the Bear Cuscus spends almost all its time in trees, moving deftly from branch to branch using its agile limbs and prehensile tail, which is almost as versatile as a fifth limb. Strong claws, and two thumbs on each hand and foot, make it an expert climber, suited for traveling large swaths of Sulawesi forest following the emergence of young leaves, its favorite food. While in some communities the Bear Cuscus is considered a human "relative," and spared, in other areas they have been hunted to near-extinction. Heightening the loss, local people will sometimes chop down a tree to capture a Cuscus perched in it.

The Bear Cuscus' size and color can range quite a bit, from rusty brown to yellowish to gray to almost black. Usually solitary, they can be hard to detect from the ground, but once you have spotted one, you will never forget it. With piercing yellow or orange eyes that stare out from under pale eyebrows, it is not shy to quietly fix you in its gaze. Like a window into an Old Soul, in the stare of the Bear Cuscus you may glimpse, all at once, the richness, the vulnerability, and the *gravitas* of Sulawesi's irreplaceable rain forests. ~



Pandji Kresno

So cute it hurts. Baby Bear Cuscuses, like this one, are often captured by local people wanting an adorable pet. Sadly, they are usually not given proper care, and quickly die. This lucky baby was rescued by ALTO staff and then released—but only after a pause for food, rest, and Cuteness Appreciation!