



Alliance for Tompotika Conservation Aliansi Konservasi Tompotika

NEWSLETTER

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Tompotika.org Redesigned: ALTO's website gets a facelift and new content

Here is the truth: on the ALTO team, we've always chosen to put a lot more time and energy into our field programs than our web presence. But given that more and more folks all over the world--including in Indonesia--are looking to the worldwide web as a first stop for information about nearly anything, lately it's become clear to us that our website needed a lot of new information. It also needed a new design to accommodate the added content in both English and Bahasa Indonesia.

Enter Lynn Adams of Lynn Adams Web Design (see her portfolio at <http://adamspixels.com>). Though parts of the site are still being completed, with Lynn's help ALTO's website now much more fully reflects the work that we do: who we are, our field and outreach programs, educational resources, photos, donation page, and more. Enormous thanks to star volunteer John Cornelison of VashonSoftware.com, who designed and maintained our previous site, even when we neglected to update it! And many thanks to Lynn for her splendid work on the new one! Please check it out at:

www.tompotika.org



Where is Tompotika, Anyway? *And why should we care about it?*

By just about any measure, Tompotika is an obscure place. Outside of Indonesia, many folks have never even heard of Sulawesi, let alone Tompotika. And even within the island of Sulawesi, Indonesia's 4th-largest island, many are unfamiliar with the Tompotika peninsula, which lies at the tip of Sulawesi's central arm. Even Tompotikans themselves are more likely to describe where



they come from as *Kabupaten Banggai*, the political unit or Regency which encompasses the Tompotika peninsula and additional lands beyond it.

But from a biological and to some extent a cultural standpoint as well, the Tompotika peninsula is a land unto itself. The island of Sulawesi has never been connected to a continental land mass, but began as a collection of small, dispersed oceanic islands which shifted with the continental plates over millions of years, eventually colliding with one another to form today's Sulawesi. The Tompotika peninsula itself was once a distinct island

fragment, different from the rest of Sulawesi's central arm. At the center of the 2500km² (1000mi²) Tompotika peninsula, or "bird's head," as locals call it, lies Mount Tompotika, a 1600m (5300 ft) mountain considered a sacred point of origin by all three of the area's indigenous ethnic groups.

Sulawesi itself is known globally for its rich biodiversity and very high rates of endemic species--that is, species found nowhere else. But even within Sulawesi, Tompotika is home to no less than 9-10 animal species found nowhere in the world outside of Tompotika's small peninsula! And as we study it more closely, those numbers are sure to increase, making Tompotika ever more irreplaceable as a biological treasure-trove.

But suppose its cultural importance and unparalleled biodiversity were not enough to convince you that Tompotika is worth working to save? Lots of places, after all, boast rich culture and biodiversity. But there is more. *You--yes, you--are connected to Tompotika.* If you ever use steel or re- *(continued on page 3)*

Two of Sulawesi's many endemic species. Top: Red-knobbed hornbill, *Rhyticeros cassidix*. Bottom: Sulawesi Giant Civet, *Macrogalidia musschenbroekii*.



Courtesy of David Slater,
www.djsphotography.co.uk

Duncan Neville

Water for Taima: New Possibilities

AlTo aims to help improve the quality of life for everyone in the areas where we work--non-human and human alike. And for human communities, access to clean water is fundamental to a high quality of life. But in Taima, AlTo's partner village for our maleo field program, fresh water can be hard to come by. In an earlier project, AlTo repaired a communal well and piping used by many village residents, but that was only an interim measure. In the last few months, AlTo commissioned a comprehensive study by water expert Mohammad Hafiz, who examined all possible water sources and options for all sections of Taima.

Hafiz's findings lay the groundwork for an ambitious new project: working together with villagers, AlTo aims to facilitate improved access to clean fresh water for all



This highly-contaminated well is the primary water source for some Taima residents.

Taima residents. Much remains to be decided in village meetings, but likely this will involve improvements to existing wells plus something new: a whole suite of rainwater collection systems. Stay tuned!

The Alliance for Tompotika Conservation/ Aliansi Konservasi Tompotika ("AlTo") is dedicated to conserving the unparalleled natural and cultural heritage of the lands and waters surrounding Mt. Tompotika, Sulawesi, Indonesia. Effective, creative, and efficient, AlTo 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, AlTo believes that the quality of our human lives is bound up to the health of our natural environment and our relationships to it.

AlTo 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 (AlTo)
21416 - 86th Ave SW
Vashon Island, WA 98070 USA

+1 206 463 7720

info@tompotika.org
www.tompotika.org



Butterfly by AlTo Conservation Coordinator Anim Alyoihana

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Reconnaissance in Tompotika: Where are the best bats?

AlTo is ramping up its bat programs. The bats of Tompotika, which play such a critical role in maintaining the health of native forests and human agricultural crops through pollination, seed dispersal, pest control, and fertilization, have been under increasing pressure lately by commercial hunters from outside the area.

Fortunately, we have a tremendous opportunity before us to help call attention to the wonders and the importance of bats of all kinds. AlTo is collaborating with world-famous bat photographer and father of bat conservation Dr. Merlin Tuttle and scientists from the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI) to plan a photographic expedition to document Sulawesi's rich bat fauna. Though still in the process of securing funding, the expedition has Tompotika slated as one of three key photographic survey areas.



Sigit checks out an insectivorous cave bat.

But where in Tompotika? To date, AlTo staff have identified at least a dozen important bat locations within the Tompotika area, most of them caves. With limited time for the photographic expedition, a preliminary survey was needed to prioritize locations and make some initial species identifications.

With that in mind, in March 2013, LIPI bat scientist Sigit Wiantoro joined AlTo staff on a whirlwind tour of key Tompotika bat locations. Visiting several caves and forest locations, the team identified at least 17 species in only three nights, including two unusual finds which call for additional study. But it also accomplished its goal of identifying which of Tompotika's many bat locations will receive further attention in the



This Tompotika cave hosts tens of thousands of bats of more than 9 species.



Sulawesi's fruit bats, like this endemic *Rousettus celebensis*, keep Tompotika's forests healthy.

expedition to come.

And there was another happy result of this survey: a fleet of local survey helpers have discovered a brand-new love of bats!

Where's Tompotika and Why Do We Care? (continued from page 1)

chargeable batteries, if you eat prepared foods, if you wash with soap, you are connected to Tompotika. How? Because steel and rechargeable batteries are made with nickel, and Tompotika is one of the few places on earth where nickel can be mined. Due to the world's soaring demand for steel and rechargeable batteries, the pressure to establish new nickel mines in Tompotika is relentless. These nickel mines destroy natural forests; as the forests are destroyed, the many forms of life that they support--which includes humans--disappear with them.

Along similar lines, read the labels on your prepared foods or cosmetics. You may very likely find palm oil listed as an ingredient, and this, too, connects you to Tompotika. Clearing of native forest for the establishment of palm oil plantations is now the number one threat to Indonesia's forests, and Tompotika's forests, too, are falling to the palm plantation bulldozers and fires.

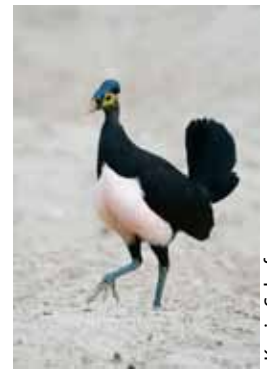
There are many other connections as well. Your shrimp may come from shrimp farms built after clearing Tompotika's coastal mangroves. Plywood, paper, and other products are made from wood exported from Tompotika's forests. The list goes on... in short, if you are one of the roughly 2 billion and growing members of the Global Consumer Class (and most of us reading this are), then you are connected to Tompotika through the things you buy and use.

But if you are also an AIto supporter, then your connection to Tompotika goes beyond the corrosive effects of global consumption. We all may be part of the problem, but you are also part of the solution!

AIto works in Tompotika not just because it is so critical from a conservation standpoint, and not just out of guilt over the fact that global consumption habits are driving a great deal of its destruction. AIto works in Tompotika because we are a collection of humans--Tompotikans and non-Tompotikans together--who care deeply about helping to forge healthier, more just, and more sustainable relationships between people and the rest of nature, and here is a place where we can actually see what that looks like, and make a real difference. Tompotika is small enough, intact enough, and biologically meaningful enough that the large-scale threats are clearly visible in microcosm--but so are the solutions. We think working



Where AIto works: Starred villages are locations where AIto has active field programs (maleo, sea turtle, forest, bat). This map shows only larger villages; in fact there are over 100 total, and AIto's Awareness Campaign works in every single one. AIto's office, complete with electricity and computer, is to the southwest in the city of Luwuk, on the "neck" of the bird's head.



The iconic Maleo, *Macrocephalon maleo*, another Sulawesi endemic.

Kevin Schafer

together, with spirit and curiosity, is the best way to forge them.

The Earth, our home, is in a tough spot these days. Tiny AIto is not going to save it. But we can make--in fact already have made--a real difference in one important spot. In Tompotika, you and AIto are helping to write some new stories--stories about how forests are being protected, and poaching is diminishing. Stories about how the maleo is now actually recovering from the brink of extinction. Stories about tens of thousands of schoolchildren growing up with a new-found awareness and appreciation for nature.

Tompotika's stories are stories of hope. Perhaps these stories will help bring inspiration to others to save other important spots. Perhaps we'll all learn to live differently on Earth. And meanwhile, we will keep working, and keep generating more stories. Perhaps the stories can save us.



March 2013: Two dozen Tompotika village heads, police, and other high-ranking officials gathered in Teku village to address the problem of wildlife crime. As one official said, "The time has come to act."

Law Enforcement Program Gathers Steam

In March, AIto and its government partner BKSDA held the second of a series of workshops aimed at law enforcement officials in the Tompotika area. Following on from the first workshop held in November 2012, at this gathering officials created a shared strategy for moving forward in enforcing laws against poaching of sea turtle and maleo bird eggs and adults. At the workshop, the group defined what would constitute "light" and "heavy" violations, and established procedures for dealing with each kind.

Next steps: the group will meet again in October to follow up and share stories about implementing these procedures. What seems significant so far: not only is this effort shining a spotlight on the need for wildlife law enforcement, but it also seems to be creating a new community of peers helping each other to actually do so.

Map by Jesse Langdon

Noval Sulung



The Faces of AlTo: Laura Bienen, AlTo Donor

On Vashon Island, if you want to get something done and done well, ask Laura Bienen to do it. Laura and her husband Tom Rogers have lived on this island, in the Puget Sound of U.S.A.'s Washington State, for twenty years, where they are raising three boys aged 17, 15, and 11.

Laura grew up in a remarkable family, spending five years of her childhood in Africa and another 10 years as a young adult in Japan and China. This upbringing gave her a global perspective, and her parents also taught her to get involved. "You have to support the causes you care about, with your time, energy, and money." Like her parents, Laura cares deeply about education, and volunteers in support of local schools. But she came to her interest in nature on her own. "I've always cared about wildlife....Wild places are powerful, shrinking, and under siege."

Laura is fascinated by the wildlife and natural areas of her island home. Active in her local Audubon Society, Land Trust, and other conservation-oriented efforts, Laura's a fixture at local nature talks and workdays. But she also sees beyond her own backyard. "The rest of the world matters to me," Laura says. "We need conservation in the context of where it is."

Though she's never been to Sulawesi or Tompotika, Laura is one of AlTo's most faithful supporters. Why? "Even though it's far away, it feels immediate and tangible to me." She remembers hearing about the plight of the maleo bird when AlTo first got started in 2006, and has followed the story of the maleo's recovery and the other programs AlTo has expanded to since. "AlTo has measurable results, and I like how it has broadened the vision from maleos to sea turtles, forests, and education, without dropping previous parts of the web." She also likes that AlTo is small and efficient, and "A little goes a long way. Other organizations seem bureaucratic and unwieldy compared to AlTo."

Laura's own family is active in science, education, and the Arts, so she's glad to see AlTo integrating all these elements in its conservation work. "I didn't need convincing of the relevance of these different pieces," she says. These days, our planet is in peril, and Laura knows it. And as she raises three kids and volunteers in her community, Laura is actively engaged in trying to make things better. "Conservation is the most important thing.... acting locally for a global purpose. There is both fear and hope about the environment." For the AlTo team, one great source of our hope is knowing people like Laura.



Laura Bienen: "The rest of the world matters to me." (Courtesy photo)