



Alliance for Tompotika Conservation Aliansi Konservasi Tompotika

NEWSLETTER

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ALTo Survey Team Discovers Three Brand-New Species!



Umilaela/Angga Rahmansyah

"*Cyrtodactylus* new species, large" was discovered in Tompotika during ALTo's herpetological survey in May 2009. The new species has yet to receive a name.

Heraclitus wrote, "Nature is wont to hide herself." And indeed, anyone who spends time in natural areas knows that there is always something new, something ever-changing in the midst of well-known places. But entirely new species? That's the stuff of TV news bites and full-page spreads in the New York Times (that is, if you are a large organization with a full-time communications department!). So it is with great pride, if considerably less fanfare, that ALTo announces that as part of a survey of Tompotika's herpetofauna (reptiles and amphibians) conducted in May, our team has discovered three new species previously unknown to science.

The three new species are a frog of the genus *Oreophryne*, a New Guinean frog genus, and two new geckoes of the genus *Cyrtodactylus*, the "bow-fingered" or "bent-toed" geckoes. These new finds bring to six the number of reptile and amphibian species endemic to, or known only

from, Tompotika. A seventh species, *Polypdates alto*, or the so-called "ALTo frog" discovered by our team in 2006, has since been found in one other location on a large island offshore of Tompotika.

The survey was conducted by herpetologists Umilaela and Angga Rahmansyah and ALTo Conservation Officer Agustian Laya, all under the direction of Indonesia's foremost herpetologist and ALTo Board member Dr. Djoko Iskandar. Financial support for the survey was provided by a grant from Conservation International's Amphibian Conservation Group, and the team was assisted by guides from several local villages in the Tompotika area.

Gecko lizards, to which the two new *Cyrtodactylus* species belong, are a fascinating group. Geckoes have no eyelids--just a clear membrane which they lick to clean. Geckoes may drop their tails or shoot a foul-smelling goo to escape predators, and (continued on next page)



"ALTo frog," discovered July 2006. Drawing by Adri Laise, 14.

New Tompotika Forest Preserve: Now Ten Times Original Size

It began with 1000 hectares (2500 acres). ALTo had been in discussions with local villagers in the Tompotika area about a patch of forest on Mount Tompotika that serves as a kind of hub and gateway to the rest of this sacred mountain's native tropical rainforest. A new nickel mine (to serve the world's recent surge in demand for steel and batteries) was being proposed for the area, and, if actualized, would destroy a huge swath of forest on the flanks of Mt. Tompotika--forest which not only provides habitat for endangered species like maleo birds, tonkean macaques, and anoas, but which also provides clean water, prevents soil erosion, and controls flooding for villages in Tompotika's foothills. Local villagers own, but do not use, this key patch of intact forest, and had been exploring selling the land, so they were thrilled when ALTo approached them about buying the land in order to protect the forest, rather than raze it for a mine. In (continued on p. 3)



A pristine stream flows near Tempat Athena, at the heart of the new Tompotika Forest Preserve.

Robin Moore

(continued from p.1) some species are parthenogenic, meaning that the females can reproduce on their own without mating with a male. Nocturnal geckoes can see colors in low light, when humans are color-blind. But perhaps most fascinating is geckoes' ability to climb any surface, adhering easily to glass, walls, even upside-down on ceilings, as any visitor to a tropical building can attest!



Umilaela/Angga Rahmansyah
"Cyrtodactylus new species, small"

It's not suction cups on their foot-pads that allow geckoes to do this, but rather millions of microscopic hair-like structures, which make use of the so-called Van der Waal's forces that create attraction at the

molecular level. The resulting adhesive force is so strong that a gecko can hang from surfaces with just one toe, and an average gecko could hold up a weight of over 90 pounds!

The discovery of these three new species underscores Tompotika's importance for global biodiversity, and renews AITo's resolve to help conserve it--and to keep looking for more of what Nature has hidden there!

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, innovative, 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

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Tompotika's First-Ever Butterfly Survey: We Come Bearing Nets

Sulawesi has always had a bit of the younger-sibling complex, consistently receiving less scientific attention than its better-known Indonesian sister islands, such as Borneo and Sumatra. And whereas the larger Borneo and Sumatra have higher overall numbers of plant and animal species than does Sulawesi, Sulawesi has far higher endemism--that is, the proportion of species unique to that place. For this reason, for its tremendous untapped potential for conservation, and because of the costs to global biodiversity of *not* conserving it, a team of scientists in the journal Nature recently ranked Sulawesi as their *number one* priority for global conservation investment--above its better-known siblings (Wilson et. al., Nature 440:337-440, March 2006).

But despite numbering over 560 different kinds, Sulawesi's butterfly fauna is poorly studied, and some parts of the island--including Tompotika--have never been formally surveyed for butterflies at all! So AITo's July butterfly survey in Tompotika was a pioneering effort, led by noted Indonesian lepidopterist Dr. Djunijanti Peggie. Under Dr. Peggie's guidance, AITo eco-service travelers visited a variety of Tompotika habitats, catching and identifying butterflies everywhere they went. And although final identification of the specimens is not yet complete, a few patterns have started to emerge: for example, Tompotika is unusually rich in *Danaus* (milkweed) butterflies. More information will be available upon release of the final survey report.

But for the visitors, chasing butterflies, snorkeling coral reefs, watching macaques, tarsiers, and dolphins, and joining in a village dance were all highlights of the trip. As one traveler put it, "Quite simply, I had the time of my life."



AITo traveler Gary Bernard examines a *Danaus* butterfly

Scott Newell



AITo staff and eco-service travelers at Libuun, Tompotika. Lepidopterist Dr. Djunijanti Peggie is at far right, middle row.

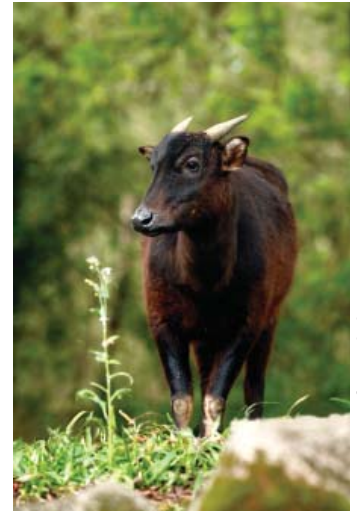
Scaling it Up: Forest Preserve Now Ten Times Larger *(continued from p. 1)*

consultation together, villagers and AITo have agreed to a plan whereby AITo will buy this key patch of forest and establish the region's first permanent, locally-managed forest preserve, and villagers will collaborate with AITo in its management, protection, and restoration.

But now there's more. Adjacent to this key 1000 hectares (ha) is another area of approximately 9000 ha (22,500 acres) that is owned by the government and encompasses most of the rest of Mount Tompotika. On zoning maps, this area is already designated as *hutan lindung*, or "protection forest," but in practice this area, like most of Indonesia's forests, is under heavy pressure from illegal logging, hunting, and overharvest of forest products such as rattan. The original 1000 ha that AITo arranged to purchase from villagers is a key forest gateway, but this additional 9000 ha constitutes the majority of Tompotika's forest itself.

So the AITo team began brainstorming ways to protect this additional forest, and has crafted an innovative plan that will allow AITo to lease the land for conservation for the next 95 years. In effect, AITo will manage this critical forest land in a sort of "conservation concession" using the same laws that are normally used to allow extractive industries, such as logging or mining companies, to benefit from government-owned land. But instead of clear-cutting the trees and then moving on, AITo will use the lease to protect and maintain the biodiversity and ecosystem benefits of these pristine rainforests. Patrolling, managing, and restoring the forest will be done by teams of local villagers facilitated by AITo, and AITo will also sponsor training in organic farming techniques and other alternative livelihoods that will help to ensure that villagers can get plenty of food and income without destroying the forest or its creatures.

It's a win-win for all. And in August, the AITo team presented the scheme to the Bupati of Kabupaten Banggai (Banggai Regency), Bapak Ma'mun Amir, who has the authority to approve the lease of government lands. Following AITo's presentation, the Bupati gave his preliminary approval to the plan (while also requesting his own personal copy of the field guide to endangered Tompotika animals that AITo has created). In the months ahead, the AITo team--which includes some of Indonesia's best experts in conservation law--will be working hard to refine the details of the plan and educate the community on this new approach for conserving the global treasure of biodiversity that is Tompotika. Best of all, through this innovative approach--and thanks to the support of AITo donors, including Conservation International's Amphibian Conservation Group--the area of forest poised for protection (10,000 ha/ 25,000 acres, or about 38 square miles) is now *ten times* the size of what was originally envisioned. Rabindranath Tagore said, "Trees are the earth's endless effort to speak to the listening heavens." In the new forest preserve, they won't speak--they'll sing!



Anoa, *Bubalus depressicornis*

Courtesy of David Slater www.djsphotography.co.uk

Meet AITo's Splendid Staff

Here at AITo, we are inspired, informed, and sustained by Nature. But it's people who make everything we do possible. People who dream, people who give, and people who act on behalf of wild Nature. All these people, working together from different lands, make up the team that is AITo. And right at the heart of the AITo team are our very bright, committed, and hard-working Indonesian staff. All local Tompotikans originally gleaned from a college *Pencinta Alam* (Nature Lovers) club, these are the people who make AITo's work happen: they are the ones who guard the maleos, patrol the turtle beaches, hike the forests, team with villagers, meet with officials, and speak to schoolchildren. Several of them are continuing to pursue college degrees when not at work for AITo, and all are receiving training from AITo in conservation science and field and outreach techniques. They are (left to right):

Noval Suling, Conservation Officer

Anim Alyoihana, Conservation Coordinator

Ikhsan Suling, Head of Government Relations

Ipan Djano, Conservation Officer

Agustian Laya, Conservation Officer

Not pictured are **Panji Kresno**, who has just joined the regular staff from our apprenticeship program, and apprentices **Sandro** and **Doni**.



Tompotika Youth Calendar Project: High School Artists Celebrate Tompotika's Wildlife

On August 2-9, twelve of Tompotika's most talented high school artists gathered in the village of Teku for a new kind of experience: a workshop solely devoted to drawing and painting from nature. In Tompotika, students attending the area's two high schools are drawn from villages all over the Tompotika area, and they receive little or no instruction in the arts during their school careers. So in AITo's workshop, taught by American wildlife artist Sandra Noel, students received their first formal instruction in how to draw fur, feathers, leaves--and their very precious, very vulnerable wildlife.



Yanti Burahima, 16, and Wista Lamato, 17, on a workshop field trip.



"A thing of beauty is a joy forever."

- John Keats

The twelve Tompotika high school artists--plus two excellent teenage translators, who assisted Ms. Noel--were selected by their teachers for their artistic talent, positive attitude, and interest in nature. And in the workshop, the students fairly shone! The instruction included not only art techniques but also the ecology of some of Tompotika's unique and endangered wildlife species. The result is a 2010 calendar, each month featuring a different species by a different student artist. The bilingual calendar is printed on recycled paper, and will be distributed free for use in schools, government offices, restaurants, and other locations throughout the Tompotika area. It will also be sold in the United States to help support AITo's conservation

work. (To get your copy of the calendar, see enclosed newsletter insert.)

The calendar, perhaps above all else, is a pride piece. For the young artists, it means pride in their skills and hard work, yielding a thing of beauty. For the people of Tompotika, it means pride in both their marvelous young people and in their natural heritage, which is among the world's richest and most irreplaceable. And for people everywhere, it means pride in the wondrous and varied forests, coral reefs, and wildlife with which we share this Earth, and in the young people who live among them. It is the hands of these young people that have rendered Earth's beautiful creatures with such feeling in the new calendar; in those same hands the Earth's very future will rest.



Sea turtle by Rifa'i Mashudi, 17

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