



Alliance for Tompotika Conservation Aliansi Konservasi Tompotika

NEWSLETTER

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Tripods in the Mud: *Documenting Tompotika's Natural Riches in Pictures*

Kevin Schafer



Corals and beach, Taima, Tompotika

Off in its remote corner of eastern Sulawesi, Tompotika is a place that simply begs a closer look. In the past few years, ALTO has helped sponsor a herpetological survey, a small mammal survey, and Tompotika's first-ever butterfly survey, yielding valuable scientific information and even discovering new species previously unknown to science--all to help increase our knowledge and appreciation of Tompotika's natural treasures.

But last November, 2011, Tompotika was the venue for a new kind of expedition: a visual one, featuring some of the world's top nature photographers. With the help of generous partners, and especially the gracious donation of their time by the photographers themselves, ALTO hosted a two-week photographic expedition dubbed "Tripods in the Mud" (TIM) by partner organization, the International

League of Conservation Photographers (iLCP, www.ilcp.com). For this expedition, top iLCP photographers Kevin Schafer of the USA and Sandesh Kadur of India were joined by celebrated Indonesian wildlife photographer Riza "Caca" Marlon, and the three spent their time tromping through Tompotika's forests and wild places, visually documenting the wildlife and other wonders to be found.

ALTO will use the resulting photos to create new outreach materials--posters, presentations, educational materials, etc. which will be used both within Indonesia--inviting locals to see their home in new ways-- and around the world. As this newsletter attests, good (*continued on p. 2*)



Maleo birds at Taima nesting ground

Riza Marlon

The Results Are In: *Organic Farming Techniques Dramatically Improve Soil and Crops*

Recently, residents of the foothills surrounding the protected forests of Mount Tompotika completed a grand experiment. Scientists had already assured them that organic farming techniques were friendlier to their health, environment, and surrounding forests than using expensive chemical fertilizers and pesticides. But how well would these inexpensive and home-grown organic farming techniques work in improving their crop yields and discouraging pests?

From July-November 2011, ALTO sponsored an in-depth, on-site organic training program in Tompotika farmers' own fields so that they could answer that question directly for themselves.

Three distinct communities planted, tended, and harvested at least seven kinds of vegetables during the training, and over 150 people took part along the way. About 90 people had active and sustained involvement, including new and experienced farmers, a women's group, and students from a local high school. (*Continued on page 3*)



Residents of Tanah Merah show off their organic greens. Trainers Yulianus and Sunyoto are at center front.

Noval Sulung

Tripods in the Mud (continued from page 1)

photos are absolutely essential to the task of bringing our work to life, and we are very excited to start harnessing the power of these new images to help promote conservation of Tompotika's marvelous and vulnerable natural heritage.



Sandesh Kadur

Red-knobbed hornbill, *Ryticeros cassidix*

But it wasn't just about bringing home beautiful images. The TIM expedition was also a terrific learning opportunity for ALTo staff, and yielded fascinating discussions about the current state of the art of wildlife photography worldwide. Most of us, for example, have seen breathtaking still and video images of wildlife on television or in magazines. Want to see the birth of a wild bear cub in its den, or a close-up face shot of a rare parrot? It's all available, via documentary or internet. But you may not be aware that, in today's world, many of these photos and videos are not as "natural" as you might think. That bear birth, for example, was actually shot in a zoo, and the parrot close-up, so perfectly lit and posed, was taken in a staged captive "habitat" specially designed just for photography!

Often, if seeking to get a shot of a rare or elusive animal such as Sulawesi's marsupial bear cuscus, giant-tusked babirusa, or secretive Sulawesi giant civet, photographers will arrange to capture the animal for picture-taking.

The iLCP's Conservation Photographer's Code of Ethics speaks to how conservation photographers should take and



Sandesh Kadur

Sulawesi banded swallowtail, *Papilio gigon*

process photos (<http://www.ilcp.com/about/values-ethical-code>). For this TIM, the team chose not to capture any animals, relying instead on our own and locals' best naturalist knowledge and woodsman's skills to locate and ap-

proach wildlife (or photograph them in automatic cameras). For instance, Kevin spent days in a blind, at all hours of the day and in all different lighting conditions, creating what is probably the best and most complete set of images of maleo birds in the world. Sandesh displayed his tremendous woodsman's skills in creeping up silently on a troop of wild and extremely shy Tonkean macaques. And Riza and Sandesh both searched for and documented what are likely the Tompotika area's first photos of a wild tarsier (most tarsier photos available are taken of a habituated population in North Sulawesi).

A sample of Kevin, Sandesh, and Riza's photos from this initial TIM expedition is presented here. In the future--for example, especially during the sea turtle season--we hope to lure expert photographers back to Tompotika to continue the task of sharing Tompotika's beauty with the wider world.

Still Growing: Tompotika Forest Protection Receives a New Boost

About two years ago, ALTo launched a multi-stage effort to secure protection for the priceless and irreplaceable primary tropical forests of Mt. Tompotika. Supported by the IUCN Netherlands, the IUCN Amphibian Specialist Group/Conservation International, The Humane Society International's Wildlife Land Trust, and numerous other ALTo supporters who bought "shares" in the new preserve, the Tompotika Forest Preserve comprises about 10,000 hectares (25,000 acres) of intact forest in several adjacent parts: a core area of government-owned land encompassing most of Mt. Tompotika, a "buffer zone" of privately-owned land which ALTo is in the process of purchasing, lot by lot, and several additional patches of stream corridors and riparian forests.

But recently, the ALTo team was delighted to receive a further boost to the project. At the close of ALTo's Organic Farming Training (see article p. 1), village head for the area Pak Suharto Mangantjo stated,

"In gratitude for this excellent training, and knowing that ALTo has been working hard to protect these forests, we have made a recommendation to the Provincial Dept. of Forestry that they transfer an additional area of nearby forest into protected status. ALTo simply needs to identify and propose the additional area desired and we will support its declaration as a new protected area." Needless to say, the ALTo team was thrilled at this unexpected boon, and has identified a new stream, waterfall, and riparian forest area which we hope will receive official protection in the months ahead. Stay tuned!



Kevin Schafer

ALTo hopes to protect this section of stream in the newest addition to the Preserve area.



Forestland whose purchase was recently completed as part of ALTo's Tompotika Forest Preserve. Photo: Kevin Schafer

Organic Farming (continued from page 1)

And what were the results? Here's a sample of the findings. A lot of folks who didn't expect to like growing vegetables turned out to like it a lot, and a lot of high school students discovered they loved it. They plan to make a permanent organic plot at their school and keep farming it. A few folks found out the hard way that you have to keep cows out of your garden if you want to eat the vegetables yourself. At least 12 folks have permanently incorporated composting and other organic techniques into their farms. One young farmer wants to start a new business growing strictly organic vegetables for sale. One group of folks complained that their liquid compost smelled bad when they were making it, but when they used it, it was so helpful that they decided they didn't mind (much!). But the most dramatic findings of the four-month training event were these: compost--especially compost made with animal manure--can dramatically increase the health and yield of food plants (see photos below)--and it costs nothing! Furthermore, there was universal agreement that the organically grown vegetables *taste better*--they're crisper and more flavorful-- than those that folks were used to eating.



Miftah Zam Achid

Sampaka ladies harvest their organics.



The effect of compost. Peanut plants of the same age grown with: Left - no compost; Center - compost made with local materials but no manure; Right - compost plus animal manure. Photos: Noval Suling

Everybody was happy. And then there was more! Village head Suharto Mangantjo announced that, in thanks for this most beneficial training, he was recommending that additional protected acreage be added to AITo's Tompotika Forest Preserve project (see article p. 2). That's what we call win-win-win!

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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Tompotika Mural Painting Trip Rescheduled for 2012:

Join Us for Wildlife, Art, and Kids!

Want to do something to support conservation? Like kids? Like art? Join AITo in Tompotika in November, 2012, for a one-of-a-kind opportunity to work with local village kids to create two large mural paintings featuring maleos, sea turtles, leafy forests, sunny beaches, and all manner of colorful birds and beasts.

On this Art for Conservation eco-service trip (originally scheduled for 2011 but postponed for a variety of reasons to 2012) you'll be working with US professional mural artist Will Forrester to help kids execute two large murals co-designed with Tompotika villagers themselves. In your free time, you'll go hiking, snorkeling, and wildlife-watching. All the best of Tompotika! Trip is 15 days, Nov 5-19 (exact dates to be confirmed), and cost is \$2900 plus international airfare. \$100 discount if registered by June 1. Contact AITo (info@tompotika.org) for further details.



Jack Barbash

Tompotika kids in a previous Art for Conservation project



Tripods in the Mud

November 2011



Sandesh Kadur



Sandesh Kadur



Riza Marlon



Kevin Schafer



Sandesh Kadur



Kevin Schafer

Maleo



Riza Marlon

Brown cuckoo-dove

Appias nero butterflies



Sandesh Kadur



Sandesh Kadur



Sandesh Kadur

ALTO posters can be seen all over Tompotika



Sandesh Kadur

Tonkean Macaque

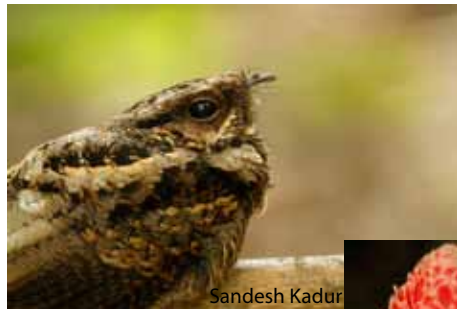


Sandesh Kadur



Sandesh Kadur

Miniopterus cave bats



Sandesh Kadur

Savannah nightjar



Sandesh Kadur

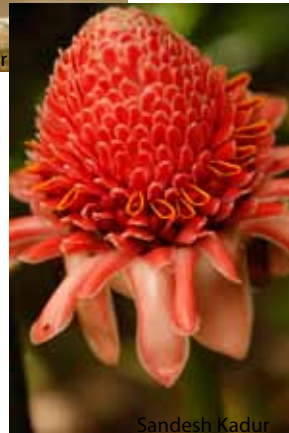


Sandesh Kadur



Kevin Schafer

"Slash and burn" agriculture



Wild ginger



Kevin Schafer

Luwuk, Tompotika's gateway city



Tarsier

Sandesh Kadur



Riza Marlon



Riza Marlon

Sulawesi Toad



Kevin Schafer



Sandesh Kadur



Sandesh Kadur
Loggers in eastern Tompotika-likely without permits



Oriental whipsnake

Riza Marlon



Sandesh Kadur

The TIM team, L to R: Sandesh Kadur, Agus Laya, Marcy Summers, Ipan Djano, Duncan Neville, Aspin Lameri, Riza Marlon, Kevin Schafer, Noval Suling, Panji Kresno.



Riza Marlon



Kevin Schafer

Newly-hatched maleo chick



Sandesh Kadur



Kevin Schafer

Pallas' Tube-Nosed Bat



Sandesh Kadur



Kevin Schafer



Kevin Schafer



Riza Marlon



Riza Marlon

Rapala ribbei plane butterfly

Forestland recently purchased by ALTO as part of the Tompotika Forest Preserve



Kevin Schafer



The Faces of ALTO: The ALTO Team Grows by Two



Education and Outreach Specialist
Sutrisno "Atu" Durant

As ALTO's conservation efforts have grown, two specific needs have emerged in recent times: a) there is far greater demand for our Conservation Awareness outreach programs than our existing staff have been able to fill; and b) we need help with managing and analyzing the large and growing body of maleo, sea turtle, and Awareness data that we collect. So, in the last few months, thanks to the generous support of the International Conservation Fund of Canada, ALTO took steps to answer both those needs with the hiring of full-time Conservation Education and Outreach Specialist Sutrisno "Atu" Durant in Tompotika, and part-time Data Analyst Steve Sears at our U.S. base on Vashon Island, Washington.

Since joining the ALTO team in November, Atu Durant has hit the ground running, making it possible for us to more than quadruple the number of Conservation Awareness outreach events we hold each month. Most of these are based in Tompotika's schools, where Atu's energy, positive outlook, and commitment to conservation are immediately evident and inspiring to students of all ages. Born and raised in Tompotika, Atu speaks all three of the area's local languages as well as Bahasa Indonesia, and brings a rare depth of experience and cultural sensitivity to the task of encouraging changes in attitudes and behavior among Tompotikans. Atu is married with three children of his own, and working with kids comes naturally to him. He first learned about ALTO two years ago, when he participated in an ALTO-sponsored beach clean-up--Atu says it has been his ambition to work for ALTO ever since. We're delighted to have him!

We're also delighted to welcome Steve Sears as ALTO's new part-time Data Analyst. As chair of the Mathematics department at Vashon High School, Steve is not only eminently qualified in all technical aspects of the job, but also brings a long-term interest and commitment to Indonesia, where he has journeyed nearly every summer since 2000 to teach teachers of math. With his infectious smile, patience, and enthusiasm, Steve also plans to use ALTO's maleo and sea turtle data as case studies in some of his high school classes, thus introducing a new generation to the challenges and opportunities of conservation in one of the world's special places.



Data Analyst Steve Sears



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