

ALTo Update June 2011: Ideas for building the future

Above all, it's cold in the United States! So say Anim Alyoihana and Agus Laya, two of ALTo's permanent Tompotikan staff, who last month completed their first trip outside Indonesia—a working visit to the west coast of the U.S. (It's true, this has been an unseasonably cold spring here on Vashon Island, Washington. But when you're from Tompotika, which is just a hair south of the equator, then just about anywhere else feels cold to you!)



Anim (L) and Agus (R) get a primer on sustainable logging from David Warren, Managing Director of the Vashon Forest Stewards, which runs a small-scale forest stewardship and timber production operation.

A great deal of what ALTo does is about “building capacity”—that is, helping local Tompotikans acquire the knowledge, skills, and experience to initiate and run conservation programs on their own. To that end, we've brought many an Indonesian expert to Tompotika to share expertise in such fields as birdwatching, use of GPS technology, butterfly identification, etc. But it's also about firing peoples' imaginations—people from Tompotika and *everywhere* in the ALTo family—with new ideas, examples, and exchanges with others in the world who are trying, like them, to find new ways to live on our small, changing planet.

So, in their three-week visit to the U.S., Agus and Anim had a full schedule. They attended the 31st annual International Sea Turtle Symposium in San Diego. They hiked in the Olympic Mountains. They visited three zoos, two aquaria, an organic farm, a wildlife rescue center, a community arts festival, and more. They counted sea stars on beaches and tried out recycling facilities. At Pt. Defiance Zoo and Aquarium (PDZA), which is a partner in ALTo's conservation efforts, Anim and Agus spent time shadowing and learning from PDZA's expert education and outreach staff, gaining tips they can use in our Conservation Awareness Campaigns in Tompotika. **They were also treated with some specially-tailored animal first aid training from PDZA's veterinary staff, so that, for example, they can now make a quick health assessment of a captive sea turtle before releasing it back into the ocean.** They ate pizza (yuck!) and ice cream (yum!).



Agus is a keen bicyclist, and enjoyed cycling around Vashon Island. Although bikes are hard to come by in the area, Agus hopes to help start a cycling club in Tompotika.



Anim experiences one of Nature's great wonders—snow—for the first time, at Mount Rainier.

In three weeks, Agus and Anim had a whirlwind introduction to a wide variety of people, places, and ways of living that can help inform their imaginations as they, and our other Indonesian staff and partners, share in creating our conservation programs and shaping new lifestyles in Tompotika. They were struck, for example, that **in the U.S., school buses come around to take children back and forth to school—for free!—there's not much trash on the ground, people read books on trains and while waiting, and folks with disabilities may have jobs in the supermarket, and are given priority on the bus.** They'll take all this back with them to Tompotika, visitors from the U.S. and elsewhere will continue to make occasional

trips to Tompotika and bring those impressions home, in future years other AlTo staff will come to the U.S., and so on. And all those experiences and exchanges will help us forge new programs, new attitudes, new ways of living that we can all take home with us, and make a difference. We're all searching for more sustainable, more conscious, more life-affirming ways of living on this earth that we share—together, we'll continue to explore the possibilities.

Thanks for helping to make it all possible!

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