



# Alliance for Tompotika Conservation Aliansi Konservasi Tompotika

NEWSLETTER

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## What we need most:

### Tower village requests ALTO's help to get trash off the beach

It's a problem all over Indonesia, and much of the world. Lacking proper facilities and procedures for safe disposal of garbage, villagers simply drop it where they are—or, collect it and dump it deliberately on the beach. In any case, household trash—much of it plastic—fouls waterways, mars streets and public areas, and eventually makes its way to the ocean, causing harm and death to countless life forms.

But one of ALTO's partner villages, Tower, determined to do something about it. As a gesture of thanks to villagers for their partnership in conservation



**Tower's spiffy new Trashmobile.** After delivery of the new vehicle, one village leader said, "Thanks ALTO, this is going to be very beneficial. But just one thing: couldn't you add ALTO's logo on the vehicle?" Cute, eh?

Could ALTO help obtain one? Such a request—one that, in itself, helps advance our conservation mission in addition to meeting villager needs—is a pleasure to fulfill!

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efforts, ALTO provides community benefits, asking communities what they need, and helping where we can. What Tower villagers identified as one of their keenest needs was a converted motorbike for collecting trash.

## Festival Returns!

### A conservation celebration for all ages

With a collective sigh of relief and grin of delight, the crew of ALTO's sixth Tompotika International Maleo and Sea Turtle Festival took to the field and stage again this February. Thrilled that Covid's waning allows us to once again sponsor this large-scale community celebration, this year the Festival team dreamed up an especially powerful day of nature-centered fun and drama in six different Tompotika villages plus the gateway city, Luwuk.



Galen Priest

The first week of Festival is all for preparation: 13 Tompotika high school students gathered at ALTO's partner village, Tanah Merah, to cre-

**An unforgettable experience.** In each village, hundreds of kids spend the day celebrating conservation; attendees of past Festivals report that the experience has changed their perceptions of nature and wildlife forever.

ate an original drama. This year, our theme was the importance of saving forests. Drama coaches Nick Fury, Ross Brown, and Billy Lolowang drew inspiration from Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. The new play they created featured a greedy businessman, a 12-foot puppet dream-ghost, and a comedic supporting cast that ultimately helped convert the businessman, changing his mindset away from profits only, and toward nature and community. Producing the show, *Antara Keserakahan, Hantu, dan Hutan* (About



Galen Priest

**Forests are the key.** In the play, the young "Scrooge" character cuts trees for quick cash; later he comes to see his earlier actions as short-sighted and misguided.

*Greed, Ghosts, and Forests*) demanded hard work and openness to new things—many of the high school Company members were brand new to acting. But by the end of rehearsal week, the students couldn't wait to perform.

Then Festival went on the road. At each location, Festival began in the afternoon, with

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## Trashmobile (continued from p.1)

Thus, a few weeks ago, Tower's new special-order Trashmobile was delivered. With it, Tower is establishing a new village service, providing bins throughout the village, making twice-weekly rounds to pick up their contents, and transporting the trash to a newly-established safe location for disposal. Members of the village leadership are delighted. "Thanks AITo! Can't wait to be able to clean up the trash!" said one, while, "AITo is galant indeed! Thanks so much for this help!" said another. Tower's streets, rivers, beaches, and the ocean beyond will all be cleaner going forward. That's a win for *all*. ~



Tower village leaders, with AITo Field Manager Pandji (far right) are thrilled with their new Trashmobile.

The Alliance for Tompotika Conservation/ Aliansi Konservasi Tompotika ("AL-TO") is committed to helping all of nature, including people, thrive. Our work is centered in Sulawesi, Indonesia — one of Earth's most unique biological treasure-houses. At the invitation of local communities, AITo forges partnerships to protect and restore imperiled species, tropical rainforests, and other natural ecosystems while supporting the dignity and self-sufficiency of local communities in a changing world.

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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## The Panganian Preserve Expands: AITo purchases 16 ha of new critical forest habitat

A few years ago, the AITo team discovered something extraordinary. Thanks to our partners in Pangkaleasang village, we learned that small numbers of critically-endangered maleo birds were nesting along a remote stretch of shoreline in that village. We also learned that the land was privately owned, and the landowners were open to selling it for conservation. Thus, since 2019 AITo has acquired,



Adarsh Raju

*Maleos, sea turtles, and more!* AITo's Panganian Wildlife Preserve includes c. 800m (½mi) of shoreline, dotted with maleo nesting areas like the patch of clear sand seen here. Sea turtles nest on the sandy stretches of beach, and threatened monkeys, tarsiers, birds, and many other species are found in the forested parts of the new preserve.

piece by piece, over 13 ha (32 acres) of this beautiful shoreline, nursery to maleos and sea turtles.

Now last month, your donations and a grant from the Quick Response Fund for Nature have allowed AITo to purchase a further 16 ha (40 ac) to help safeguard the forested corridor that connects this natural shoreline to primary interior forest a few kms away. The new purchase brings the area now in AITo's permanent conservation ownership to nearly 30 ha (74 ac)—with more to come, we hope! At the same time, AITo-villager teams have ended poaching, and maleo numbers at the site have already jumped four-fold. As a new song by local residents conveys (see *Jackoustik* article p.3), its human neighbors love Panganian's wild nature, and its future is now looking much brighter. ~



Adarsh Raju

*Critical habitat.* Maleos use this forested ridge to travel between their non-breeding forest habitat (outside of photo, to right) and their nesting grounds near the shore (photo above). Now AITo has protected a key strategic patch of this forest to help ensure that the entire area will be kept intact for the maleos—and many other species—of tomorrow.



## Festival *(continued from p.1)*



Galen Priest

**New BFFs:** Sea turtle hatchlings and human kids. get maleos painted on their faces or for the best position for a running game. Matrons tossed bean bags for coveted t-shirt prizes. Absolutely everyone took selfies.

Each day's climax was the evening drama performance. Audiences numbered in the hundreds; in these rural villages, entertainment is rare, so everyone came. Audiences laughed at the comedy, gasped at the ghost, and hooted at the young lovers—but nearly everyone also seemed moved by the tragedy of losing a precious

games, information booths, music and art activities, and more—all on the conservation theme. "It was fun telling people about conservation," said Company member Kieran. The orange and green Festival colors flew everywhere, on banners, ribbons, and kids' creations. Old men stuck sea turtle stickers on their motorbikes. Kids jostled to



**Mamas in Hoops:** fun for all ages

forest. The drama's message hit home. AlTo does a lot of outreach activities, in schools, meeting rooms, government offices, etc. But for breadth of reach, depth of feeling, and pure enjoyment for those delivering and receiving the conservation message, it's hard to beat Festival: a positive message of love of nature at its very best. ~



**Drama that inspires both actors and audiences.** The Festival Company became first-rate conservation ambassadors.

### **Festival: changing young lives**

For Keishia, 16 (left), being a member of the Festival Company has opened new worlds. Like others of the 13 high school Company members, she remembers attending a previous AlTo Festival in her village; she was thrilled to be chosen to join the Company this year. Keishia says her favorite part of this year's Festival experience was learning surprising new things about maleos and sea turtles. That, and going to new places and making new friends. Fellow Company member Kieran, 17, agrees: "I loved learning acting. It was difficult, but it's getting easier... And everyone is best friends."



### **Jackoustik:**

#### **Music for Conservation**

Again this year, through AlTo's Jackoustik music contest, Tompotika rang to the sound of a brand-new suite of songs celebrating nature and wildlife. Held as part of Festival and in honor of musician, conservationist, and former AlTo Board member Dr. Jack Barbash, Jackoustik inspires new compositions on the conservation theme by Tompotika musicians. Winners receive musical instruments plus cash prizes.

The performers and their songs ranged widely. Three brothers belted out a rousing call about Tompotika: "Guard it!" An ensemble of four middle-aged ladies sang a paean to "my nature." And a husband-wife team composed a tribute to AlTo's new wildlife preserve, Panganian (see article p. 2): "... The special animals that are protected--let's take care of them!"



Galen Priest

Solo act Aisyah, this year's first place winner, sang it with feeling: "Friends, our Nature needs us... Don't hide." ~

## **GiveBig is on now!**

*Now through May 3, your donation to AlTo will be doubled (up to \$5000).*

Make your gift at the GiveBig website, [www.givebigwa.org](http://www.givebigwa.org) (search for "alto"); at AlTo's website, [www.tompotika.org](http://www.tompotika.org) ; or send a check. Thank you! Gifts will be matched up to \$5K.



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## The Faces of ALTO: Thusi Bonandito, ALTO's new Mining Outreach Manager



Courtesy photo

New Mining Outreach Manager Bernandus "Thusi" Bonandito has always enjoyed working with local people to help them get what they need. And now, perhaps more than ever, people need nature, while nature needs people. Thusi has a degree in law, and he and his wife Desi have two boys: Diego (13) and Ethan (7). In this newly-created post as Mining Outreach Manager, Thusi will be helping local communities to better understand the risks and their rights with respect to mining; he'll be encouraging government to enforce regulations to protect nature and communities; and he'll be building relationships with mining companies to encourage them to institute safer and less-destructive mining practices. With the "nickel rush" that's taking place in Sulawesi today, Thusi has his work cut out for him. Building awareness, he expects, will be the biggest challenge. "The mining companies and the communities, they only think of the profits." Even if they have heard a little about the risks, and the need for better practices, "They know, but they're not *aware*," he says.

Thusi comes to ALTO from a career in Indonesia's NGO world, including many years working for Habitat for Humanity and organizations doing disaster-relief work in Indonesia. He likes working in international teams: "I learn new things, and there is a different work culture. I like the discipline." Amongst NGOs, Thusi finds ALTO to be "small and effective... and the feeling of family is stronger here."

During interviews for the ALTO job, Thusi noted that after feeling somewhat worn down from working in disaster situations, he was looking forward to being healed by spending time in healthy nature through ALTO. He says he's already learning a lot about conservation from being with ALTO: "Before, I thought conservation was all about building projects and hatcheries and such. But now it turns out, you can just protect nature and leave it to heal and grow itself!" Thusi's message to his fellow Indonesians is urgent. "We need to better understand about the future of nature, and what nature needs. People say, 'I need this, I need that.' But nature is quiet, and can't ask for what it needs. We have to be active in protecting it." In the face of a challenge as serious as the one Tompotika faces from new mining pressures, Thusi asks support from people everywhere. The whole world must join together to address this threat, he says: "We need one voice to protect nature." ~