



Alliance for Tompotika Conservation Aliansi Konservasi Tompotika

NEWSLETTER

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Monjagai Tompotika Rangers: A new corps of community rangers to protect Tompotika's forests and wildlife

When it comes down to it—whether it's protecting endangered species, providing clean drinking water for communities, keeping nearshore coral reefs healthy, or slowing climate change for the planet—it's pretty much all about preserving forests. There's not much that's more important than keeping tropical rainforests healthy and standing. And now, ALTO's efforts to protect the "Heart of Tompotika Forest"—about 800 km² (300 mi²) of native tropical forest at the center of the Tompotika peninsula—are taking a great leap forward with the establishment of a new corps of community-based forest rangers that will watch over every corner of it.

What if we recruited the people who know Tompotika's forests best—those with both a strong *(continued on p. 2)*



Sandy Bawotong

A team in lock-step. Team-building games at the group's first meeting helped the new rangers learn to walk, talk, and act together.

The Preserve Grows: Land purchase expands protected area at Panganian



Stephanie Broekarts

A private paradise for wildlife. ALTO's Panganian Nature Conservation Area harbors safe nesting areas for sea turtles and for maleo birds, which nest in small open sandy spots spread along 800 m (1/2 mi) of beach. Coastal forest provides the essential matrix for these nesting sites. Now a new purchase makes the preserve larger and stronger.

Followers of ALTO's news know that the critically endangered maleo bird, mascot of Sulawesi, is actually recovering at three locations thanks to conservation partnerships between ALTO and local villagers at each site. This is great news! The newest of these sites, the Panganian Nature Conservation Area, was established in 2019, when ALTO purchased the first 13 ha (32 acres) from six local landowners, who, together with other residents of Pangkalaseang village, now work with ALTO to protect the maleos and sea turtles that have nested there for millennia. It's working: maleo numbers at Panganian have risen four-fold!

But in the last few years Tompotika's lands have been under increasing threat from mining and other industries fueled by booming global demand for electric vehicle batteries. Since establishing *(cont. on p. 3)*



Janina Kraemer

Critically Endangered. Maleos need vegetated corridors to travel back and forth between their non-breeding forest habitat and the nesting ground. A mine would have destroyed their passageway.

Community Rangers (continued from p. 1)



Sandhy Bawotong

Power Rangers. The new rangers hail from different villages spread across Tompotika, each familiar with a different area of the forest. But all are experienced woodsmen eager to work with others to put their skills to use for conservation.

that they're now legally protected. But experience has taught that many of these hunters hunt (and set snares) not because they must hunt to subsist, but because they simply love to be in the outdoors, and hunting is a vehicle that gets them there. As ex-hunter Yudil explains it, "I used to hunt everything: anoas, maleos, junglefowl, forest pigs, hornbills, everything! Hunting was my hobby. I loved being in the forest. But I stopped hunting in 2013, after I met AIto and found out that these wildlife are protected, and endangered with extinction." Now, Yudil (far right in above photo) is one of our most committed conservationists, and has already for several years partnered with AIto to patrol key parts of the forest. His skills are unmatched, his example is inspiring, and now he's part of a team of twelve: the hunters-turned-conservationists of Tompotika, joining together to guard the entire region.

In order to ensure wide regional representation, the new rangers were drawn from villages across the Tompotika peninsula. Between them, they're familiar with virtually the entire span of the Heart of Tompotika Forest where

humans tread. All know how to observe, move, and live in the forest. And all are excited about their new role as the "eyes of the forest": in teams of three, they will make regular patrols all over the area, using established procedures to report incidents of illegal logging, poaching, and any other problems they encounter.

The new rangers are also proud and excited about the broader worldwide community of nature defenders that they now join. Training and establishing the new corps will take time, but thanks to expert advice and support from Re:wild and a global network of highly-trained and dedicated rangers, Tompotika's new team has lots of help to get going and learn their trade.

The world's forests and wildlife need all the friends they can get. In Tompotika, among the Monjagai Rangers, nature now has some powerful new allies. ~

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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Sandhy Bawotong

Untangling the knots. When poaching, illegal logging, or other problems arise in Tompotika's forests, the new Monjagai Rangers will be there to sort it out—and have fun while doing so!

Forestland Purchase *(continued from p.1)*



Sandhy Bawotong

Maleo friendly. The new Panganian lands contain boulders and rocky streams, big trees and scrubby slopes—rarely traveled by humans but perfect for migrating maleos.

And in March '24, AlTo was tremendously fortunate to be able to add another significant chunk of essential habitat to the preserve. With support from the IUCN-Netherlands Land Acquisition Fund, AlTo has just purchased 27 ha (67 acres) of critically important forest lands that maleos must cross in order to reach the Panganian nesting grounds.

The purchase comes in the nick of time. The Indonesian government had, in fact, recently approved a permit for a 50-ha (122-acre) new mine to be constructed in exactly that area, which would have wiped out all forest and natural habitat, cutting off maleos' access to their nesting grounds. Local landowners had already been approached by the Chinese-owned mining company, offering top dollar for their lands. But the nine local landowners made a clear choice: for them, maleos make better neighbors than mines. Even sacrificing higher profits, all nine opted instead to sell their lands to AlTo to become part of the preserve. At the Panganian preserve, now 57 ha (140 ac) and still growing, we are all of us—people and nature—learning to be better neighbors. ~

the Panganian preserve, AlTo has continued to negotiate with local landowners to purchase key parts of the forested corridor that connects Panganian's protected nesting grounds with Tompotika's large interior forest.

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Community Benefits: Free Reading Glasses

Last year, when asked what benefits AlTo had brought to her village, one Tompotika woman immediately said, "Well, they've brought back the maleo!" Conservation is its own reward. Nevertheless, AlTo asks our partner villages what their needs are, and how we may be able to help.

In that vein, in February '24, thanks to low-cost, high-quality reading glasses obtained from the non-profit Restoring Vision, AlTo distributed 188 pairs of free reading glasses to all comers in Pangkalaseang village, where few would otherwise have access to them. A variety of strengths and styles were made available free of charge to all who wished, who ranged in age from 25 to 84 (average age 52). Most recipients (63%) were women. The glasses made an immediate, profound, and positive difference for many. "Hey, that's cool!" said Fadli (48), "Now I won't sign my name all wrong anymore!" Rohaya (68), beamed, noting the approach of the religious period of Ramadan: "I thought I would never be able to read the Qu'ran again. But now I can! Praise God! And thank you, AlTo!" ~



Pandy Isfandri

Blurry or clear? AlTo staff member Vivi helps a Pangkalaseang resident test what glasses will be the right strength for his eyes.



Pandy Isfandri

Trees for tomorrow. Taima villager Pino Bunsung, 11, plants a native *ketapang* tree, assisted by his father, Roma, and AlTo Director Marcy. Soon, bats will roost in this tree's fast-growing branches.

Restoration: Trees for Tangkaladi 's Bats

In 2013, AlTo secured a conservation lease on uninhabited Tangkaladi island, offshore of Taima village. With this lease, the hunting that had been decimating imperiled flying foxes that roost on the island ended, and the island's bats began to recover.

The burgeoning numbers of Tangkaladi's bats, however, has taken a toll on the island's trees, which in some cases have been "loved to death" by the growing numbers of bats hanging from their branches. So, recently the AlTo team and our villager partners planted 56 new trees that will stretch out their branches for the bats of tomorrow. The bats are clearly thriving at Tangkaladi: at the latest count, there were an estimated 30,000 flying foxes on the island—*triple* the pre-protection numbers of a decade ago! ~



Stephanie Broekarts

These Black Flying Foxes roost on Tangkaladi by day and fly to the mainland every night to forage in Tompotika's forests.



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The Faces of ALTo - Ardi Managkari: Farmer, Dammar Collector, Forest Protector



Pandy Isfandiri

Om Adi, as he is known, 51, has lived his whole life in Sampaka Village, at the feet of Mt. Tompotika, as did his parents before him. Adi and his wife raised five children, one of whom died; he supports his family in part by growing cash crops like corn, dry rice, and sesame seeds. But Adi's favorite income—and that which has made him one of Sampaka's most expert woodsmen—comes from the time he spends in the forests of Mt. Tompotika, collecting dammar, a resin used to produce paints and varnishes. Adi chuckles. "I've less energy now, and five grandchildren! But I still enjoy the forest," he says. So once a month or so, he goes dammar collecting.

To harvest dammar, Adi hikes for hours or days into the forests of Tompotika, visiting a handful of rare *Agathis dammara* trees. Like other dammar collectors, Adi knows each individual tree, including when it was last harvested. First, a cut is made across the tree's bark, where the sap flows out and hardens. Then, several weeks later, the hardened sap is chipped off and collected; on a good day, Adi might collect as much as 100 kg (220 lbs) of dammar, which he carries back to the village in a sack on his back. It is critical, however, to show restraint: if any individual tree is cut too broadly, or too often, it will weaken and die, and a great sentinel of the forest—many of them more than 100 years old, and an important source of food and shelter for many other forest creatures—is lost. When people are greedy or impatient, *everybody* loses.

But what Adi worries most about right now is mining for nickel, which threatens to destroy huge swaths of the forest below which he and his ancestors have lived for generations. "This mining must be refused. Now, the forest is intact, and we can still receive its benefits. There is a great danger of flooding if the forest is destroyed." In partnership with Adi's village, Sampaka, ALTo recently submitted an application to permanently protect Sampaka's forests through establishment of a *Hutan Desa*, or Village Forest. For Adi, Mt. Tompotika and its forests are an iconic and priceless part of his heritage. "It should be forbidden to destroy the forest. I would absolutely refuse a mine. But not only me—many people feel this way! ...We should be thinking twenty years ahead. What if there is an earthquake, and the forest is gone?" In Adi's view, it's simple: access to Mt. Tompotika should remain at human scale. People are welcome, but not "companies." Mining, logging, or anything that requires "heavy equipment"—that is, bulldozers, loaders, dump trucks, etc.—would bring large-scale destruction and simply does not belong. "This has an impact on everyone, not just me. We must defend the forest." ~