

The Ako Project

The Ako Project aims to produce children's storybooks on the lemurs of Madagascar, to involve and aid primary school teachers, and to provide teaching materials on Madagascar's forest habitats. The first Ako series books were written in the Malagasy language, and focused on education efforts within Madagascar. Today, the books and educational materials are available in English, with educational outreach in England, Canada, the USA and other countries.

The goal of the project is to enrich knowledge of and empathy for the extraordinary biodiversity of Madagascar—and to be fun for children to see and read.

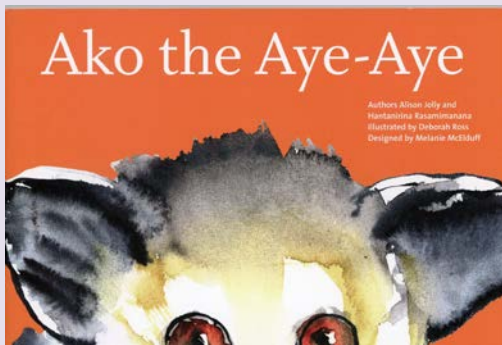
Ako means "Echo" in Malagasy. "Ako the Aye-Aye," a bilingual children's book in English and Malagasy, was published by the Lemur Conservation Foundation, Myakka, Florida, in 2005. The Ako series now has six books and educational posters featuring lemurs like sifaka, red ruffed lemurs, ring-tailed lemurs, mouse lemurs, indri, and the aye-aye and their unique habitats and behaviours.

The Ako Project links conservation and education professionals with Malagasy schoolteachers. In the USA, England, and Canada lesson plans and curriculum are available for each book with emphasis on skills like reading, maths, language, and social studies.

The late Dr. Alison Jolly, author of the Ako series books, began her studies of lemur behaviour in the wild in 1963. She taught at Cambridge, Sussex, and Princeton. Her eleven books include seven on Madagascar's lemurs, conservation, and history, as do many of her 100-odd articles and all the 16 television programs she has advised on. Dr. Jolly worked to promote environmental education in Madagascar through programs like the Ako Project.

Dr. Hantanirina Rasamimanana, Malagasy author and head of the Education Component of the Ako Project, is a lecturer at the École Normale Supérieure of the University of Madagascar. She teaches biology and pedagogy and is a founding member of GERP, the Malagasy Primatological Society. Dr. Rasamimanana is an Ex-Secretary for Africa and Madagascar of the International Primatological Society, Scientific Secretary of the IPS Congress in Madagascar, 1998. She has an impressive record of field research on ringtailed lemurs. Many school-teachers and graduate students of Madagascar are her ex-pupils.

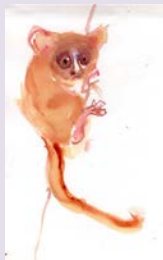
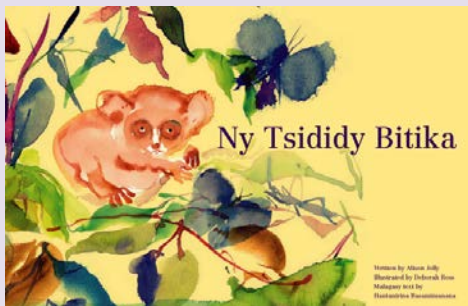
Deborah Ross, Ako series illustrator, is one of America’s notable wildlife artists. She has worked in East and West Africa and Madagascar. Painting essays published in Natural History Magazine, art published in The New Yorker, New York Times and Harper’s Magazine, graphics for zoos and natural history institutions across America including exhibits at the Bronx Zoo, Dallas Zoo and Long Beach Aquarium. Ms. Ross has led wildlife watercolor workshops since 1995 at the School of Visual Arts, Walt Disney Feature Animations, DreamWorks, Pixar, and Cal Arts, and for local Malagasy at Kirindy and Tampolo Reserves. In May 2006 the Lemur Conservation Foundation exhibited the results of Ross’ watercolor workshop with Malagasy schoolchildren around Tampolo Reserve as “A Village Paints its World.”



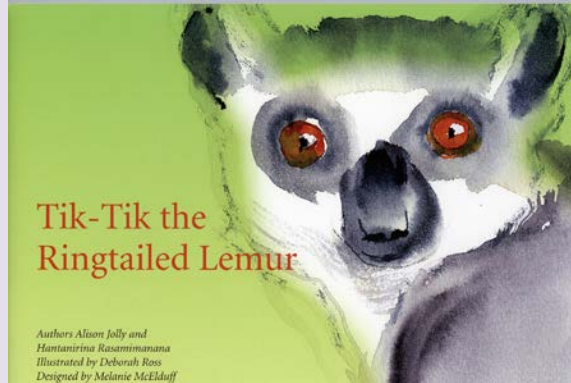
Ako the Aye-aye (his name means Echo) is a playful little aye-aye. His species is solitary so he can only play with his mother’s tail. He finds and loses a brown lemur playmate, and eventually is hanging by his feet when he forgets to be scared of humans. Visitors to the reserve

see him playing and stop being scared of the ill-luck supposed to be brought by aye-ayes. This book is set in the east coast littoral forest with coconut and travellers’ palms.

Bitika the Mouselemur is a baby lemur of the smallest species in Madagascar. (Bitika means Tiny.) She ventures out of the nest and meets lemurs of other sympatric species which make her feel smaller and smaller and smaller, and then she saves her mother’s life from a white-browed owl. She ends up feeling like the biggest lemur in all Madagascar! *Bitika* is set in the western baobab forest of the Menabé.



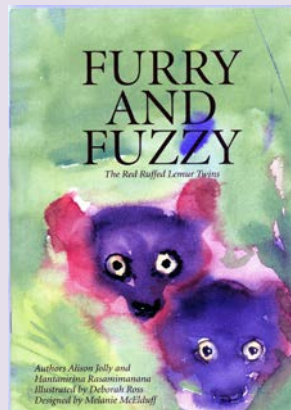
Tik-Tik the Ringtail aged 8-12. Tikitike Malagasy, or “Let’s lemur sounds. An ringtail is growing up in a



is for older children means “explorer” in go” in ringtailed adolescent male confronted by species where

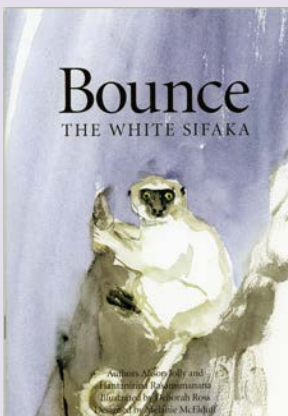
females are totally dominant, and young males emigrate to different troops. He leaves his mother and sister’s troop to travel alone through the forest. He spends months trailing another troop and trying to approach a beautiful female. In the end she comes into oestrus (suddenly smells absolutely wonderful). He challenges the dominant male and wins. He has grown up; the beautiful female thinks so too. In the story 11 different ringtail social calls are presented in context so that if you read the book aloud the children can click, meow, purr, howl, squeak, shout war-cries, and give alarm calls. *Tik-Tik* is set in the spiny forest of the south.

Furry and Fuzzy the Red Ruffed Lemur Twins: two infants are parked by their mother in a liana tangle high in a rainforest tree on the Masoala Peninsula. They are visited in turn by mother, father, and aunt. Rain becomes a cyclone. The branch breaks. They fall in the night by a forester’s hut that also loses much of its thatched roof.

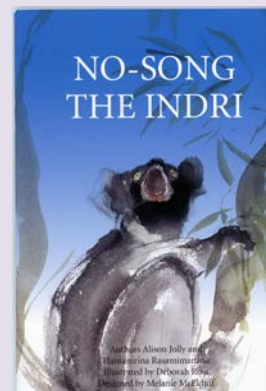


Twin children want to make pets of the baby lemurs, their mother wants to cook the lemurs, but the father says they must

be returned to their own family—“What if a family of lemurs found you and wanted to make pets of you?”



The final two books are about a sifaka living among 100-foot karst pinnacles who leaps to safety from a hungry fossa. The indri No-Song in learns to sing with her family in their hill forest of cliffs and waterfalls.





The posters are as detailed portrayals of each of the six different habitats. These will be real teaching tools with more and more to discover as children look closer. Each shows the differing landscapes with inset regional species of plants and animals.



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Dr. Alison Jolly inspired many people, children and adults alike, to care deeply about lemurs, Madagascar, its people, and its unique natural world. As the author of the six Ako Series books, Alison created a magical way for children all over the world to experience rare, endangered lemurs and Madagascar, the incredible country they call home. These beautifully written books help children and adults develop deeper respect, compassion, and appreciation for nature, the environment and the world around them. The exciting stories she created for the Ako Series open our imagination and hearts to embrace lemurs, nature, and one another as fully as Alison Jolly did. We are honoured to have worked with her on this delightful and engaging project. It is our great pleasure to share them with you as part of her work and legacy, from Dr. Jolly's learned, witty, and charming pen, to new generations of conservationists waiting to be inspired, and windows on amazing Madagascar to be opened in their imagination.

