



# Alliance for Tompotika Conservation Aliansi Konservasi Tompotika

NEWSLETTER

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## Youth Drama Festival: Endangered wildlife to be celebrated in Tompotika youth production

In February, 2014, Tompotika will be the scene of much merry-making, as a dozen local high schoolers create a traveling road show celebrating maleo birds, sea turtles, and other endangered wildlife. A Tompotika drama teacher will team up with two volunteer drama and circus arts experts from Australia to coach the kids in creating their own original production, complete with colorful puppets, stilt-walking, juggling, and music. This road show, newest project in ALTO's Art for Conservation series, will be performed free to all comers in seven Tompotika villages as well as the region's capital city, Luwuk.

The spirit will be light-hearted, but it's merriment with a message: the performance will be aimed at educating Tompotikans about the plight of maleos and sea turtles, their protected status, and what folks can do to save them. And, time and place are key: the show will help spread an anti-poaching message right at the outset of the 2014 sea turtle nesting season, exactly in the area of ALTO's most intensive sea turtle conservation efforts.



Mark Kinney

Tompotika schoolchildren painted sea turtles and other wildlife in a 2012 Art for Conservation project.

## Still out there:

### New maleo nesting sites discovered in Tompotika

When British naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace (see back page) explored Sulawesi in the 1850's, he was particularly taken with "those singular birds," the maleos (*Macrocephalon maleo*). Wallace spent many days observing maleos, which in his day were common, despite being found nowhere else in the world outside of Sulawesi. But even in those days, Wallace remarked on how choosy maleos are about their nesting grounds, noting "the great distances the birds come to deposit the eggs in a proper situation (often ten or fifteen miles)..." In



Kevin Schafer

short, maleos won't nest just anywhere, and a "proper situation" for maleos is of tremendous value. Alas, the marvelous maleo bird, so numerous and revered in Wallace's day, is now an endangered species, and all but a tiny fraction of its former nesting areas are now empty or destroyed. One of the best of those remaining, near Taima village on Sulawesi's Tompotika peninsula, has been the site of a collaborative conservation effort between ALTO and local villagers since 2006. What we've shown at Taima is great news for the maleo: where intact habitat remains, if you can protect the nesting ground from human poaching, maleo numbers can recover.

But the endangered maleo cannot be saved at one location alone; it will take a network of connected sites across Sulawesi to ensure healthy, abundant, and genetically diverse maleo populations in the long term.

Over the last few years, ALTO has been interviewing locals across the 2400 km<sup>2</sup> (960 mi<sup>2</sup>) Tompotika peninsula to identify any remaining locations where maleos may still be nesting. Maleos are well-known birds in Sulawesi, and rumors of their nesting areas abound. But in which of those places are the rumors true? With the vast majority of their historical nesting grounds now abandoned, where are maleos still hanging on? Using local knowledge, ALTO has compiled a list of possible sites, and has lately begun formal surveys.

In accordance with Tompotika weather patterns, the best time for field surveys for nesting maleos are the months of September through December. To date, we've completed surveys of twelve rumored maleo nesting areas, with a few more yet to be checked. And here's the terrific news: of those twelve sites surveyed, at least two or three seem still to harbor significant maleo nesting activity. What's more, ALTO is already well known to community leaders and members at most sites, and some have already expressed (*continued on p. 2*)

## New Maleo Sites (continued from p.1)

a keen interest in working with AITo to start new maleo conservation activities.

Much information still remains to be gathered. What is the landscape context of each site, and is its connection to native forest--essential as maleo habitat outside the breeding season--likely to remain intact? How much poaching is occurring at the site, and how willing are poachers to talk about change? What people and resources are available for new efforts? But as, together with community members in each area, AITo investigates these and other questions, there is a great sense of hope and excitement. Maleos are



Pandji Kresno

Small dots of black--two heads and a tail of a maleo pair--are barely visible near the vegetation edge at this new beachside site.

still out there in previously unknown locations. It is not too late. Building on our successes to date, the momentum is still growing for maleo conservation in Tompotika--and therefore, for the world.

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, creative, 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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Butterfly by AITo Operations Manager Anim Alyoihana Lanusi

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## Community-based conservation: Community division means a setback for maleos

It's probably not the first thing you think of, but one of the most important ingredients of successful community-based conservation has nothing to do with biology: it's about unity and decision-making within the human community. Sadly, the last few months have brought some bad news for maleos as some of their closest human neighbors experience deep division in their community.

Taima village, a community of 600-some people spread over c. 30 km<sup>2</sup> (18 mi<sup>2</sup>) of land area in the northeastern corner of the Tompotika peninsula, is the *desa*, or village district, in which the premier maleo nesting ground where AITo works is located. The central part of the *desa*, where a majority of residents live, is about 5 km (3 mi) from the nesting ground.

### Collaboration leads to conservation success

AITo works to conserve maleos at the Taima nesting ground under two separate agreements: one with the government wildlife management agency, BKSDA; the second with



Sutrisman Labuna, 17

## We're Coming to America

In America, there are special parking places reserved for the disabled, people separate their trash into different bins for recycling, a big yellow school bus picks up children and takes them to school, and people *do* something--like read books or knit socks--while they're sitting on buses or in waiting rooms. These are just a few things noted by AITo staff Anim Alyoihana Lanusi and Agustian Laya when they visited the United States in 2011.

As part of AITo's goal of building Tompotikan conservation leaders for tomorrow, in April, 2014, three more AITo staff members--Conservation Programs Coordinator Noval Suling, Survey Manager Pandji Kresno, and Facilities Manager Ipan Djano--will make a three-week visit to the U.S., including attending the International Sea Turtle Symposium in New Orleans.

At the conference, AITo will present information about our sea turtle program--which last year marked an 83% increase in the number of live hatchlings successfully reaching the ocean--and AITo staff will have the opportunity to meet and network with other conservationists from all over the world. Following that, they'll spend three weeks visiting parks, zoos, and other conservation projects in the Pacific Northwest.



Robin Moore

Along with buddies Noval and Pandji, Ipan is on his way to the U.S.A.

Taima village. Since the project's beginnings in 2006, most Taima villagers have expressed great satisfaction with the collaboration with AITo for its success in bringing back the maleo--numbers of adult maleos have increased 62% since the beginning. Also very popular is the AITo-provided Clean Water project, which was initiated after a formal survey identified fresh water as residents' overwhelming primary need, and which benefits everyone in all parts of the *desa*.

### Dissent and division in Taima

But sadly, in recent months a small group of Taima villagers has become dissatisfied with the AITo collaboration. These few feel that they should be paid cash in return for not poaching maleo eggs, and that only certain village residents--those whom they deem "entitled" to do so--should benefit from the conservation collaboration. As a result, recent discussions on renewal of the Taima-AITo collaboration contract have failed to reach agreement; with their personal demands this vocal minority have blocked the clear consensus that the community previously enjoyed.

Taima is divided. Factionalism, ethnic divisions, historical factors, and other political tensions have all added up to a lack of village unity. Like the U.S. Congress, the village community has been unable to reach decisions, not only on the renewed collaboration with AITo, but with respect to other local issues as well. A small number of poachers have even returned to the long-halted practice of digging up maleo eggs to sell for cash. And, though in the past this maleo population has been able to withstand high levels of poaching for years without disappearing, any poaching is a serious setback in our efforts to rebuild the region's maleo population.

### AITo's response: learn, persist, and take the long view

So what has AITo been doing in the face of these challenges? First, we will continue to work with Taima villagers to encourage clear, honest, and transparent discussion of our conservation efforts and their results. At times in the past we have relied too heavily on leaders to disseminate information, and not done enough to ensure that correct, understandable information got directly to villagers. And because not everyone in the village is literate, this means finding creative ways to communicate, such as by demonstrating numeric trends using piles of pebbles rather than numbers on paper.

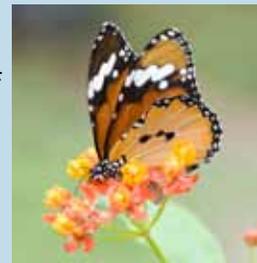
Secondly, we'll continue to work closely with government leaders and agencies to encourage enforcement of laws and strong civil society in Taima and beyond. As is evidenced by the area's recent declaration as an "Essential Ecosystem," AITo and the Taima maleo conservation program enjoy strong support from government officials at regional and national levels. Encouraging these officials to intervene for the sake of the rule of law and fair and transparent public discourse even in a small remote village like Taima will not only help this project, but all conservation and civil society efforts into the future.

And finally, we're focusing on the big picture: broad-based and long-term. Conservation doesn't occur in a snapshot; rather, it's marked by healthy natural systems that support the abundance and diversity of life over time. For maleos and other wildlife, our ultimate goal is a network of conservation sites across the unique and globally-important landscape that is Tompotika. Over the long haul, occasional setbacks at specific sites are inevitable, but we believe that with patience and persistence, the overall results will continue to "arc toward the good."

For the time being the AITo team remains engaged at the Taima nesting ground--our government-granted MoU for management there remains in force--and we remain hopeful that a renewed agreement with villagers will eventually be achieved. In addition, though Taima's is currently the Tompotika region's premiere maleo nesting ground, it is not the only one, and as the article on p.1 describes, we've recently identified several other locations where maleos are actively nesting, and, critically, community members and leaders have expressed interest in collaborating with AITo to initiate new conservation activities. Whatever happens at Taima, it's clear that in the Tompotika region at large, the maleo's fortunes are still pointing upward.

### Thank You to our 2013 donors!

All things considered, 2013 has been a banner year for conservation in Tompotika, thanks in large part to the AITo family of donors. In 2013, you've helped to ensure that more than a thousand maleo eggs could hatch safely and naturally into live chicks, you've saved thousands of sea turtle adults and eggs, you've created a new, safe island haven for bats, you've helped 10,000 ha (25,000 acres) of native forest to stay intact, you've educated thousands of children for conservation, and more. Thank you for making this happen! Deep gratitude to our 2013 donors: The International Conservation Fund of Canada, Save our Species (S.O.S.), Pt. Defiance Zoo and Aquarium, The Seattle Foundation, and 176 giving households just like yours in seven countries. *Thank You!*



Scott Newell



Rifa'i Mashudi, 17



Newly-hatched maleo chick, Taima

Sandesh Kadur



## The Faces of AlTo: Alfred Russel Wallace

Here in “The Faces of AlTo,” we feature a variety of souls, human and non-, who are important to the work we do in one way or another. And though he died more than a century ago, British naturalist and explorer Alfred Russel Wallace (1823-1913) is one such soul. Like his older contemporary, Charles Darwin, Wallace was a brilliant naturalist and a keen observer of the world around him, and as it happened, he developed the theory of evolution at the same time as Darwin--but completely independently. In publicizing his theory, however, Wallace graciously deferred to the more senior Darwin, such that, to this day, Darwin got the lion’s share of the fame and the credit for the revolutionary new paradigm that both men had originated.

Wallace developed his theory of evolution while traveling in Indonesia, or the “Malay Archipelago,” as his book of the same name, published in 1869, is titled. And he’s special to AlTo because he had a particular soft spot for Sulawesi, of which Tompoka is a part. In fact, Sulawesi is the heart of the region now often called Wallacea--the transition zone of odd biological minglement between Asia in the west and Australasia in the east. Wallace’s close observations of the birds, beetles, mammals, plants, and other biota allowed him to detail what he called the “anomalies and eccentricities in the natural history of Celebes.” The island is “wonderfully rich in peculiar forms, many of which are singular or beautiful... a considerable number of its animal forms are so remarkable, as to find no close allies in any other part of the world.” In Sulawesi, we can still see what inspired Wallace’s concept of biogeography, and in turn, evolution: “Celebes, therefore, presents us with a most striking example of the interest that attaches to the study of the geographical distribution of animals.”

But to Wallace, genius as he was, Sulawesi’s natural landscape was also a source of pure joy. “What delightful hours I passed wandering up and down the dry river-courses, full of water-holes and rocks and fallen trees, and overshadowed by magnificent vegetation! I soon got to know every hole and rock and stump, and came up to each with cautious step and bated breath to see what treasures it would produce.” Our goal, in AlTo, is to help all of us humans to learn to walk over this Earth with “cautious step and bated breath,” that the treasures it produces might endure forever.



Wallace in Singapore, 1862.