



Alliance for Tompotika Conservation Aliansi Konservasi Tompotika

NEWSLETTER

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Maleos Safe Again!

... and returning to nesting ground in record numbers

Kevin Schafer



With the signing of a renewed conservation agreement, all poaching has ceased, and maleos like these are returning to the Taima nesting ground in unprecedented numbers.

“Maleos have a right to live, too,” said Taima villager Sudiarto Yusup on March 1, 2014, explaining why he had chosen, along with eighteen other village leaders, to sign a new interim agreement with ALTo to collaborate in protecting the endangered maleo birds’ nearby nesting ground. And as if in relief and celebration of the new agreement, on March 31, a record *fifty-six* maleos were recorded at the nesting ground at one time--the highest numbers seen since data recording began in 2006, and likely more maleos than have been seen in decades.

The previous few months had been hard ones for the maleos. As reported in ALTo’s October 2013 newsletter (available at www.tompotika.org), ALTo’s collaboration contract with Taima village had expired in September, and disagreement and strife within the village had blocked agreement on a new contract. The village was in disunity, and worse, a small handful of villagers began poaching maleo eggs. For nearly five

months, poaching continued as ALTo worked to persuade authorities to intervene, but disappointingly little action was taken. Clearly the best recourse to protect the imperiled maleos was to resolve the conflict in Taima village and achieve a new agreement. Yet, although most villagers were quietly supportive of maleo conservation, a few politically powerful poachers were promising to derail any agreement, and village leaders were hesitant to stick their necks out on behalf of maleos.

Fortunately for maleos and for ALTo, there is great power in old-fashioned patience, persistence, and careful listening. ALTo staff set to work to sit down, one by one and in small groups, with village leaders of every stripe, and with each one of those expressing reservations about a new agreement. Villagers felt that a public meeting would likely grow too contentious, so, working closely with village representatives who were supportive of a new agreement, small (*continued on p. 2*)

Youth Drama Festival:

Tompotika youth take maleo and sea turtle show on the road

Public awareness about the plight of endangered wildlife in Tompotika has just taken a huge leap forward, and thousands of people have had a wonderful time in the process.

It began in February, 2014, when a dozen Tompotika high school students--all chosen by their teachers for their acting talents--gathered in Tompotika’s mountain village of Tanah Merah. Joining them there were

Nick Fury and Ross Brown, two volunteer experts in drama and circus arts from Australia. The group had their work cut out for them: in one week’s time, they had

to create, cast, rehearse, make sets and props for, and get ready to perform an original drama about endangered maleos and sea turtles. The following week, they were to take it on the (*continued on p. 3*)



Above and left: Tompotika youth performed in nine villages, to the delight of audiences numbering in the hundreds in each location.

Oliver Hensel-Brown



Oliver Hensel-Brown

Maleo Agreement Renewed (cont. from p.1)

teams of AITo staff and village advocates went door-to-door to gather input and hammer out the details of a new agreement.

The hours of leg-work paid off, a new agreement was drafted, and in the hours that followed, Taima maleo supporters circulated the new agreement by foot and motor-bike to the farthest reaches of the village in pouring rain in order to collect the eighteen different village leaders' signatures required for ratification. Yet as painstaking as the negotiation and signature process had been, the result seemed far more robust because of it.



Oliver Hensel-Brown
Taima Head of Education Haswin Hanah supported the new agreement because he feels conservation is important for future generations.

All poaching has ceased, and this interim agreement is expected to be followed by a long-term contract in October. And in the months since, maleos have not only returned, but are now nesting in numbers stronger than ever. And that's the best news of all!

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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News Briefs

What's That on the Scan?

A primary market for maleo eggs is the souvenir market: travelers who want to bring a coveted gift to a friend or relative illegally purchase maleo eggs. In Tompotika, such eggs leaving the region often pass through the area's one airport in the city of Luwuk. For a few years now, AITo's been doing outreach work to discourage this illegal practice, and to encourage officials to seize maleo eggs being smuggled through the Luwuk airport. And it's now paying off: on February 25, 2014, Luwuk newspapers reported the confiscation of 4 maleo eggs by airport security personnel.

Gates Not Open Wide

For an Indonesian citizen wishing to visit the United States, it's not easy to get a visa. One has to answer pages of complicated online application questions, then travel to Java (which may cost hundreds of dollars) for an in-person interview, and wait for the visa to be issued. Sadly, though their visas have now been issued, due to delays in the process the planned visit of AITo staff members Noval, Pandji, and Ipan to the U.S. this spring has had to be postponed until next year.



Oliver Hensel-Brown
One workshop group's slogan for maleos and sea turtles: "Let them live free in wild nature"

The Long Arm of the Law Gets Longer

AITo's Law Enforcement Outreach program has proven so popular among officials in Tompotika that on request of the district head, the program was recently expanded into the Balantak Selatan district. AITo's previous work with officials from other districts has produced a small cadre of experienced and committed local "experts." Now, AITo is facilitating these experts in taking a lead role in mentoring their peers on the why's and how's of wildlife law enforcement. It's working: in Teku village, sea turtle survivorship has more than quadrupled since the Law Enforcement program began in 2012.

New Face at AITo-US Office

The AITo-U.S. office is delighted to welcome Sheila Eckman, who will be providing a few hours a week of administrative and other assistance to the AITo endeavor. Sheila has many years of conservation experience, including for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Please, Don't Like Us on Facebook.

AITo doesn't have a Facebook account. We'd rather spend our time doing conservation work. And we'd rather you spent that time *not* looking at a screen.

Youth Drama Road Show (continued from p. 1)



Nick Fury (in blue) and Ross Brown (pointing) have worked in community theater projects for decades. The students learned role playing, improvisation, comedy skills, juggling and walking on stilts, and much more, besides creating the show. All photos, this page: Oliver Hensel-Brown

By the time of the first village performance, the students were ready, if a bit nervous. Once they got started, however, "the kids really came into their own as they went on the road," Nick said. Full of color and lots of humor, the show traces an arc from an early time when wildlife were plentiful and



True to life, each female maleo in the show laid an enormous, precious "egg." Audiences cheered when, after being protected instead of consumed, the egg produced: yes--an adorable chick!

the success of AIto's sea turtle protection efforts are any indicator, then the show has clearly had an impact--egg poaching is way down in the months since!

For the kids who took part, the Drama Festival was a fantastic--and eye-opening--experience, and one they want others to pay heed to. As they wrote in a group letter, "It is our hope that the people, officials, and government will become aware of the importance of our natural heritage, especially here in Sulawesi!"

road for performances in nine different Tompotika villages.

The first week gave the group a chance to "bond"--with each other and with the Tanah Merah village community. After rehearsing all day, the students spent evenings creating sets and props, and members of the community joined in to help--painting, building a mobile backdrop, and sewing costumes. At one point, Ross noted, he was worried: they had planned to build sturdy tails for the maleo costumes out of heavy wire, but suitable wire could not be found in this remote area. "What sort of maleo tails do you need?" asked village leaders, and within a few hours, a local man who makes baskets was building strong, elegant maleo-tail frames out of bamboo.

By the time of the first village performance, the students were ready, if a bit nervous. Once they got started, however, "the kids really came into their own as they went on the road," Nick said. Full of color and lots of humor, the show traces an arc from an early time when wildlife were plentiful and healthy, to when populations became endangered due to human excess and greed, to the present, when a pair of young heroes are inspired to protect maleos and sea turtles.

Audiences loved it. Entertainment of any kind is a special treat in rural Tompotika, and the free show was a big event in each village where it was performed; nearly everyone came out to watch, which meant that the kids played to crowds of up to 700 people. For many in the audience, it was the first time they'd ever given

much thought to endangered wildlife, and if



The young hero (right) confronts the wicked boss man (center) and his bumbling henchmen, explaining that poaching is illegal and they must cease.

much thought to endangered wildlife, and if



The 12 students were selected from all over the Tompotika region. Performing for strangers and for their neighbors was "great and sometimes embarrassing--but now I've really got courage," one said.

Indonesian government: Conserving maleo and sea turtle habitat is *Essential!*

It's official: Tompotika's maleo and sea turtle nesting area near Taima village has been finally and officially declared an *Ekosistem Esensial*, or Essential Ecosystem, at all levels of the Indonesian government. Earlier, the Taima area was identified by the national government as one of only seven sites nationwide that is critical for conservation, but is outside the formal protected area system. With this final step, that status has now been officially recognized and endorsed by the regional *Kabupaten*, or Regency-level government, at which level most land-use decisions are made. AIto has been named as a key member of the area's new advisory committee. This official recognition of Taima's importance as a conservation area strengthens our conservation work in Taima in two important ways. First, it will boost our efforts to expand the area of protected habitat around the maleo nesting ground to include more of the maleos' migration corridor. And second, it endorses one of AIto's cherished goals: that of achieving permanent protection for this spectacular natural area--a beautiful and irreplaceable haven for some of the world's most unique and imperiled species.



The Faces of AlTo: Sandra Noel, Volunteer Extraordinaire



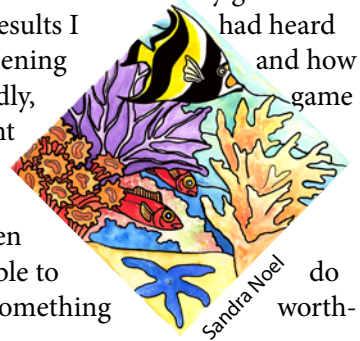
Marcy Summers

Sandra Noel field sketching in Tompotika, 2009.

What do Lilac-cheeked Kingfishers, Moorish Idols, and Mountain Anoes have in common? They all live in Sulawesi, and they've all been rendered, exquisitely, by the hand of Sandra Noel. Sandra, a graphic designer and illustrator specializing in wildlife and the environment, is one of AlTo's most dedicated and cherished volunteers, offering her illustrator's hand and designer's eye--for free to AlTo--for everything from outreach stickers to trailside signs to invitation cards. If an AlTo item is a thing of beauty, it is often thanks to Sandra's touch.

Originally from Virginia, Sandra Noel has spent most of her adult life in the Pacific Northwest of the U.S.A., where she lives with her husband Bill Walker, a marine mammal biologist. In recent years, she's also made three trips to Tompotika, where each time she has played a key role in various AlTo Art for Conservation projects. With the same kind of talent, enthusiasm, and stamina with which she runs marathons, Sandra has dedicated her artistic skills to AlTo efforts, showing a level of willingness and commitment far beyond that of most volunteers. Why does she give so much time and energy to AlTo? "It's love. I love it. I can't put it any other way," she says. Sandra says that she would have continued to volunteer for AlTo even if she hadn't eventually gone to Indonesia. "I would have done it anyway, because of the results I had heard about. But going there I got to see what was actually happening and how

amazing it was." In Tompotika, Sandra quickly became a favorite among locals for her friendly, attitude and her love of strong coffee. She made a special connection with the kids she taught to draw and paint from nature. "The kids were very focused, interested, respectful. Their attention and desire to learn was so *there*." Sandra would like to go again to Tompotika sometime, but gives enormously of her time and talents without thought of return. "AlTo has given me this gift. To feel like you're actually making a difference. Things are such a mess. To be able to do something I have the ability to do, and to know that I can contribute in some small way to something worthwhile. It's a sense of doing something worthwhile. This is that thing."



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