



# Alliance for Tompotika Conservation Aliansi Konservasi Tompotika

NEWSLETTER

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## Healing Nature, helping people:

### AlTo helps aid victims of the Palu earthquake and tsunami

On September 28, 2018, the area around Palu, Sulawesi--about 400 km (250 mi) from Tompotika--was hit by a 7.4 magnitude earthquake and resulting tsunami. Over 4,000 people were killed and more than 200,000 lost their homes,



Sandhy Bawotong

**Help with life's essentials.** AlTo aid was used to purchase the things refugees identified as their greatest needs, including food, tarpaulins, and clothing. *Jilbabs* or headscarves were needed for dozens of young girls; because the money came from AlTo, they chose to purchase them in *green!*

including some whose entire neighborhoods were literally "swallowed up" when the soil under them liquefied. Since the disaster, some government and international aid has been provided to residents of the area, but the needs have far overwhelmed available aid.

Palu resident and AlTo colleague *Pak Nurlin Djuni*, an expert birder, conservationist, and birding tour leader ([www.maliabirding.com](http://www.maliabirding.com)), did not wait for the government. Though he and his family, too, suffered damage in the earthquake, they fared better than *(continued on p. 2)*

## Two for two: Kaumosongi confirmed as AlTo's second maleo recovery site

If you have read AlTo's news in recent months, perhaps you, too, have been buoyed by this fact: the endangered maleo bird--long in steep decline across its entire range--is recovering at AlTo's main protected nesting ground near Taima village in Tompotika. Since AlTo and local villagers began working together at that site in 2006, the number of maleos coming to nest has quadrupled. In fact, in daily counts during November '18 and January '19, AlTo staff repeatedly counted over 100 birds at once--a phenomenon that hasn't been seen anywhere in decades.

But AlTo also has a second maleo site, Kaumosongi, about 18 km (11 mi) from Taima--a remote beach site where AlTo began conservation work in late 2014 with partners from Teku and Tower villages. And now, the numbers are in: at Kaumosongi, too, the decline of the endangered maleo has been halted and reversed--the number of maleos coming to nest has now *more than doubled* in the four years since conservation work began there.

The AlTo approach is simple. The two greatest threats to maleos across their range are poaching of their large eggs (usually sold as a luxury item, like caviar), and loss of their forest habitat. So, AlTo begins by working directly with local people and governments at the village level to halt the poaching of maleo eggs and to protect the nesting grounds and their nearby forests from logging or other disturbances. AlTo had already been partnering with Teku and Tower villages on sea turtle conservation since 2008; so when the team was considering starting a second maleo conservation site in 2014, the choice of these villages as collaborators was a glad and easy one. Maleos have been fully protected under Indonesian laws *(continued on p. 3)*



Vivi Tan Oga

**Stop the poaching, protect the habitat, and let Nature do the rest.** Maleo birds must walk through at least 5 km (3 mi) of secondary and semi-natural vegetation to reach it, but for over four years now, Kaumosongi beach--below and to the left--has afforded them a safe haven where their eggs can hatch undisturbed. AlTo Program Coordinator *Agustian Laya* makes the trek over a steep headland to reach this remote site.

**Helping with disaster relief (continued from p.1)**

many, and mobilized immediately to help others. Aided by Rp 5,000,000 (about USD \$400) in financial support from AITo staff and Board members, Nurlin assembled a team and identified the ways that they could help. Thus, in several areas hardest hit by the disasters, Nurlin and his team, with his large van, distributed rice, eggs, drinking water, and other food items; clothing; basic medicines; tarps and other equipment; and even little backpacks for the children.

But Nurlin also realized that the children of the newly-established refugee camps were particularly traumatized by the disaster, and in need of constructive things to do now that schools were suddenly unavailable. What could be better than Nature to help heal kids' souls and enliven their minds? Nurlin put together what he calls his "Trauma Healing" program and immediately welcomed kids of all ages to "Emergency School." He showed pictures and gave them talks on Sulawesi native wildlife. An accomplished self-taught English speaker himself, he held "English Camp" sessions and taught the kids. And, be-



The team set up a public kitchen, serving food and also providing staples and equipment so folks could do their own cooking.

lieving that coloring is a great multi-age vehicle for expression and learning to draw, he established a regular program for kids with animal coloring sheets. Disaster recovery takes a long time, and Nurlin's programs are ongoing. But the folks touched by Nurlin's aid are receiving practical assistance, human care, and a closer relationship with Nature--the best possible prescription for healing. ~



Nurlin Djuni (center, in tan hat) and his team of neighbors helping neighbors. The sign expresses thanks to AITo people for their contributions.



AITo Director Marcy Summers lends a hand, providing maleo and sea turtle coloring sheets, (coolest creatures ever!) plus Crayola crayons.

Nurlin Djuni

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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Wista Lamato, 17

This newsletter is printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper. Please let us know if you would prefer to receive it by e-mail.

**Annual Fund 2018: Terima Kasih !**

Thanks to the generous support of over 161 donor households, AITo raised over \$50,785 in our 2018 annual fund drive. Your gift provides the critical operating funding that is essential to AITo's success.

AITo's success has always been to be nimble, creative, and efficient, concentrating our resources not on *things*, but on *people* who are building a highly effective long-term conservation program. Your support has made it possible for AITo to assemble an outstanding local Indonesian conservation team, who together are leading the way on conserving the natural and cultural heritage of one of the most biologically significant places in the world. Most important of all, your generosity helps build a strong sense of community and ethic of care amongst people committed to the conservation of wild species and places, and the self-sufficiency of local people.

If you have not yet made a gift, please use the enclosed envelope (or go online) to send in your gift today. If you have already contributed, **terima kasih** -- thank you!



Sandesh Kadur

## Kaumosongi Maleo Recovery (continued from p.1)

for decades, and in the village leaders of Teku and Toweer, who had already worked closely with ALTo for years, there was strong support for the enforcement of those laws.

Since starting the project, however, it is the practicalities of enforcement that have been more of a challenge. The Kaumosongi site is remote, and to reach the nesting ground each day, the guard team of one ALTo staff and one villager (often a former poacher) often have to brave strong waves or scale a steep and difficult headland. They either have to get there very early, before any poachers (who usually arrive by boat), or they have to camp out and stay at the site, sometimes for days at a time. ALTo has constructed a small hut for the guards' shelter, but there is no source of fresh water nearby, and the weather can be challenging. In truth, at this quiet, remote site, the teams sometimes struggle with the primitive conditions, boredom, and isolation.

But persistence has paid off. Now four years into it, the guard teams have both become more accustomed to the task, and, as maleo numbers grow, the task itself is getting more exciting. Whereas when we started the project, there were frequently days with no birds at all, and the most ever seen was one maleo pair at a time, in December '18 guard teams started observing three maleo pairs at once. And overall, the numbers speak for themselves: maleo visits at Kaumosongi have *increased by 149%*--more than double--since our conservation efforts began.

The recoveries that ALTo has facilitated at both Kaumosongi and our original Taima site make it clear: in order for maleo populations to recover, no buildings, hatcheries, egg manipulation, predator control, or other human interventions are required. All that is really needed, these sites prove, is to maintain habitat integrity and cease poaching by humans--and Nature will take care of the rest. Humans have the power to choose not to poach, and in Kaumosongi and Taima, this is the choice that local people have opted for. For the maleo, and for the villagers themselves, that has made all the difference. ~



Kevin Schafer

**Chicks again!** After decades of poaching nearly wiped them out completely, baby maleo chicks are hatching again at Kaumosongi.

### **Not just another pretty endangered face: The Maleo as a conservation ambassador for all**



The maleo is the official mascot of Sulawesi parks, provinces, and parties of all kinds.

Let's be clear: in ALTo's opinion, *every* species matters, and *all* endangered species deserve special attention and conservation efforts. But some species are especially iconic, and well-suited to serve as conservation "flagships" or "ambassadors"--that is, efforts at raising awareness of these species are also helpful at raising awareness and concern for the plight of other endangered species, and of wild habitats and nature in general. Thus, for all ALTo's focus on maleo conservation, it's important to remember that it's not just about maleo birds themselves--as marvelous as they are. More than this, the maleo is the premier ambassador for all wildlife of Sulawesi, which according to numerous scientific assessments is, in itself, one of the world's highest-priority regions for conservation.

Sometimes described as "Sulawesi's Bald Eagle," the maleo is well-known to Sulawesi's human residents, if rarely seen. Once common throughout the island, the maleo has been all but extirpated outside of Tompotika and a few other locations. The main threats to maleo--poaching and habitat loss--are also the same threats faced by many other local endangered species.

The maleo's "significance" credentials are impressive: internationally, it is classified as *Endangered* by the IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature); maleo is #20 on the EDGE list of the world's most Evolutionarily Distinct and Globally Endangered birds. It is #14 on the government's list of Indonesia's highest-priority species for conservation; and the maleo is the official mascot for many provinces, regencies, and other Sulawesi public and private entities.

Perhaps most importantly, people *care* about the maleo. They marvel at its life story. They value their shared history with it and its role in their culture. And when reminded to think about it, they don't want to lose it--or the rest of their natural heritage. ALTo is recovering the maleo, but our aim is even larger: to foster a healthier relationship between humans and *all* the rest of nature. Chick by chick, the maleo is helping us get there. ~



**Part of our cultural identity.** Last month, on their own initiative, these women from ALTo's partner village of Sampaka created a costumed Maleo dance, which they performed at a regional exhibition. While others hawked products or promoted companies, these women chose to celebrate something that matters deeply to them.



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## The Faces of ALTO: Wiranto Abas, ALTO Conservation Officer



Sandhy Bawotong

When Wiranto was a kid in school, he remembers how ALTO staff often would come to his classroom to talk about wildlife and nature: maleo birds, sea turtles, forests, endangered species, and the like. Born and raised in Teku village, which has partnered with ALTO on field conservation projects since 2008, now Wiranto is 20 years old, a keen nature lover, and one of ALTO's newest Conservation Officers.

The son of a coconut farmer & fisherman father, and a homemaker mother, Wiranto is the eldest of three siblings. He remembers once seeing a maleo bird in the wild when he was very small, out with his father. The sight made a strong impression on him, but it wasn't until ALTO's outreach work in his school that he learned that the maleo is endangered, and only found in Sulawesi. It made him feel proud that he had maleos near his home, and that he had seen one.

As he grew older, Wiranto began helping with ALTO's beach patrols for sea turtles, then joined the team as staff in 2017. In his village, many young people do not finish high school, and there are not many options for work locally; everyone in the village, and especially his parents, are very proud that through ALTO's apprentice program he earned a place on ALTO's permanent staff. "I like everything about working for ALTO--there's nothing I don't like! It's really good that we can collaborate on working for conservation." he says. "Things I didn't know before, now I know." Nowadays, the vast majority of people in his village, he says, support conservation. "Before ALTO, people weren't really aware. But the intention of conservation is really good. We should support rare wildlife. Now most people support conservation. Only a very few don't like it, and those few that don't like it don't understand--they just don't yet realize, 'Oh yeah, we can eat chicken eggs instead of turtle'."

Wiranto is proof positive that ALTO's approach of starting with outreach to children pays off. Now he leads similar outreach efforts to the ones he grew up with, and has become an inspiring conservationist both in his own village and beyond. "People trust me. Mostly they wouldn't dare to poach [protected wildlife] anymore. If they do, they know I'll dare to report them! But really, they support me." Wiranto says his ambition is simply this: to continue and grow as a member of ALTO's staff. "If it weren't for ALTO, the maleo would probably already be gone. Now we must work together to guard the future." ~