



## Alliance for Tompotika Conservation Aliansi Konservasi Tompotika

May 2007 Newsletter

### Maleo Moratorium: a “win-win” for everybody

Well-known but imperiled, the endangered maleo bird (*Macrocephalon maleo*) has been called “Sulawesi’s Bald Eagle”. Found only on the island of Sulawesi, Indonesia, the iconic maleo is a central focus of ALTo’s conservation efforts in the Mount Tompotika area. In August 2006, ALTo joined with local villagers, community groups, and government officials to launch a complete moratorium on the harvest of maleo eggs at Tompotika’s critically-important nesting ground near the village of Taima. Now nine months later, **the moratorium has proven to be a roaring success for everyone involved.** Since August, over 1000 eggs have been protected, and **soon our team will record the 200<sup>th</sup> chick observed.** Through ALTo’s work, in just a few short months **the decline of the maleo at Taima has been reversed!** In fact, the actual number of chicks hatched is likely much higher: newly-hatched chicks emerge from the sand in the dark of night, and only remain at the nesting ground for a few minutes before flying off into the forest. The ALTo team is experimenting with methods for better detecting and recording chicks during this narrow window.

Meanwhile, both the local community and government have shown strong support for the moratorium. Delighted to see this protected species making a recovery, the **district government has recently signed an agreement giving ALTo’s team official management authority over the Taima nesting ground for five years,** and has also begun making modest but regular financial and in-kind contributions to the effort. Likewise, the **local village council has voluntarily extended the moratorium for another three years,** noting that **the people of Taima are now much better off than they were before.** Where previously on a given day one or two men earned less than a dollar illegally selling a maleo egg as a status symbol, now each of the 64 former egg-poachers has a regular, part-time job as a guard, village women earn money providing meals, and a new community fund is purchasing cement for the construction of a new mosque.



*A maleo pair shares the task of digging the large nest pit in which their single, enormous egg will be laid, one meter deep. Now fully protected, Taima maleo eggs hatch after about 80 days in the warm sand. After hatching, the chick will dig for 24-48 hours to reach the surface, whereupon it makes its way on its own to nearby rainforest habitat.*

Photo: © Riza Marlon

**Art Exchange to promote Conservation Awareness** The ALTo team is currently hard at work raising funds for our **next new program launch: a much-requested and eagerly-anticipated Conservation Awareness Campaign.** In this Campaign, ALTo’s Conservation Officers (“Nature Lover” college students from the Tompotika area – see Dec ’06 newsletter) will travel throughout Tompotika, conducting workshops and meetings in schools and villages. The workshops will educate adults and children on the need for, and ways to achieve, conservation of their lands, waters, and wildlife—something Tompotikans have been repeatedly requesting since ALTo began work there.

To help underscore the fact that Tompotika's natural wonders are worthy of celebrating and conserving, **dozens of decorated maleo birds are now being created** in the Puget Sound area. These decorated maleos will be paraded in Vashon Island's Strawberry Festival in July, raising awareness of Tompotika in the US, and then they will travel to Indonesia. At the same time, maleos are being decorated in Indonesia which will travel to the US. In August, this glorious flock of decorated maleos will be paraded in Tompotika to help launch AlTo's new Awareness Campaign there. Then, some of the decorated maleos will continue to travel with the Awareness Campaign, while others will take up permanent posts at key locations such as airports, village centers, etc., serving as both **emblems and witnesses of love and pride in Tompotika's natural heritage**. Not only that, but creating them is, well... fun! There is still time to participate. **If you would like to decorate a maleo, or sponsor one being decorated by a professional artist, contact AlTo for a model and complete your maleo by June 15, 2007.**

*US-made maleos preparing for their trip to Indonesia. Artists, l to r: Don Olson, Penny Grist, Gene Amondson*



*Pristine beach at Taima, Tompotika, where you can snorkel offshore, or sit quietly and watch maleos and sea turtles lay their eggs.*

**Come to Tompotika!** There are still a few remaining spaces in this summer's eco-service tour to Sulawesi, August 1-15, 2007. Do you like to travel, but also want to make a difference? In Tompotika, not only will you snorkel among the world's richest coral gardens, see endangered wildlife in its native habitat, and hike in tropical rainforests, but your presence will make a real difference in promoting conservation. **Watch family groups of tiny primate tarsiers, search for maleo chicks by moonlight, take canoes to an uninhabited island of giant flying foxes, catch frogs for a biodiversity survey, spend time with local villagers, and take part in a parade to help launch the new Conservation Awareness Campaign.** All-inclusive cost for the 15-day trip, including airfare from Seattle, is \$3900 per person. Contact AlTo for details.

**New AlTo logo by Gargoyle Design** The AlTo Board wishes to extend a huge "terima kasih" to Paul Wilkin of Gargoyle Design on Vashon Island, Washington, ([www.gargoyledesign.com](http://www.gargoyledesign.com)) who donated his professional services to design our new logo (see overleaf and below). Many thanks, Paul!

**Coming Soon: [www.tompotika.org](http://www.tompotika.org)** ~ Stay tuned!

To continue AlTo's work to protect endangered species and build an enduring conservation ethic in Tompotika, **your contributions are greatly needed and will be most gratefully received.** If you would prefer to receive future AlTo news by e-mail, please let us know at [tompotika@centurytel.net](mailto:tompotika@centurytel.net).



**Alliance for Tompotika Conservation (AlTo)**  
**21416 - 86<sup>th</sup> Ave SW, Vashon, WA 98070 USA**  
**206 -463-7720 ~ [tompotika@centurytel.net](mailto:tompotika@centurytel.net)**