



Alliance for Tompotika Conservation Aliansi Konservasi Tompotika

November 2007 Newsletter

Year 1: 1300 maleo eggs

Margaret Mead said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” On August 1, 2006, local villagers, government officials, and ALTO visitors from the U.S. joined together to declare a moratorium on the illegal but longstanding custom of harvesting the eggs of the iconic, endangered maleo bird (*Macrocephalon maleo*) at its communal nesting ground near the village of Taima, Sulawesi, Indonesia. Since then, former egg poachers have been “converted” to egg guards, a new cadre of local conservation professionals is being trained, community leaders and government officials have hailed the project as a great success, and people at three other sites in Sulawesi are exploring ways to duplicate the ALTO model at their maleo nesting grounds. Best of all, **after decades of decline, the maleos of Tompotika that gather to nest in Taima are now recovering.** By August 1, 2007—the one-year anniversary of ALTO’s activities in Taima—**1312 eggs had been laid and protected at the site**, with chicks hatching daily in their natural habitat. At the same time, several key patches of native forest habitat, starting with 40 hectares adjacent to the nesting ground, have been declared protected. And consider this: those 1300 eggs are adding new maleo souls to a total earthly maleo population which is estimated at as few as 5000 birds; starting with the maleo, the world is changing.



When the female maleo is ready to lay, a maleo pair travels to a communal nesting ground to lay one single egg, then returns to its rain-forest home. Chicks hatched from the 1312 eggs laid and protected in the past year at Taima now also have protected forest to grow up in.

Photo: © WCS/Connie Bransilver

Art birds: conservation from the heart

At ALTO, we’re learning this: art changes hearts. This year’s ALTO Art for Conservation project began last spring in the U.S. Twenty-five artists—both professionals and amateurs—took what began as a simple plywood cut-out in the shape of a maleo bird, and added paint, tiles, fabric, beads, shells—you name it—to create a celebration: a celebration of a remarkable bird and the international partnership of people who have joined together to conserve it. The resulting **25 maleos—each one different, each one gorgeous—were paraded on a float and displayed during Vashon Island, Washington’s Strawberry Festival**, where they were seen by about 40,000 people. From there, the maleos were hand-carried with August’s ALTO eco-service group to Tompotika, where the group assisted Tompotika schoolchildren in creating three more beautiful decorated maleos.

Then, on August 9, **a second parade was held, this one with about 300 villagers and schoolkids in Bualemo, one of the capital villages of Tompotika.** At the head of the parade, three girls carried a banner saying,



“Lestarikan Maleo ~ Save the Maleo”—the same banner that had been displayed at Strawberry Festival. Behind them, the **25 U.S.-made maleos, along with the three new Indonesian-made ones, were proudly carried along**—sometimes on shoulders!—by Tompotika kids. The AITo visitors from the U.S. played “When the Saints Go Marching In” and other tunes on the harmonica (newly taught by one of the group members), and when these tunes were finished, the Tompotika children took up the call with Indonesian songs, singing as all marched, bearing the maleos. As the parade neared its final destination, **the kids spontaneously raised the shout, over and over, “Hidup Maleo!” (“Long live the maleo!”).**

Tompotika high schoolers and AITo Director Marcy Summers in a light moment after the parade.



Also participating in the parade was the “Camat,” the government head of that district. Inspired by the decorated maleos from America and by the photos of Strawberry Festival in the album he’d received, the Camat circulated throughout the parade, showing the children the photo album and urging them to support the maleo conservation activities that AITo is sponsoring. “When I was little,” he said, “there were thousands of maleo birds behind my house. Now there are none. We must do everything we can to support these activities to conserve our maleo!” Later, Agus, one of AITo’s Conservation Officers, said of the event, **“Those children have never been able to be part of anything like this before. They will never forget this event, and ‘hidup maleo.’ They will remember this for the rest of their lives.”**

Have maleos, will travel

AITo Conservation Officers Anim and Agus talk with Tompotika schoolchildren about maleo conservation.



As AITo team members talk with folks around Tompotika about the area’s global importance and conservation value, villagers often remark that they had no idea that their place was so special, and request “sosialisasi,” or public education, about their natural heritage. Accordingly, **to help build a long-term constituency for conservation in Indonesia and to sustain the maleo and other conservation efforts we have begun, AITo has launched a new Conservation Awareness campaign** aimed at children and adults throughout the Tompotika area. AITo’s nine Conservation Officers, all college students from the local area, having received training in conservation science and in public speaking, will travel in teams of two, spreading the conservation message in schools and villages. Reinforcing the message, AITo’s Conservation Officers carry with them some of the decorated maleo birds, conservation ambassadors from the global AITo community. Future awareness

topics will focus on forest protection, coral reef conservation, waste management, population control, clean energy, and sustainable farming practices—all with the aim to change the world!

AITo’s work to protect endangered species and build an enduring conservation ethic in Tompotika and beyond is possible only because of your support. Thank you! ***If you would prefer to receive future AITo news by e-mail, please let us know at tompotika@centurytel.net.*** This newsletter is printed on reclaimed paper.



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