

THE SUSTAINABILITY OF EGRETS CONSERVATION TOURISM VILLAGE IN SLEMAN REGENCY

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Abstract: The development of the rural environment, one of which is in the egret conservation tourism village, which is located in Ketingan Hamlet, Tirtoadi Village, Mlati District, Sleman Regency continues to experience pressure. The threats to the habitat of the egret as a migratory animal that settles in this hamlet are caused by the internal and the external factors. In doing so, if there are no measures to control or prevent the pressure on its habitat, it will have an impact on increasingly pressing habitat and disruption of the egret colony which only breeds in Ketingan Hamlet during the rainy season. The purpose of this study is to explain what forms of pressure occur and threaten the sustainability of the egret habitat, and to find out the government's and local communities' roles in efforts to protect the egret habitat ecosystem. Through the use of observation and in-depth interviews method, this study was carried out by a phenomenological approach which tried to display the symptoms of the field. This study is able to explain several facts in the field which are related to the occurrences of pressure on ecosystems which disrupt the sustainability of the egret's habitat. These pressures include the rampant logging of trees in the hamlet, the invasion of housing in Ketingan complex and also the construction of buildings and residents' houses have made many vegetation as egrets' habitat had destroyed.

Keywords: *community participation, egret conservation, the government and local community role, phenomenological*

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Ketingan Hamlet which is located in Tirtoadi Village, Mlati District, Sleman Regency is an ecotourism hamlet. This hamlet has been the habitat of *Bubulcus ibis* since 1997. This type of aves includes migratory birds. MacKinnon et. al (1998) describe this bird has white fur, a heavier beak and a distinctive knotted neck. This kind of birds likes to live alone or in small groups. These birds like wetland habitats because they are included as members of the waterbird group and they like eating invertebrates (Fransisca, 2018). This type of migratory

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bird only comes and temporarily resides in Ketingan Hamlet during the rainy season. At that time, it coincided with the breeding period for these birds. Even though they are in the midst of residential areas, these flocks of birds do not feel afraid or disturbed by the activities of residents and visitors who are interested in seeing their behavior.

Ketingan Hamlet has an area of 17 hectares covering 4 RT, 2 RW, and its residents totaling 267 families, besides, the atmosphere is not different from most hamlets in rural Yogyakarta. In addition to the potential of these migrant animals, Ketingan Hamlet has unique potentials such as *Merti Bumi*, *Gedog Lesung*, *jatilan* and farming activities such as plowing, planting rice, animal husbandry, and home industry (Supartini, 2012). The cultural event that was regularly held (before the Covid-19 pandemic hit) was *Merti Bumi*, Ketingan Hamlet. The purpose of holding this cultural event is a form of gratitude from Ketingan residents to God the Almighty for the safety and yields given to local residents.

The yards of residents' houses in this hamlet are still large and many plants are cultivated, including *mlinjo*, sapodilla, bamboo, and coconut trees (Raharjana, 2011, 2020; Gharata, 2021). Various types of trees that are still widely planted by local residents which then attract flocks of birds to perch. Seeing this potential and objects owned by Ketingan Hamlet, the existence of the Egret Bird in that area, in the 2000s Ketingan Hamlet was designated by the Tourism Office of Sleman Regency as a fauna tourism village. Migratory birds that only come during the mating season and only live in Ketingan Hamlet are unique/rare events and this can be said to be a brand for the hamlet (Raharjana, 2020). In context, the tourism of an area will be able to be appointed as a tourist destination if the location has something interesting to watch and is able to generate interesting activities for tourists. Ketingan Hamlet was later designated as a conservation-based tourism village (Raharjana, 2011; Widiyanto, Handoyo, Fajarwati, 2008; Supartini, 2012). Development of tourism with special interest tourism packaging (Hall and Welier, 1992) with the theme of ecotourism that emphasizes conservation or preservation aspects, both natural, social and cultural environmental preservation. The strength of tourist attractions in rural areas is largely determined by the quality of the environment. This confirms that the existence of various types of resources in Ketingan Hamlet should be able to be managed wisely, including the efforts to preserve the habitat of these migratory birds (Raharjana, 2011).

However, along with the development of time and the demands of space requirements, there has been a lot of pressure on the Egret's habitat. The purpose of this research is to explain the various forms of pressure that exist, both internally and externally that take place and have an impact on the egrets. In addition, it also explains the role of the government and the community in efforts to support the existence and sustainability of the Egret's habitat as a booster for conservation tourism icons in the Sleman Regency, DIY.

Environmental Conservation

Conservation is an effort to manage natural resources wisely guided by the principle of preservation. Conservation is seen as an action to preserve the environment, taking into account the benefits that can be obtained at this time while maintaining it for future use. Conservation actions encourage the preservation of living natural resources and the balance of their ecosystems so that they can support the efforts to improve people's welfare (UU No.

5/1990 concerning Conservation of Living Natural Resources and Ecosystems). The current modern conservation paradigm does not only emphasize the function of protection (conservation), but also must touch the economic and social benefits for society (Herman, 2017; Haryanto, 2014).

Utilization of Animals for Tourism

The existence of migratory animals, such as egrets, can be seen as a natural resource whose habitat needs to be protected, so that they do not become extinct, due to natural factors or human actions. In the context of tourism, there have been many studies that review the presence of animals in tourism activities. Sea turtles, as an example, have been developed as ecotourism attractions (Prihanta, Syarifuddin, and Zainuri, 2016). Bird-watching activities also use animals as a strength of attraction (Pribadi, Pamungkas and Riyantini, 2019; Hasibuan, Nitibaskara, Mahardika, 2018) including efforts to strengthen story telling as an integral part of providing education for tourists (Raharjana, 2020). There are also those who make the *bekatan* animals in Kuala Samboja as ecotourism attractions (Atmoko, 2010).

The direction of tourism development which makes animals as an attraction is more suitable to be carried out with an ecotourism approach. Tanaya and Rudiarto (2014) state that ecotourism is one of the rural development efforts to improve the local economy, where the people in the area are the main control holders. Ecotourism is aligned with the concept of community-based tourism or Community Based Tourism (CBT), called as a tourism development planning strategy model that is oriented towards empowering local communities as the subject of development (Sunaryo 2013; Simanjuntak, Wangka, and Manik, 2022).

The Role of Stakeholders/Stakeholders

The sustainability of tourism development certainly cannot be separated from the role of all stakeholders. Weber and Damanik (2006) explained that stakeholders include tourists, the tourism industry, tourism service supporters, government, local communities, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Stakeholders are none other than defined as groups or individuals who can influence or be affected by the achievement of certain goals (Freeman, 2002). Tourism is a number of activity processes that arise from the interaction between related stakeholders. These stakeholders include government, tourism suppliers, host communities, and the surrounding environment involved in the management of tourists and other visitors.

Tourism development involves at least three interrelated stakeholders such as the government, the private sector, and the community. Each stakeholder has different roles and functions that need to be understood so that tourism development in an area can be realized and implemented properly. The government's strategic role is to determine the direction and policy as a guide for all stakeholders in carrying out their duties and functions. Meanwhile, the position of the local community around the tourist attraction is the subject or one of the key players who will provide most of the tourist attractions.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted within the framework of a phenomenological approach (Farid, Adib, Rusmanto, 2018), an approach that emphasizes the phenomena which occur before us, both physical and mental phenomena. Phenomenology is used as a methodology to reach the truth (Main, in Farid et al, 2018). The data collection method is carried out qualitatively through observation, documentation, and in-depth interviews. The presentation of this study contains forms of pressure that threaten the habitat of the Egret and examines the role of the government and society in protecting the habitat of this bird.

Furthermore, primary data collection was carried out by means of in-depth interviews conducted with key informants who were seen as having information according to the research objectives. Several informants, such as tour managers, community leaders and heads of local hamlets. In addition, non-in-depth interviews were conducted with several community members to find out the opinions of the influences and problems caused by the presence of egrets from the perspective of local residents. Then, conducting direct observation to see the breeding patterns, the way how they find food, and observing people's lifestyles in preserving birds. The researchers also added several references to complete the information. The data analysis was carried out by systematic mapping which included grouping and description of data. After the data were collected, data analysis was carried out with systematic mapping and relevant detailed descriptions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Egrets in Ketingan Hamlet

The egrets have started to feel at home in Ketingan Hamlet since 1997. Precisely, three months after the arrival of Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono X, as the Governor of DIY at that time inaugurated an asphalt road in the middle of the hamlet then the birds known as farmers' friends began to arrive. The arrival of these birds was initially ignored by the community. These birds perch in the bamboo trees on the edge of the village. In its development, along with the increasing population of migratory birds, all tall trees with branches and twigs are always chosen by birds for nesting. One type of the trees for nesting is the *mlinjo* tree. As a result, residents who own *mlinjo* plants feel worried. They argue that the birds' droppings will contaminate the environment and it is feared that the increasing number of bird populations will reduce the fruit yields of *mlinjo* trees. However, this worry did not materialize. In fact, in 2002 the amount of *mlinjo* fruit harvest was reportedly increase. As a result, people's perceptions of disturbances caused by the egrets have changed or even disappeared. At the moment, the residents have already felt that the egrets belong to them.

Since the birds have lived in Ketingan, many people have come and see them. Gradually, the name of Ketingan became widely known as a conservation hamlet. From time to time, the number of bird colonies has increased rapidly. The community has knowledge that these birds come periodically, especially when entering the rainy season because this period is the season for mating and developing these birds. For the local community, their arrival is highly anticipated. The residents have the notion that these birds are pets. Village residents agreed to protect their existence. In rainy season, before the flock of egrets entered the village, there are

several egrets had already passed over the village but had not yet settled. The arrival of these birds is usually in November and December when the rainy season begins. According to the residents, this type of birds has a high memory. They usually will come fly around the village while looking for the nest they will use to perch. Below is the picture of egrets perch on *mlinjo* tree.



Fig. 1 Egrets on *Mlinjo* Tres

Based on the experiences of the following residents, the stages of egret breeding are presented, as follows:

Table 1. Breeding Stages of Egrets in Ketingan Hamlet

Activities	Month
1. Starting to come	November-December
2. Starting to settle and making nest	January-February
3. Mating time	February-March
4. Laying eggs	February- March
5. Incubating eggs	March-April
6. Hatching eggs	April-June
7. Parenting period	March-July
8. Learning to fly	March-August
9. Leaving the nest/hamlet	July-October
10. Recovery of hamlet environment	October-November

Source: based on some sources, 2023

In Ketingan Hamlet and its surroundings, you can still find vast expanses of rice fields and shady vegetation. The fertile rural atmosphere makes these wetland-loving birds have no difficulty obtaining food sources. That is why the egrets is comfortable living in Ketingan Hamlet. These birds look for food in the fields. These birds have no impact on rice plants and they only look for worms as their food.

Internal and External Pressure for Egret Habitat

The dependence of bird species on their habitat is very high. If their habitat is under pressure, it is believed that the birds will move to a safer place. Such conditions are also experienced by a flock of egrets living in the settlements of the residents of Ketingan Hamlet. As explained by a community leader, initially the arrival of these birds caused different views in the community. There are residents who agree or disagree with the presence of the birds, but there are also those who feel disturbed and try to make the birds to leave Ketingan. Internally, these forms of pressure on habitat and flocks of birds can be seen in the following illustrations.

“...the residents, who were not happy with the presence of these birds, had many reasons, for example, pollution from the smell of bird droppings, disruption to the production of mlinjo fruit planted by the residents, and fears of bird flu which was prevalent at that time and those were their reasons. They, then took the same action. aims to drive the birds to fly out of the village. The actions of the residents varied, such as shaking a tree with a nest in it, making loud noises or setting off firecrackers so that the birds would then fly out of the hamlet... (field notes, 2023).”

The rampant private trees logging has also led to increasingly limited vegetation that can be used for breeding. This happens because when there are residents who need to build a house, then they will cut down trees. As explained by head of the hamlet, as follows.

“...in this hamlet there has been a lot of trees reduction which is actually mostly used as a place for egrets and other bird species... the need to build houses for local residents and the emergence of housing complexes in this hamlet have also triggered a reduction in trees. Now the big trees are starting to decrease by 25%. Trees that should be used as nesting sites are decreasing, so there is a possibility that the number of nests currently available will also continue to decrease. At least, in the last two years there has been a large reduction in trees.”

There are also hunters from outside the village who come to Ketingan. Even though there are signs of prohibiting hunting, the residents often find that there are people who carry air rifles for hunting. The people of Ketingan already understand and do not do hunting, so when they find poachers, they do not hesitate to forbid them and remind them not to hunt egrets because these animals are protected and really help the work of farmers in their lands. Based on the records of the Natural Resources Conservation Agency (BKSDA) of Sleman Regency, from 2021 to 2022 there will be at least 23,000 egrets. However, in 2023, there has been no record made by this agency.

The external pressures that are thought to have an impact on the Egret's habitat are caused, among other things, by the conversion of paddy fields around the hamlet to settlements or plans to build a toll road which is thought to have an impact on logging of large trees around the hamlet. The rampant conversion of land functions around the Ketingan hamlet will also encourage changes in behavior that will make the egrets avoid from Ketingan Hamlet and its surroundings.

In addition, due to the climate changed and triggered by the increasingly limited wetlands which are a source of food for birds, it can also be the effect of egret decreasing. The hamlet head explained as follow.

“...the effects of climate change have also an impact on the patterns of arrival and departure of egrets. If the rainy season comes earlier, then the birds will also come to Ketingan earlier, and vice versa...climate changes that occur in the hamlets, for example, of course also cause the air humidity and temperature to change quickly. If the birds feel uncomfortable, it is of course that they will migrate, thus it is causing a shift in the pattern of the arrival of these birds...”

Government and Community Efforts in Conserving the Egret's Habitat

The sustainability of habitat and migrant wildlife conservation in Ketingan Hamlet seems to require consistency and support from all parties, especially from the government which has a function as a regulator as well as a facilitator. The proof is, in 2004 the Sleman Regency government designated Ketingan Hamlet as a conservation hamlet due to the presence of the Egret. The government issued a ban on bird hunting in accordance with law number 5 article 21 paragraph (2) of 1990 concerning to the conservation of living natural resources and their ecosystems, which stipulates this bird as a protected species. If someone hunts and destroys their habitat, they will be fined. For this reason, one of the routine programs carried out by BKSDA Sleman Regency is to count the egret population. However, since the Covid-19 pandemic broke out until now no further calculations have been carried out. Another role carried out by the government is to provide assistance with Mahogany plant seeds as a substitute for plants that have begun to be cut down a lot because of the need for the residential areas.

Meanwhile, some efforts that can be made by local residents to support the conservation of the Egret include increasing a sense of concern in providing protection and preservation of the bird's own habitat. This action can be taken by trying to limit trees logging or they do not taking actions that might disturb the existence of this animal. The community can also actively support government policies in the form of playing an active role in planting Mahogany trees as a substitute habitat for these migratory birds, which have long been familiar living comfortably in Ketingan Hamlet.

CONCLUSION

The existence of the Egret as a migrant animal that has lived comfortably with the residents of Ketingan Hamlet since 1997 has strengthened the identity of this hamlet as a conservation hamlet and developed as a fauna-based tourism village in Sleman district. However, it is understandable that the sustainability of migratory animals, namely the Egret in Ketingan Hamlet, is determined by many things. Regional and community development has led to forms of pressure that have an impact on the existence of bird habitats. The internal pressure that arises due to the rampant felling of trees and other forms of disturbance to these birds is still ongoing. Meanwhile, externally, the pressures that have an effect on the sustainability of the Egret's habitat are the widespread conversion of land use around the villages and the effects of climate change which are thought to also affect the Egret's habitat.

The role of the government and the community is certainly needed to protect and ensure the sustainability of the habitat for these wetland-loving animals. Efforts to enforce the law to ban bird hunting and provide mahogany seeds are a concrete form of the government's role.

Meanwhile, from the community, the expected role is to have concern for protecting and preserving the egret's habitat, and suppressing any actions that will threaten its sustainability.

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