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A GREAT PRIVILEGE – BEING A VOLUNTEER

A GREAT PRIVILEGE – BEING A VOLUNTEER

Working as a volunteer communications assistant for the **Friends of the National Parks Foundation (FNPF)** for a full a month in Ubud, Bali, was an unforgettable experience for 19-year-old **Rosa Hall**. **FNPF** is a not-for-profit organisation that helps save endangered birds, monkeys and other animals all around Indonesia. The director and founder of **FNPF**, **Dr Bayu Wirayudha** is a veterinarian and has, so far, saved the Bali Starling from extinction. One can now find many of these attractive white-feathered birds with blue-ringed eyes and yellow bills living freely on Nusa Penida, a little island off Bali.



"As it was my first time flying, first time overseas and by myself, coming to Bali was at first incredibly different and nerve racking," reflected Rosa "but it didn't take long until I was warmly greeted by the owners of my home stay and welcomed by the people I was going to be working with for the next month at FNPF."

During Rosa's volunteer stay, she was able to travel to many of **FNPF** projects, **The Bali Wildlife Rescue Centre (BWRC)** being the first. The **BWRC** shelters many of **FNPF's** endangered wildlife species. Here, the staff endeavors to fully rehabilitate each creature, so they can eventually be released back into the wild.

"I had no idea it was going to be so big, and to see so many of the animals looking happy and healthy really brought a smile to my face."

However, while Bayu and the team at the **BWRC** make sure the animals are restored to full health, some will live permanently at the **BWRC** because their injuries are so severe that they would be unable to survive without human intervention and this requires long term planning for their care.

Rosa was also able to visit the **Besikalung Wildlife Sanctuary (BWS)**, another project undertaken by **FNPF**. The Wildlife Sanctuary protects and nurtures some of Bali's most endangered birds and primates within the forest on the slopes of Mt. Batukaru in Central Bali. **BWS** aims to provide assistance and aid for endangered and injured wildlife and, like the **BWRC**, hopes eventually to release many of the animals back into the wild. The lush, thick forest that surrounds the Besikalung Temple is perfect terrain for release after rehabilitation.

"The setting was absolutely amazing. Not only was the temple breathtakingly beautiful but the rice fields behind the temple were also astonishing. To hear the calls of wild, local birds was just thrilling and gave audio accompaniment to the visual splendour. I really enjoyed my time at the sanctuary and definitely want to come back."

There was also a chance for Rosa to visit **Bali's Bird Sanctuary** on Nusa Penida, a unique island where local people protect endangered birds from poachers. Driven by the desire to save one of the world's most endangered species and Bali's emblem bird from extinction in the wild, **FNPF** has used its unique bird sanctuary on Nusa Penida as the location for its **Bali Starling Conservation Project**. The project has already saved the critically endangered Bali Starling from extinction in the wild. From **FNPF's** Conservation and Community Development Centre near the village of Ped, endangered birds are rehabilitated and released to live and breed freely on the island and are under the protection of the local communities. **FNPF** continues to release more *Bali Starlings*, *Java Sparrows*, *Lesser Sulphur Crested Cockatoos*, and *Mitchell's Lorikeets* and are also working with certain villages located close to the beach to extend the community-based protection to sea turtles.

"Nusa Penida was completely different to Ubud, it was small, incredibly quiet but absolutely stunning. The bird sanctuary was great too and it was wonderful that I had the chance to see the Bali Starlings."

When Rosa wasn't travelling around Bali, she was in the **FNPF** Ubud office as a communications assistant writing feature and promotional articles as well as case studies about **FNPF** projects.

"Being in Bali was a great experience. I was able to see and do so many new and different things along with meeting so many different people. Bali is amazing. It is colourful and vibrant; the people are so lovely and generous. Bali is heaven on earth and it is bound to take your breath away."

photo: Rosa Hall @Rosa Hall

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 PO Box 439 Avalon NSW 2107 Australia



Telephone: +61 2 9973 1728 · Fax: +61 9973 1729 · email: admin@hsi.org.au
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