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Bali Starling Thriving In Nusa Penida Sanctuary

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The Bali Starling is Bali's provincial emblem and is quite a pretty little thing. It is a white bird with a vivid blue mask, so it is rather easy to identify, even for inexperienced birders. Unfortunately it is not always so easy to spot – not because it is elusive, but rather because it is critically endangered in its natural habitat.

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Unfortunately on mainland Bali, the Bali Starling has been actively poached and also suffered a decline in numbers due to loss of habitat. Numbers have shrunk so much that conservation officials started to get truly worried about the likelihood of this species' continued survival. The Begawan Giri and Friends of the National Parks Foundations subsequently decided to breed and release 65 Bali Starlings on Nusa Penida, a small island situated just off the coast of Bali. Though the island does not form a part of the bird's natural habitat, it does seem to be a safe haven for these struggling little creatures. Now it seems that doing so, they may well have taken the first steps to ensuring the bird's survival in the wild. Since their release on the island in 2006, 45 of the 65 starlings have hatched offspring.

Bayu Wirayudha, a Bali Starling breeder and veterinarian working with the Friends of the National Parks Foundation, attributes the success of the birds' survival on the island to traditional laws. Apparently the traditional laws protecting the birds and animals of the island are still in place on Nusa Penida. Despite the fact that birds should be protected in the West Bali National Park, the same sort of traditional law just does not seem to exist in West Bali where the bird originally hails from. Of course, moving the birds to Nusa Penida has drawn some fire from certain concerned organizations, but it seems that the recent count of 45 birds born on the island would show that the plan is working. Further, it seems that the new batch of hatchlings may well help to bring wild Bali Starling populations back from the brink of extinction. The concept of creating new colonies for endangered birds is not new and has been successful on more than one occasion in the past. Let's hope that these conservation efforts continue to move ahead successfully and so prevent yet another one of our beautiful bird species from dying out.

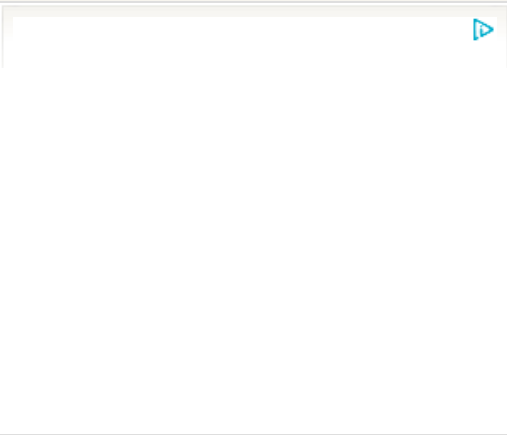
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