

An Island Sanctuary

By Matt Mackay

en/ Although it lies just 15 km off the east coast of Bali, Nusa Penida feels like it's a whole world away and is untouched by the mass tourism. I'd been invited to Nusa Penida by Dr Bayu Wirayudha from the FNPF (Friends of the National Parks Foundation), a nonprofit organisation based in Ubud over on the Balinese mainland, in order to visit their bird sanctuary.



Bayu, founder of the FNPF and a bird specialist, was instrumental in establishing the Nusa Penida Bird Sanctuary back in 2007 in a bid to help save the critically endangered Bali starling.

The Bali starling is one of the most beautiful and critically endangered species of bird in the world. By 2005, there were less than ten remaining in the wild in Bali, despite the release of many hundreds of birds into the West Bali National Park by the Indonesian Government and various NGOs from the mid-1980s onwards. The population's rapid decline, to the point of near extinction, was caused primarily by habitat loss and rampant poaching



(a single bird can fetch over USD 1,000 or IDR 8.5 million).

Bayu, frustrated by these problems, decided to examine other options. When he first proposed the idea of a sanctuary on Nusa Penida however, Bayu was viewed as a crackpot and many declared that his plan would fail. Undeterred, Bayu spent two years on Nusa Penida employing his knowledge and understanding of Balinese traditions and culture to establish good relationships with the island's various communities. He offered conservation education and advice about the various community-development benefits that his scheme would provide.

As a result of his efforts, all of Nusa Penida's villages passed a traditional

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village law (*awig-awig*) aimed at protecting the island's native bird population (especially the Bali starling). In return, the FNPF pledged to run a range of programmes designed to help local communities, encompassing education scholarships, a nursery devised to nurture thousands of saplings and from which the villagers can take freely, eco-tourism promotions and a community library.

As Bayu explains, the organisation's strength is in creating community-based conservation by combining programmes that directly improve local communities through education scholarships, agro-forestry and eco-tourism. These programmes help motivate and mobilise communities to protect wildlife, restore habitats and support conservation work.

The FNPF rehabilitated and released just 64 birds onto Nusa Penida over the 2006-2007 period. Over 100 birds are currently thriving on the island though and, thankfully, no evidence of poaching has been found. By motivating and mobilising all of Nusa Penida's 41 villages to protect the birds, the FNPF has overcome the threat of bird poachers, thus transforming the whole island of Nusa Penida into an unofficial bird sanctuary.

To learn more about the work of the FNPF and the organisation's volunteer programmes, point your browser at: www.fnpf.org or drop into the FNPF office in Ubud, Bali: *Jl. Bisma No. 3, Ubud, Bali, T. 62 361 977 978*.

in/ Meski berjarak hanya 15 kilometer dari pesisir Bali, Nusa Penida memancarkan karakter yang sepenuhnya berbeda: sebuah kawasan yang nyaris tak tersentuh *mass tourism*. Saya mengunjunginya suaka burung di pulau tersebut atas undangan Dr. Bayu Wirayudha dari FNPF (*Friends of the National Parks Foundation*), organisasi nirlaba yang berbasis di Ubud.

Bayu, pendiri FNPF sekaligus pakar burung, berperan besar dalam mendirikan *Nusa Penida Bird Sanctuary* di 2007. Misi utamanya adalah menyelamatkan jalak Bali, burung ikonik Pulau Dewata yang berstatus terancam punah.

Jalak Bali adalah salah satu spesies burung yang paling cantik sekaligus paling terancam di dunia. Di 2005, jumlahnya

kurang dari 10 ekor di alam liar Bali, padahal sejak 1980-an pemerintah dan berbagai LSM pernah melepaskan ratusan jalak Bali ke Taman Nasional Bali Barat. Akibat hilangnya habitat dan perburuan liar (harga jalak Bali lebih dari USD 1.000 per ekor), populasi burung terus menyusut hingga mendekati status musnah.



Frustrasi dengan kondisi tersebut, Bayu mencari solusi alternatif. Perjuangannya tidak mudah. Gagasan tentang pendirian suaka di Nusa Penida dipandang banyak orang sebagai ide konyol yang dipastikan gagal. Tak mau menyerah, Bayu lalu menghabiskan dua tahun di Nusa Penida untuk melakukan riset serta menjalin hubungan dengan komunitas lokal agar bisa memahami tradisi dan kebudayaan mereka. Lewat pendirian suaka, ia menawarkan masyarakat edukasi seputar lingkungan serta sejumlah program pemberdayaan sosial yang saling menguntungkan.

Hasilnya, seluruh desa di Nusa Penida kompak meluncurkan *awig-awig* (aturan adat) yang bertujuan melindungi populasi burung, khususnya jalak Bali. Sebagai timbal balik, FNPF menjalankan berbagai program yang dirancang guna membantu komunitas lokal, seperti menyediakan beasiswa pendidikan, kebun bibit yang hasilnya bisa dimanfaatkan masyarakat,

serta sebuah perpustakaan umum.

Menurut Bayu, kekuatan organisasinya terletak pada kemampuan mengombinasikan upaya konservasi berbasis komunitas dengan program-program yang berefek positif langsung pada masyarakat, seperti beasiswa pendidikan, wisata agro, dan ekowisata. Program-program tersebut berperan besar dalam memicu motivasi komunitas untuk melindungi alam dan merestorasi habitat jalak Bali.



FNPF telah merehabilitasi dan melepaskan 64 ekor burung di Nusa Penida dalam periode 2006-2007. Lebih dari 100 burung kini tercatat berkeliaran di pulau yang telah terbebas dari perburuan liar tersebut.

Dengan memotivasi dan memobilisasi warga dari 41 desa, FNPF berhasil mengatasi ancaman bagi kelangsungan burung, sekaligus mentransformasi Nusa Penida menjadi suaka burung dan surga ekowisata bagi turis.

Jika ingin mempelajari lebih jauh tentang FNPF dan program-program sosialnya, silakan klik www.fnpf.org atau mampir ke kantor mereka di Bali (*Jl. Bisma No. 3, Ubud, T. 0361 977 978*).