
BALI MYNAH 98 Fact Sheet (7/1/98)

Bali Mynah (*Leucopsar rothschildi*)

Description: The Bali mynah, also known as Rothschild's starling or Jalak Bali, is the only endemic vertebrate bird species on the island of Bali. This beautiful white bird, with black wing tips and blue cheek patches framing its eyes, also has a lacy crest of feathers which is lifted for courtship displays. It is about the size of a mockingbird, and weighs 75 - 95 grams.

Range: Bali mynahs are found today only in a small area (65 square kilometers) of Bali Barat National Park, in the northwest corner of the island of Bali in Indonesia. It is thought that the bird never had a wide range and was always confined to western third of this small island.

Habitat: The Bali mynah inhabits grasslands, open woodlands and scrub forest. During the dry season, which lasts from April - October, this area of Bali normally becomes extremely arid. Fresh drinking water can be quite scarce, so the birds often make do with ripening fruit. Like all members of the starling family, the Bali mynah nests in cavities, frequently using sites excavated and abandoned by woodpeckers and barbets.

Diet: Like most starlings, the Bali mynah is an omnivore, eating insects and fruit according to availability. Its breeding cycle coincides with the rainy season (November - March) when both of these items are in good supply.

Social Organization: Bali mynahs nest in pairs, which may remain together for several seasons. During the dry (non-breeding) season the wild birds gather in flocks to feed and roost. An average clutch is three bright blue eggs, with 2-3 young expected to fledge after about 22 days.

Conservation Status: The Bali mynah is one of the rarest birds in the world; only about 30 remain in the wild. It is listed as an endangered species in the IUCN Red Data Book, as an Appendix I species under CITES, and it is on the List of Endangered Species of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

Threats to Survival: Habitat destruction, human encroachment and poaching are the primary threats to the Bali mynah. Coconut and forest plantations inside park boundaries, along with illegal firewood collection, are rapidly reducing the areas where it can live. A powerful status symbol due both to its rarity and its capacity to mimic human speech, the Bali

mynah has for years been subject to illegal capture and sale to the Indonesian pet market.

Zoo Programs - SSP: Western zoos may have unknowingly contributed to the original decline of the Bali mynah through importation of wild birds in past decades. Somewhat ironically, it is now hoped that those same zoos will provide the resources to save the mynah from extinction. There are at least 750 captive-bred Bali mynahs in zoological facilities worldwide, 230 of which are in North American institutions.

Conservation: Over the past decade, efforts to save the Bali mynah have involved extensive cooperation between zoos in North America, Europe and the United Kingdom. AZA, Birdlife International (formerly International Council for Bird Preservation), and the Indonesian Department of Nature Conservation (PHPA) began working together in 1987 to implement a recovery plan for the wild population on Bali. Conservation efforts for the wild population have included better guard protection in the park and conversion of some plantation areas back to natural habitat. In 1997, the AZA hired an American biologist who assumed the position of full-time Director of Indonesian operations. This individual works with PHPA and interested Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) to coordinate and implement a comprehensive, long-term reintroduction and monitoring program.

Education: In 1991, the Bali mynah was adopted as the provincial symbol of Bali, and has since become a symbol of conservation in Indonesia.

Reintroduction: Despite the political, social, and economic upheaval that has racked Indonesia recently, the recovery/reintroduction initiative is moving ahead with renewed vigor. With input from a team of experienced experts, the BMSSP is developing a scientifically based reintroduction and long-term monitoring program. Following two workshops in the summer of 1998, a formal plan is expected to be adopted by the Indonesian government and implemented later in the year.

Contacts:

SSP Coordinator:

Robert Seibels

Riverbanks Zoological Park

PO Box 1060

Columbia, SC 29202

Phone: (803) 779-8717

Fax: (803). 253-6381

E-mail: bseibels@riverbanks.org

Studbook Keeper:

Steve Thompson, Ph.D.

Lincoln Park Zoological Gardens

2001 North Clark Street

Chicago, IL 60614-4799

Phone: (312) 742-7765

Fax: (312) 742-2211

E-mail: steveed@ix.netcom.com

Rev. 7/98