

REAL LIFE

Schoolboys Pledge to Save Orangutans

Two Northern Beaches brothers have vowed to raise \$1 million to buy back the jungle for threatened orangutans and have published their own book on the endangered species to help boost funds. Gillian Currie found out more about their inspiring campaign.

Terrey Hills schoolboys Daniel and William Clarke are international wildlife campaigners, authors and, simply, teenage boys.

In the battle to raise awareness about the plight of orangutans in Borneo and Sumatra, they have met world leaders, travelled the globe and given countless talks.

Most memorably though, they have travelled to Borneo to meet the beautiful animals they are doing their best to help save.

"It was amazing to see them in their natural habitat instead of the zoo - to see how they interacted with everything around them," says Daniel.

"I thought they would be a lot more shy towards humans but when we got there they got onto the floor with us."

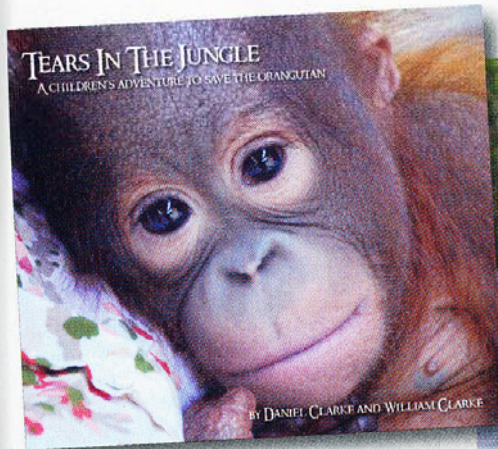
"We looked up and they were just up in the trees," adds William.

Now aged 15 and 13-years-old, Daniel and William made the trip a couple of years ago, and the family is planning another one soon.

Daniel has cerebral palsy and uses a wheelchair, so he had to be carried by guides the last kilometre into the jungle to see the orangutans.

He dismisses the idea that the journey was any kind of hardship given his condition, smiling as he remembers the way the young orangutans poked and prodded at his wheelchair. "They were very curious about it because they'd never seen one before," he laughs.

Images: Penny Clarke



The story of Daniel and William's trip is now the subject of a book the boys have published, with support from their parents Penny and Rodney, called *Tears In The Jungle*.

Images of the orangutans stare out from every page along with facts and information about the animals and how they are struggling to survive.

The book has taken the boys more than 18 months to put together as they researched facts and figures about orangutans and combined them with photos taken by their parents.

"When they came to us and said they'd finished the book we couldn't really believe it," says Penny.

Both Daniel and William's parents set about finding out how to have the book published but when they discovered publishers



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would take 80 per cent of the profits they found a printer and decided to publish it themselves.

The hard work has resulted in a book the boys hope will give a boost to their \$1 million fundraising target.

"It's a very small area that is left for the orangutans to live in now, so we want to buy back some of the jungle to stop it being developed," Daniel explains of the situation in Borneo.

Troy Kenah, vice president of the Australian Orangutan Project, says that in Sumatra the situation is slightly different, with land available but too few orangutans to populate it. However, the orangutans from Sumatra and Borneo cannot be integrated.

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He says the project in Australia started around 11 years ago and has representatives in Sydney, Darwin, Perth and Tasmania.

Daniel's fascination with orangutans began about six years ago after watching a wildlife program. His interest became more apparent when the Starlight Foundation approached Daniel to grant a wish. When asked what he wished for he said he, "wanted to save the orangutans in Borneo and Sumatra".

Unable to easily resolve this complex issue, the foundation treated Daniel and his family to a Wallabies game where the then 10-year-old met John Howard who committed \$500,000 over four years to save orangutans.

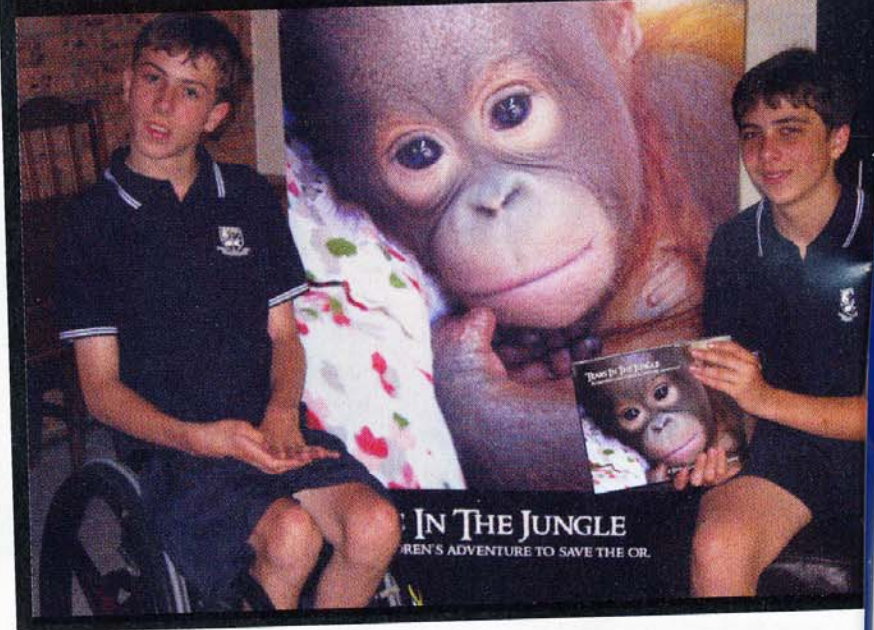
Daniel is the National Youth Ambassador of the Australian Orangutan Project and has received a conservation award from the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA).

Two years ago his younger brother William decided to join the campaign. They adopted an orangutan each, Lydia and Wallis, before making the trip to Tanjung Puting National Park, in Kalimantan, Borneo. This was made possible thanks to an anonymous benefactor who wanted Daniel to see the orangutans in the wild.

Just as their mum and dad are breathing a sigh of relief that the book is published, the boys have informed them there are three more in the pipeline that will cover each of the great apes – gorillas, chimpanzees and bonobos.

As the boys continue to address business and community leaders and schoolmates and youngsters across Sydney, it seems

Daniel and William Clarke, with their book, *Tears In The Jungle*



their plan to raise awareness is working.

As Daniel says, "We can all make a difference."

Tears In The Jungle (RRP \$14.95 for soft cover, \$29.95 for hard cover) is available to buy online from the website www.tearsinthejungle.com or from the Terrey Hills Post Office, 5 Booralie Road, Terrey Hills, NSW 2084. All profits go towards saving the orangutans.

The Clarks have also set up the The Daniel Clarke Foundation www.DanielClarkeFoundation.org.au to assist in the care of Daniel and the needs of other children with Athetoid Cerebral Palsy. 