ForeWord Reviews

PICTURE BOOKS

Adventures of Riley: Operation Orangutan
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Laura Hurwitz
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Riley is one lucky kid, with a scientist-uncle who invites him along on trips around the world to learn about animals and the environment. *The Adventures of Riley* is a series of books focused on raising awareness among young readers about threatened and endangered species. This is the seventh book in the series by Lumry and Hurwitz.

Operation Orangutan takes Riley to the rain forests of Borneo, one of only two places in the world to find wild orangutans. There Riley meets real life scientists who live and work in the forest studying the orangutan and their habitat. Young readers will learn with Riley that orangutans sleep in tree nests, only give birth every eight years and are threatened by logging in their native forests. Riley's readers will also learn about other animals found in Borneo including sun bears, fig wasps, pigmy elephants, gibbons, and flying snakes.

One of the special features of the Riley series are the fact boxes interspersed throughout the text providing tidbits of information about the animals. These documented facts are presented by experts from the Smithsonian Institute, Wildlife Conservation Society, and the World Wildlife Fund—organizations that receive a small percentage of the sales from the Riley series.

Like other books in the series, *Operation Orangutan* is colorfully illustrated using a combination of artwork and photographs of animals, villages, and local scenery. One photo of an orangutan has him looking out over the colorfully illustrated habitat with birds and insects hunting for food while other mammals nap in the daytime heat, the scientists busy at work, and logging operations off in the distance. The presentation will entice non-readers to pick up the book if only to look at the graphics.

The Riley series is for the very curious child and his parents or caregivers willing to answer the many questions that will be stimulated by the story and the facts presented. It's a read-along book for most young readers with its fairly sophisticated language, sentence structure, and busy graphic presentation. The environmental message is conveyed subtly and in

a manner that most wouldn’t find objectionable. For example, near the end of the story, Riley and his friends find an orphaned baby orangutan. The adults talk about how its mother was probably lost to the loggers but they know of a safe place to send it where it will be raised to be reintroduced to the forest later.

Most kids will finish this book eager to read another, learn more about the orangutans and other wild animals, and dream of their own adventures just like Riley’s.

Mary Cary Crawford