

# Born to be Wild (2011)

Rated G. Documentary

*So out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.*

*Genesis 2:19*

This is a beautifully photographed documentary, all too short at 40+ minutes, dedicated to rescuing orphaned elephants and orangutans.

dedicated to saving orphans.

These are not babies victimized by wars in Africa or Asia, but animals, orphaned when their mothers are killed by poachers or more natural causes such as lack of water and food caused by drought. The film alternates between primatologist Birute Galdikas in Borneo and elephant expert Daphne Sheldrick in Kenya. These white women have successfully passed on their love for their charges to the fine staff of natives who, in so many tender scenes, deal so patiently with their small charges (and tiny in the case of the adorable orangutans.

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During the course of the film we learn a great deal about elephants and primates that lift our awareness that we are not the only creatures with emotions. What a joy to watch the baby elephants and their keepers play a running game with soccer balls, and by what mysterious means do elephants out on the veldt know that a new group of young elephants have arrived at the half-way house of a farm where they will be learn how to survive in the wilds. Shortly after the truck disgorges the half-grown elephants, the wild elephant bulls show up and spend some time with the newcomers, evidently passing on some knowledge to them of their new surroundings.

In Borneo also there is a halfway station where the half-grown orangutans are taken to learn the ins and outs of tree climbing and finding their own food. Like the orphaned elephants, the orangutans are raised not to be pets but to return to their native habitat. The care the two women and their skilled associates give the animals echoes the Genesis passage in which God involves "the man" in completing the creation of animals by having "him" name them.