



*FOR RELEASE ON 1<sup>st</sup> APE-RIL*

## **Unleash Your Inner Ape to help Orangutans this Ape-ril**

What has your chin got to do with orangutan conservation? Quite a lot, according to bearded celebrities including Brian Blessed, Robin Ince and Bill Oddie, who are helping raise awareness and funds for the **Sumatran Orangutan Society (SOS) Ape-ril campaign**, during the month of April.



*Top row, left to right: Tony Law, Jess French, Robin Ince / Bottom row: Tim Key, Tom Meeten, Bill Oddie  
Portraits by Dave Brown for the Sumatran Orangutan Society (SOS)*

SOS are asking men and women to get behind the campaign and show solidarity with Sumatran orangutans, a critically endangered species, by unleashing their inner ape during 'Ape-ril' – such as by growing a beard, adopting orangutan-orange hair, or sharing the campaign via social media using #IAmApe. The Ape-ril campaign is supported by several hirsute Ape-ril Ambassadors who have been turned orangutan-orange in a series of portraits, including comedians Robin Ince and Tony Law, actors Brian Blessed and Tom Meeten, naturalist and broadcaster Bill Oddie, CBBC presenter Jess French, poet Tim Key, and eco-adventurer Cat Capon.

The set of Ape-ril portraits has been released by photographer Dave Brown, who is no stranger to going ape himself, being the man behind Bollo the gorilla from comedy series The Mighty Boosh.

The campaign is also being backed by the smartphone app MSQRD, which is popular with many celebrities – and now users can show their support for the Ape-ril campaign by trying on a virtual orangutan mask, and sharing an image or video message of themselves as an orangutan on social media.



Supporters can submit their orangutan-themed photos to the Hairy Hall of Fame and appear alongside the celebrity supporters of the campaign on the Ape-ril.org website, and add an Ape-ril campaign badge to their Facebook and Twitter profiles to raise awareness.

There are less than 15,000 Sumatran orangutans left in the wild. The ancient Leuser rainforests of the Indonesian island of Sumatra are the only place in the world where orangutans, elephants, tigers and rhinos roam together, but all are critically endangered. The Sumatran Orangutan Society (SOS) is a conservation organisation that is dedicated to protecting orangutans and their unique habitat through rainforest restoration, orangutan rescue, community-led conservation, education and campaigning.

Helen Buckland, Director of the Sumatran Orangutan Society, says:

“We share 96.4% of our DNA with orangutans, but we are pushing them to the edge of extinction. Through the Ape-ril campaign, we want to create a global movement of people declaring #IAmApe and showing their solidarity with our Great Ape cousins.” She continues: “SOS supports frontline conservation projects in Sumatra, and our campaigns tackle the root causes of the destruction of orangutans’ rainforest home. The funds raised during Ape-ril will help us keep working to protect orangutans, their forests and their future.”

“Having had the great privilege of seeing orangutans in the wild, I am steadfast in my belief that we must do all that we can to protect these magnificent creatures. You don’t need to climb a mountain or run a marathon to show your support – get involved with Ape-ril and go wild for orangutans.” **Brian Blessed, Actor and SOS Patron**



“Face the facts – we’re great apes too. It’s unthinkable that we could let one of our closest relatives go extinct. If you’ve already got a facial forest, you could do a bit of topiary or decorate it. It’s not the size of your beard, it’s what you do with it that counts.” **Bill Oddie, Broadcaster**

And it’s not just for men; women are being encouraged to take part too. **CBBC Presenter and Ape-ril Ambassador Jess French says** “No beard? No problem. Ape-ril isn’t just for hairy men. With a bit of creative hairstyling, you can weave your hair into an impressive beard - and get sponsored to wear it like that for a day, a week or the whole month!”

**Visit the official Ape-ril website at [www.Ape-ril.org](http://www.Ape-ril.org) to take part.**

-ENDS-

*For more information please contact Helen Buckland, Director of the Sumatran Orangutan Society on: [Helen@orangutans-sos.org](mailto:Helen@orangutans-sos.org) / Office: 01235 530825 / mobile: 07970 666051*

**Download hi-res images of the Ape-ril Ambassadors and Sumatran orangutans via:**

[https://www.dropbox.com/sh/8qc5l88ufuym7i1/AAAeEbq\\_JOVhq5bP\\_MSXViQwa?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/8qc5l88ufuym7i1/AAAeEbq_JOVhq5bP_MSXViQwa?dl=0)

**PLEASE NOTE:** The photographers have donated the use of these images to the Sumatran Orangutan Society (SOS). These images are being provided to you for free usage ONLY in stories that help promote SOS. They are not to be kept on file for any other usage thereafter, and must be fully credited.

Notes to Editors:

***About orangutans and SOS***

Sharing 96.4 per cent of our DNA orangutans are among our closest living relatives in the animal kingdom and are the only red ape.

With less than 15,000 left in the wild, the Sumatran orangutan is Critically Endangered.

Orangutans play a key role in rainforest regeneration and are a fantastic flagship species. By helping them we help countless other species including critically endangered tigers, elephants and rhinos.

The Sumatran Orangutan Society is dedicated to protecting orangutans and their habitat through rainforest restoration, orangutan rescue, community-led conservation, education and campaigning.

For more information please see [www.orangutans-sos.org](http://www.orangutans-sos.org)