



DIARY OF A

WILD BOY



BY BRANDO YELAVICH

School Journal Story Library is a targeted series that supplements other instructional series texts. It provides additional scaffolds and supports for teachers to use to accelerate students' literacy learning.

Diary of a Wild Boy has been carefully levelled. While the contexts and concepts link to English and health and physical education at level 4 of the curriculum, the text has a reading year level of years 5 to 6.

Teacher support material (available at www.schooljournalstorylibrary.tki.org.nz) contains key information to help teachers to provide the additional support and scaffolding that some students may need to meet the specific reading, writing, and curriculum demands of *Diary of a Wild Boy*.

DIARY OF A

**WILD
BOY**



BY BRANDO YELAVICH

Since high school, Brando's life had hit a dead end.

Boring jobs and unhealthy habits were leading him nowhere. But he found a way out. At 19 years old, Brando Yelavich set himself a challenge to turn his life around. He was ready – as ready as he'd ever be – to walk around the coastline of New Zealand. On 1 February 2013, he set off from the top of the North Island.

DAY 1 - *Cape Rēinga*

I have no idea what I am getting myself into. My muscles feel raw and untested. The cramp in my right leg is almost unbearable. I've tied it with flax to try to relieve the spasms. And this is meant to be the easy part!

First thing this morning, my dad and uncle waved me off at Cape Rēinga. Six months and I'll be the first person to walk the entire coastline of New Zealand. Six months and I'll have emerged from the wild.



DAY 75 - **King Country**

I'm in the King Country, just south of the Kawhia Harbour. Earlier today, I was following my map and thought I'd found a short cut. If I climbed over the top of a mountain, I could avoid scaling a near-vertical cliff face. Three hours later, at the top of the mountain, my stomach dropped. I was stranded on the edge of a cliff.

There was only one way down: going back the way I'd come. Then I had to go up the towering cliff that I'd tried to avoid. I was halfway up when it started to get dark. Then the rain came. Branches hit my body and poked me in the eyes. Gorse clawed at my legs. My pack got stuck in every tree I passed. I dropped to my knees and screamed. I was cold, tired, hungry, and alone.

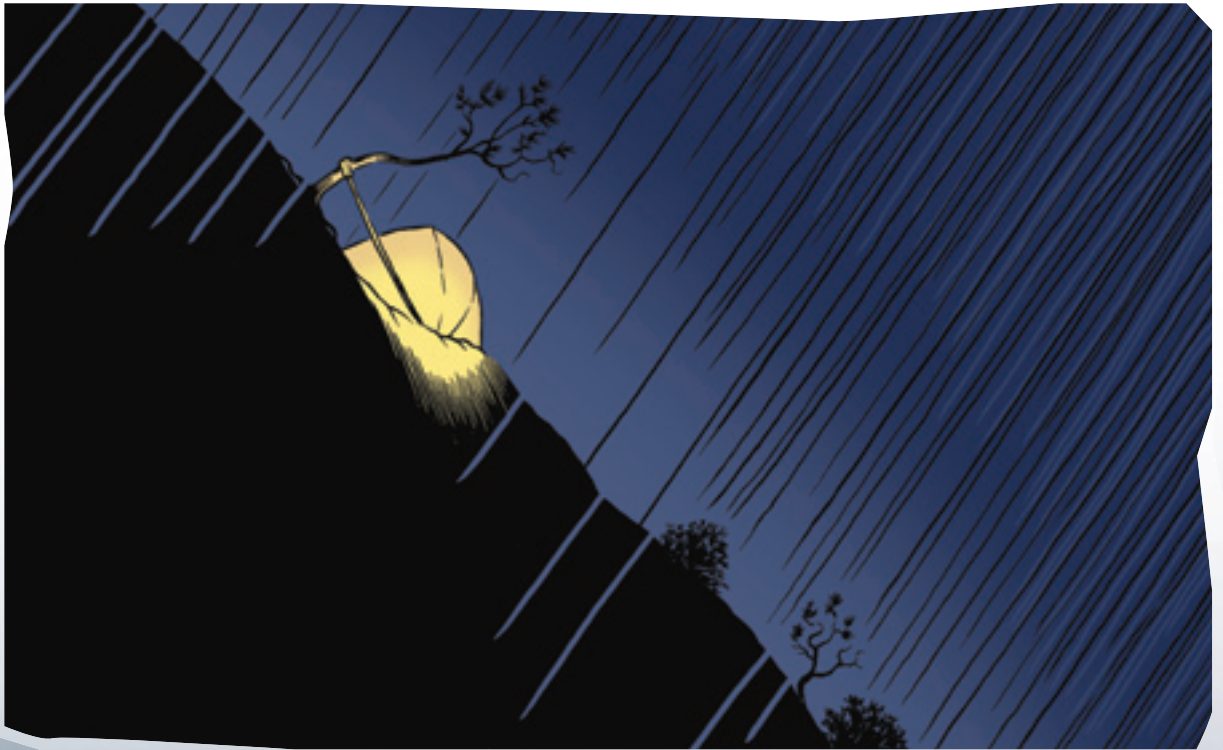


It was the first time I'd truly felt like giving up. I called Mum and told her I was ready to come home. Her advice was simple: "You can come home whenever you want, but you have to walk."

Eventually I realised that no one was going to help me. I pulled myself together and found a way to pitch my tent on the side of the cliff.

As I write this, it's nine o'clock at night and I'm lying in my tent. Water is seeping through the roof, and the wind is picking up. I've tied myself to a small tree so I don't roll off the cliff in my sleep. I hope the tree holds my weight.

If I can get through this, I can get through anything.



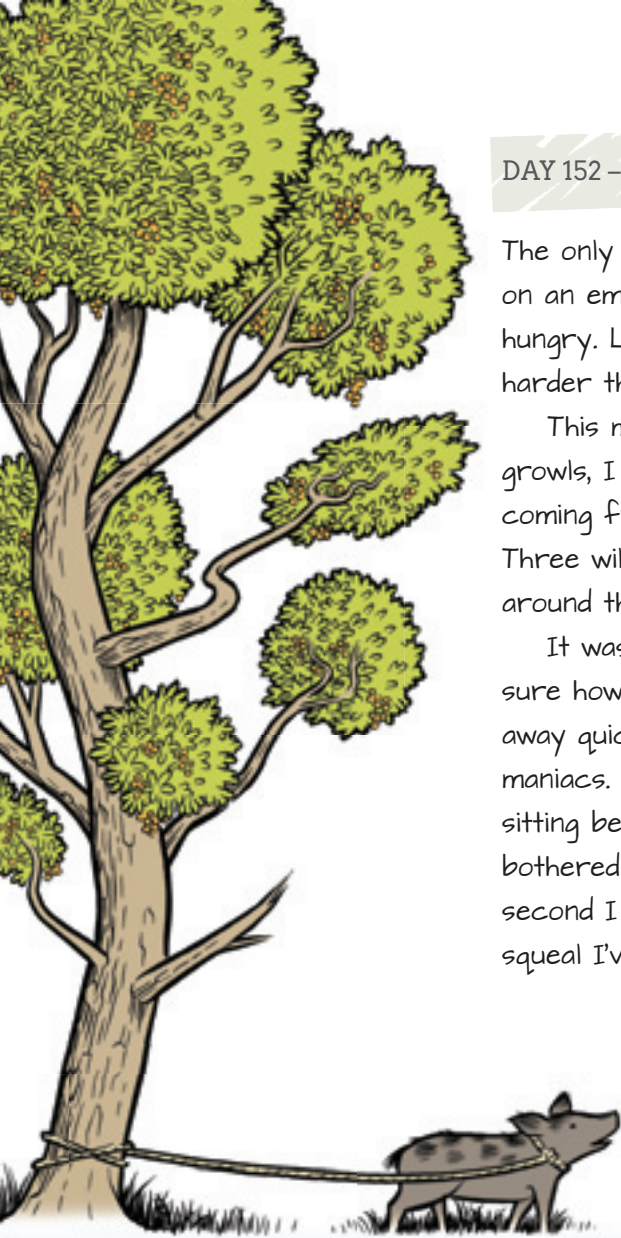
DAY 152 – **Wellington Coast**

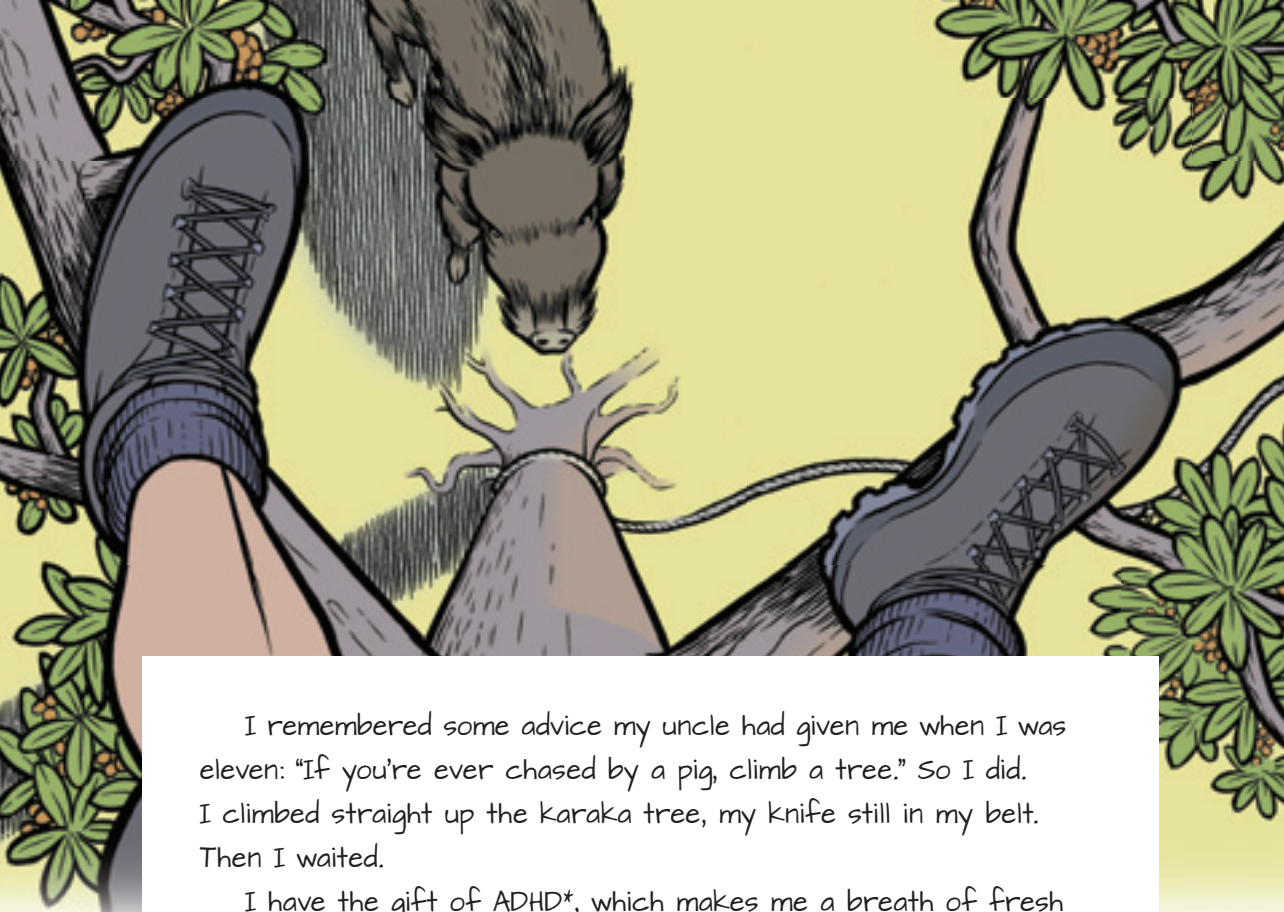
The only thing worse than going to bed on an empty stomach is waking up still hungry. Living off the land has been harder than I thought it would be.

This morning, in between stomach growls, I heard a sniffing noise coming from outside my tent. Three wild pigs were grazing around the edges. Breakfast!

It was my first pig hunt, and I wasn't too sure how to approach it. The bigger two got away quickly - running down the coast like maniacs. I set my sights on the runt. It was sitting beneath a karaka tree and didn't seem bothered that I was there. This changed the second I grabbed it. It let out the loudest squeal I've ever heard!

I didn't know how to make it stop, so I tied the pig to the tree and went to get my knife. On the way back, I locked eyes with a big, black sow at the top of a hill - Mumma pig! In a ball of dust and rocks, she roared towards me.





I remembered some advice my uncle had given me when I was eleven: "If you're ever chased by a pig, climb a tree." So I did. I climbed straight up the karaka tree, my knife still in my belt. Then I waited.

I have the gift of ADHD*, which makes me a breath of fresh air in everybody's lives. Because of this, sometimes I do things without thinking about the consequences. Mumma pig arrived and started scratching around below me. I jumped down on top of her, and tried to wrestle her to the ground. She dragged me for about 30 metres before I managed to wear her down. Next time I'll know better. For now, it's time to cook some bacon!

P.S. Six months have almost gone by, and I'm only in Wellington. It's going to take a lot longer than I thought it would to walk around New Zealand!

*ADHD: attention deficit hyperactivity disorder



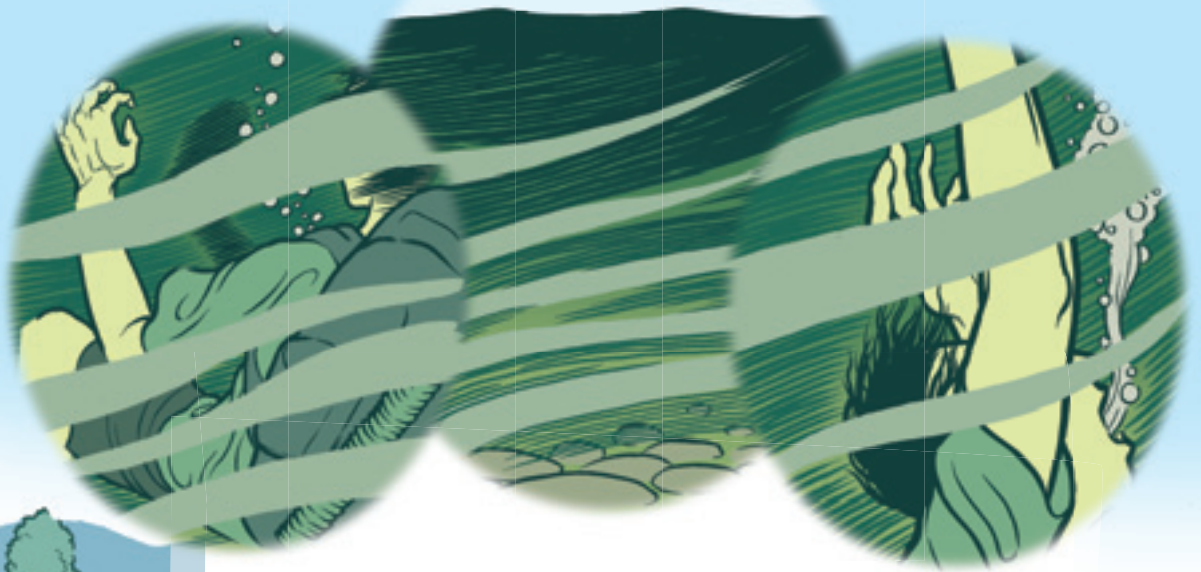


DAY 190 - **Takaka**

There are some experiences in life that nothing can prepare you for.

Earlier, after passing Takaka, I came across a river. It looked like a standard river crossing, and I thought it'd be shallow enough to walk through. It wasn't. I started wading through the ice-cold water but it kept getting deeper. My muscles seized up, and I couldn't think straight. I fell into the water, and with my boots on and the weight of my pack, I was pulled to the bottom. Then the panic set in.





I thrashed around under the water, fighting to stay afloat. I realised that if I pushed off from the bottom, I could get to the surface and gasp for air. I jumped up and down for a long minute until I finally found a log to stand on. With my head above the water, I could take off my boots and pack and throw them into the current. Then I managed to swim across to the edge of the river. I pulled myself up onto the bank, slicing my skin on oyster shells, and fell on my back.

Lying on the rocks, I felt an overwhelming sense of peace. I'd had a lucky escape, but I was doing what I loved. I was living life to its full potential.



Don't get me wrong, I'm still shaken up. For the past four hours, I've been recovering from mild hypothermia. I was lucky. An old farmer was sitting on his balcony watching me cross the river. He quickly came down, brought me back to his house, and helped me recover. My pack and boots even washed up on the bank next to me. I'm exhausted, but I'm alive.



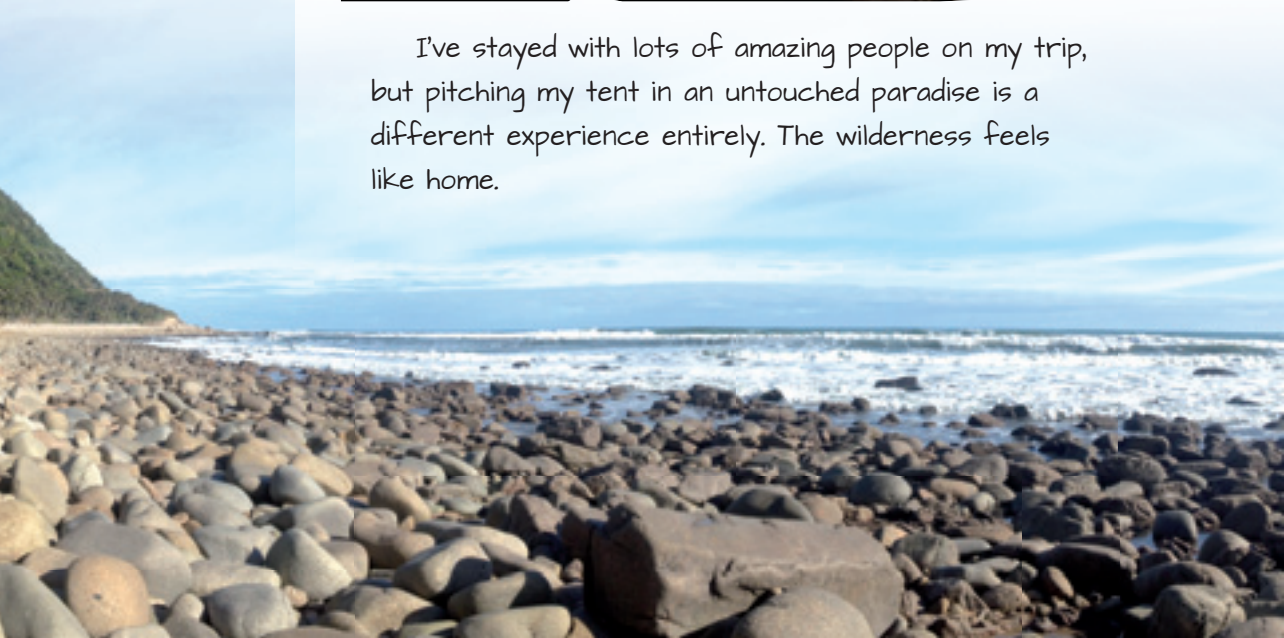


DAY 200 - *Kahurangi Coast*

I feel like an early explorer, stepping into a tropical rainforest. Thousands and thousands of nikau palms. Limestone cliffs like giant cheese graters. Birds, animals, seafood. I think I have found my favourite part of the country: the Kahurangi coast. It's also one of the hardest bits of coast I've walked along yet - so much climbing!



I've stayed with lots of amazing people on my trip, but pitching my tent in an untouched paradise is a different experience entirely. The wilderness feels like home.





DAY 342 - *Canterbury Coast*

The Canterbury coast is one giant cliff. I've been walking along the bottom of it, alone, for days. Well, almost alone. Four days in, I found a sheep that had fallen onto the beach. She was trapped, worn-out, and hungry - some feelings I could relate to! I made a leash with my rope and fed her the grass that she couldn't quite reach by herself. I even gave her a name: Bettie. Every now and then, Bettie got a fright and took off down the beach, dragging me along with her! Eventually I found a paddock with lots of other sheep, so I carried her up the cliff and dropped her off. I hope the farmer appreciates the gift. She was just the boost I needed.



A person is sitting on the ground next to a large, bright campfire. The fire is made of sticks and is burning brightly. The person is wearing a dark jacket and is looking towards the camera. The background shows a sunset or sunrise over a body of water.

DAY 436 - **Gisborne**

I think the hardest part of my adventure has been the loneliness. When I began my journey, I thought it would be good to be away from people for so long. I needed some time inside my own head to reflect on my life and figure out who I really was. But it's hard. I miss human connection. It's probably why I've enjoyed my time with Tarsh.

Tarsh heard about me through my Facebook page and was interested in my journey. She was camping in Raglan, on the other side of the island, but I thought I'd see if she wanted to walk with me anyway. Surprisingly, she said yes! The next day, at five o'clock in the morning, she came walking down the beach towards me with a pack on and some great-looking boots. It was the most beautiful surprise I'd had in a long time.





We went through some tough terrain together, and it was cool to be able to share the experience with her. We talked a lot. Tarsh taught me to live in the moment instead of worrying about the future or the past. She helped me to see the value in what I was doing.

This whole trip has taught me that positive human connection is the secret to life. The bonds we have with other people are what matter the most. Without my friends and family, I could never have come this far.



DAY 581 - **Northland**

Finally it's happened. I've been waiting to come face to face with a wild bull my entire trip! I was following a well-worn animal track in Northland - and there it was. Two dirty-white horns stuck out of its head like spears. I froze. The bull turned, saw me, and charged.



On my left was a flimsy-looking mānuka tree. On my right was a ditch full of gorse. The bull was charging closer and closer. At the last second, I jumped to the right and threw all my weight into the gorse. It was lucky I did because, as I got up and looked back, I saw the bull slam into the tree. It ripped the roots out of the ground and then took off into the bush.





DAY 600 – **Cape Rēinga**

Throughout this whole journey, I've been so excited about finishing. But with only one day of walking to go, I'm scared.

This last week has been one of the most amazing weeks I've ever had. After crossing the Parengarenga Harbour, I ran with wild horses and watched them gallop over the sand dunes. Camping in the dunes and looking back towards Great Exhibition Bay, the sand was like snow, and the water sparkled like a sapphire. I even had the chance to swim with dolphins! Everything around me seemed magical. I felt happier than I ever have before.

This trip has taken me four times longer than I thought it would – and I'm still not ready for it to end. I've realised that reaching the finish line is not what matters. It's the journey that's important.

I know that once I take my last steps to the tip of Cape Rēinga, my life will never be the same. I'll be stepping towards something new; the opportunities are endless.



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