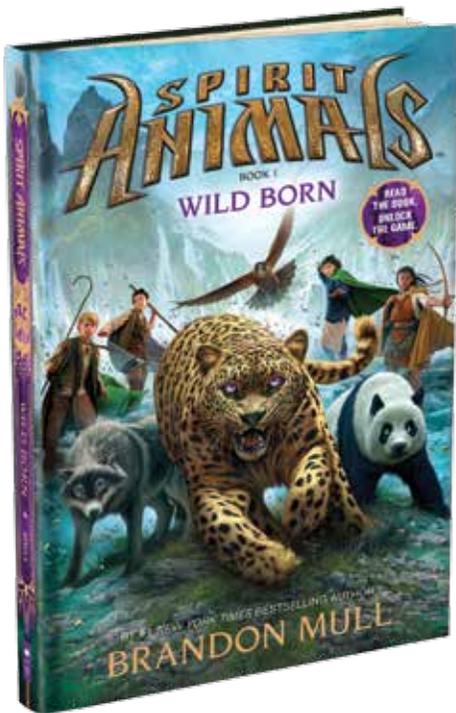


SPIRIT ANIMALS™

The Legend Lives in You



Scholastic is taking multiplatform publishing to another world with SPIRIT ANIMALS, a new series that combines the excitement of fantasy, the wonder of the animal world, and the magic of brilliant storytelling.

When we were looking for an author who could capture all this (and more!), our eyes turned to Brandon Mull, whose impressive imagination, humor, and sense of adventure have been well on display in his bestselling novels for middle-grade readers. Luckily for us, he was up to the task, and the result is now in your hands.

On the editorial side, Brandon found a kindred spirit in Zack Clark. I deeply suspect that the two of them could talk about magic and animals and adventure for hours. Turn this page over for a sampling of what you might hear if you eavesdropped on their conversation.

—**David Levithan**,
Publisher and Editorial Director

Q&A with Brandon Mull, author of Spirit Animals Book 1: Wild Born

Zack Clark: Hi, Brandon! I'm sure glad no one's eavesdropping on us here while we talk about magic and animals and adventure.

Brandon Mull: I know, right? They might suspect we were way too into all of this.

Though Spirit Animals is a fantasy, all the animals are based on real ones. How did you research for the books? Did you find out any cool animal facts?

I mostly looked at videos and articles on the Internet. When it came time to describe the animals, it helped a lot to have visual references for how they look and move. Among many other fun facts, I learned that leopard spots are called rosettes, and that wolves can see visions of the future. (I may have made up that second one.)

Which of the four animal/kid pairings was your favorite to write?

That's so hard to pick! Rollan and his falcon were fun to write because they are both very independent. The attributes that make them similar also keep them from trusting each other. I enjoyed Abeke and her leopard for the opposite reason—they were the most in sync of the pairings, and it let us glimpse how these relationships can work when things go well.

The four main characters are all so different. In terms of personality, who is the most like you? Who do you wish you were more like?

I'm probably most like Conor, who is eager to please and pretty loyal. I wish I had Meilin's confidence and fighting skills.

What excites you most about writing for a multiplatform series?

I'm thrilled about the many ways people will be able to interact with the story. If readers enjoy the world of Erdas, they can go online, get a spirit animal of their own, and join the fun. It's also really cool to see talented designers create a look for characters that I can only describe with words.

When did you start writing fantasy? Has it always been your favorite genre?

I've loved fantasy ever since reading the Narnia books. For some reason, I tend to daydream about adventure stories with fantasy elements. I live half in the real world and half elsewhere. I like messing with the rules of reality and seeing what story possibilities emerge from the new set of rules.



Photo credit: Marguerite La Riviere

Brandon carefully attempts to bond with a spirit animal.

Who or what influenced your love of reading and writing?

I have a very short attention span when I get bored. Growing up, adventure stories like Ender's Game and The Lord of the Rings felt like the opposite of boredom. The more I read stories like those, the more I daydreamed about my own adventures and wanted to share them.

Of course I have to ask...what's your spirit animal?

I'm reasonably smart, generally friendly, and kind of goofy. Though I'm no great swimmer, a good match might be a dolphin.

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