

# Make-Believe T&E

Nebraska  
Rare Species  
Educator Packet  
grades K - 4

## **OBJECTIVES**

Students will (1) learn about several threatened and endangered species in Nebraska.

## **METHOD**

Students color and cut-out masks of several different Nebraska threatened and endangered species. Students then put on these masks and pretend to be threatened & endangered species while discussing the characteristics of the animal and learning about its habitat.

## **MATERIALS**

- copies of threatened & endangered species masks (at least one copy per child)
- markers or crayons
- scissors
- paper punch
- string
- photos of Nebraska threatened & endangered species (optional)

## **BACKGROUND**

There are a wide variety of reasons why an animal may become threatened or endangered. Habitat loss, habitat degradation, and historically unregulated

hunting are the most common. Often before a species is listed as threatened or endangered, it is first listed as an "At-Risk Species." This means that although the species is not threatened or endangered, it is headed in that direction. If the species' population declines further, it is then listed as threatened. Following careful analysis and much research, the species is listed as endangered if the population drops further.

There are nearly 9,000 species in the U.S. listed on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's "Federal Endangered Species List". Nebraska has 14 federally listed species.

In addition to federally listed species, there are also state listed species. All federally listed species are on the State List. However, all Nebraska state listed species are not on the federal list. For example, Saltwort is on the Nebraska State Endangered Species List but it is not on the federal list.

Every species - endangered or not - has certain things it needs - this is called its "habitat." A habitat includes the food, water, shelter, and space in the proper arrangement for a specific species. Although all animals need food, water, shelter, and space, each species is different in the amount of water it needs, the kind of food it must have, the type of shelter it prefers, and the amount of space it needs.

When one (or several) aspects of a species habitat are disturbed, it can cause stress or even death for the species. Too much habitat change - in the form of habitat loss and habitat degradation (pollution, noise, invasive species, climate change, etc.) can cause many individuals of a species to die. If too many individuals die, a species is likely to

Subject Areas: Science, Environmental Education, Art

Duration: 30-50 minutes

Group Size: any

Setting: indoors

Vocabulary: threatened, endangered, habitat



become at-risk. If the habitat change continues to occur, the species will likely become threatened or endangered.

### **PROCEDURE, PART I**

1. Talk with students about what it means for a plant or animal to be threatened or endangered.

2. Ask students if they can think of any species that might be threatened or endangered. Show the students pictures of some of Nebraska's threatened and endangered species.

3. Talk with students about some of the species of which they will be making masks - River Otter, Piping Plover, Massasauga, Swift Fox, Salt Creek Tiger Beetle, Sturgeon.

Talk about where the animal lives, what it eats, how it moves, what type of body covering it has (fur, scales, exoskeleton, feathers).

### **PROCEDURE, PART II**

1. Make copies of the masks (at least 1 per student).

2. Allow children to color their mask as they choose. You may want to have photos of the actual species for students to look at.

3. Help students cut out their mask and punch a hole for the string.

4. Help students tie a string to their mask and put it on their head.

5. Invite children to pretend to be their animal... move like their animal, eat like their animal, sleep like their animal, etc.

### **EXTENSIONS**

1. As a class, read a book about threatened or endangered species.

2. Encourage children to share their masks with other students. Pretend to be other endangered species.

3. Create a play for students to act-out using their masks.

### **RELATED WEBSITES**

[Nebraska Game and Parks Commission](http://www.ngpc.state.ne.us/wildlife/programs/nongame)

[www.ngpc.state.ne.us/wildlife/programs/nongame](http://www.ngpc.state.ne.us/wildlife/programs/nongame)

[U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Nebraska Field Office](http://www.fws.gov/nebraska)

[www.fws.gov/nebraska](http://www.fws.gov/nebraska)

[U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Endangered Species](http://www.fws.gov/endangered)

[www.fws.gov/endangered](http://www.fws.gov/endangered)

[U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Endangered Species Educator and Kids Webpage](http://www.fws.gov/endangered/kids/index.html)

[www.fws.gov/endangered/kids/index.html](http://www.fws.gov/endangered/kids/index.html)

### **BOOKS & PRINTED MATERIAL**

[Will We Miss Them? Endangered Species \(Nature's Treasures\)](#) by Alexandra Wright

ISBN-13: 978-0881064889

[Can We Save Them? Endangered Species of North America](#) by David Dobson. ISBN-13: 978-0881068221

[The Atlas of Endangered Species: Revised & Updated](#) by Richard Mackay. ISBN-13: 978-0520258624

[Gone Wild \(Caldecott Honor Book\)](#) by David McLimans; ISBN-13: 978-0802795632

[Almost Gone: The World's Rarest Animals \(Let's-Read-and-Find-Out Science 2\)](#) by Steve Jenkins  
ISBN-13: 978-0060536008

[Through Endangered Eyes: A Poetic Journey into the Wild](#) by Rachel Allen Dillon  
ISBN-13: 978-0893170677

[I Wonder Why The Dodo is Dead and other questions about extinct and endangered animals](#) by Andrew Charman  
ISBN-13: 978-0753460955

[The Lorax](#) by Dr. Seuss  
ISBN-13: 978-0394823379

### **PERMISSIONS & CREDITS**

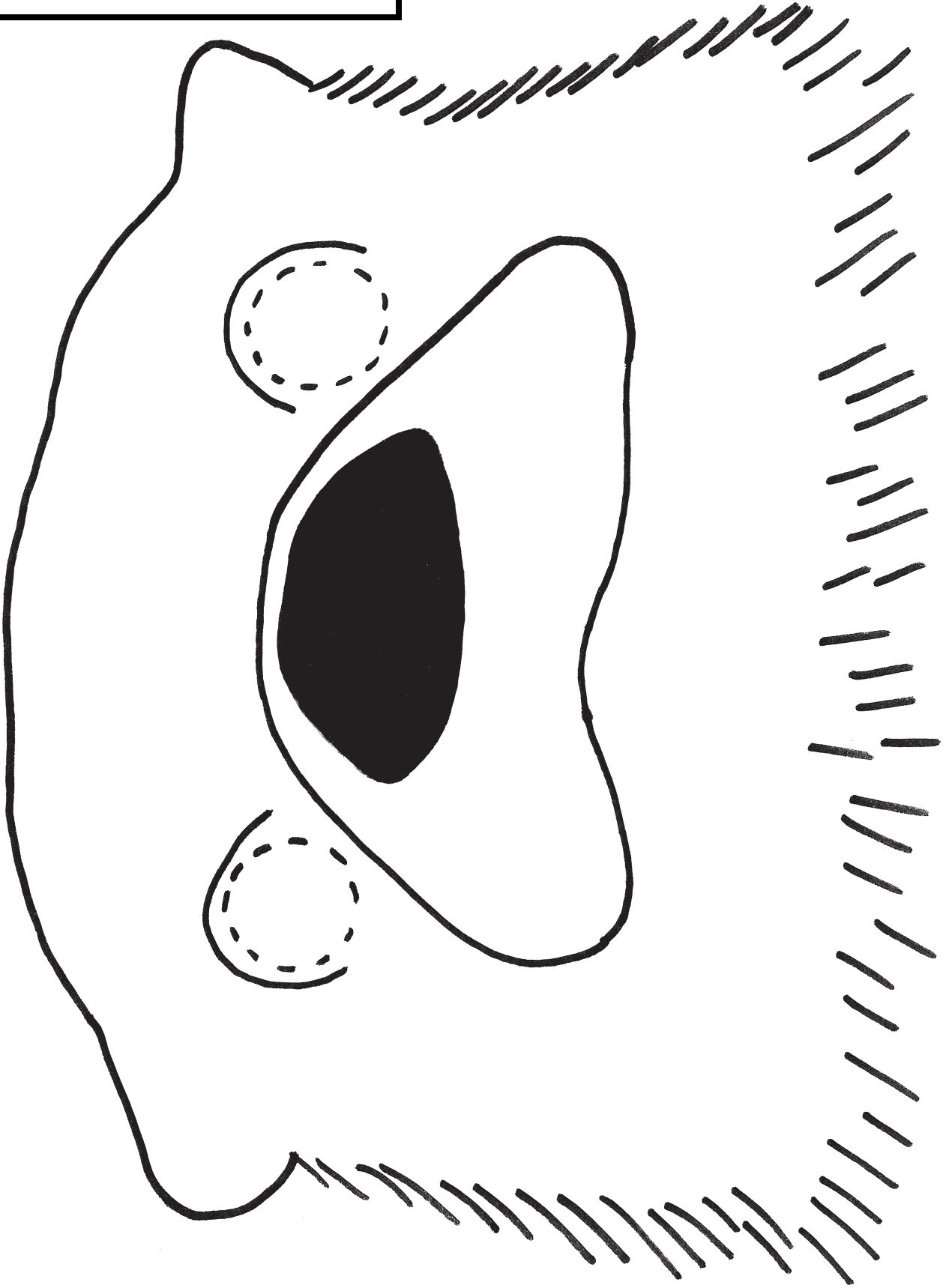
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# RIVER OTTER

River Otters...

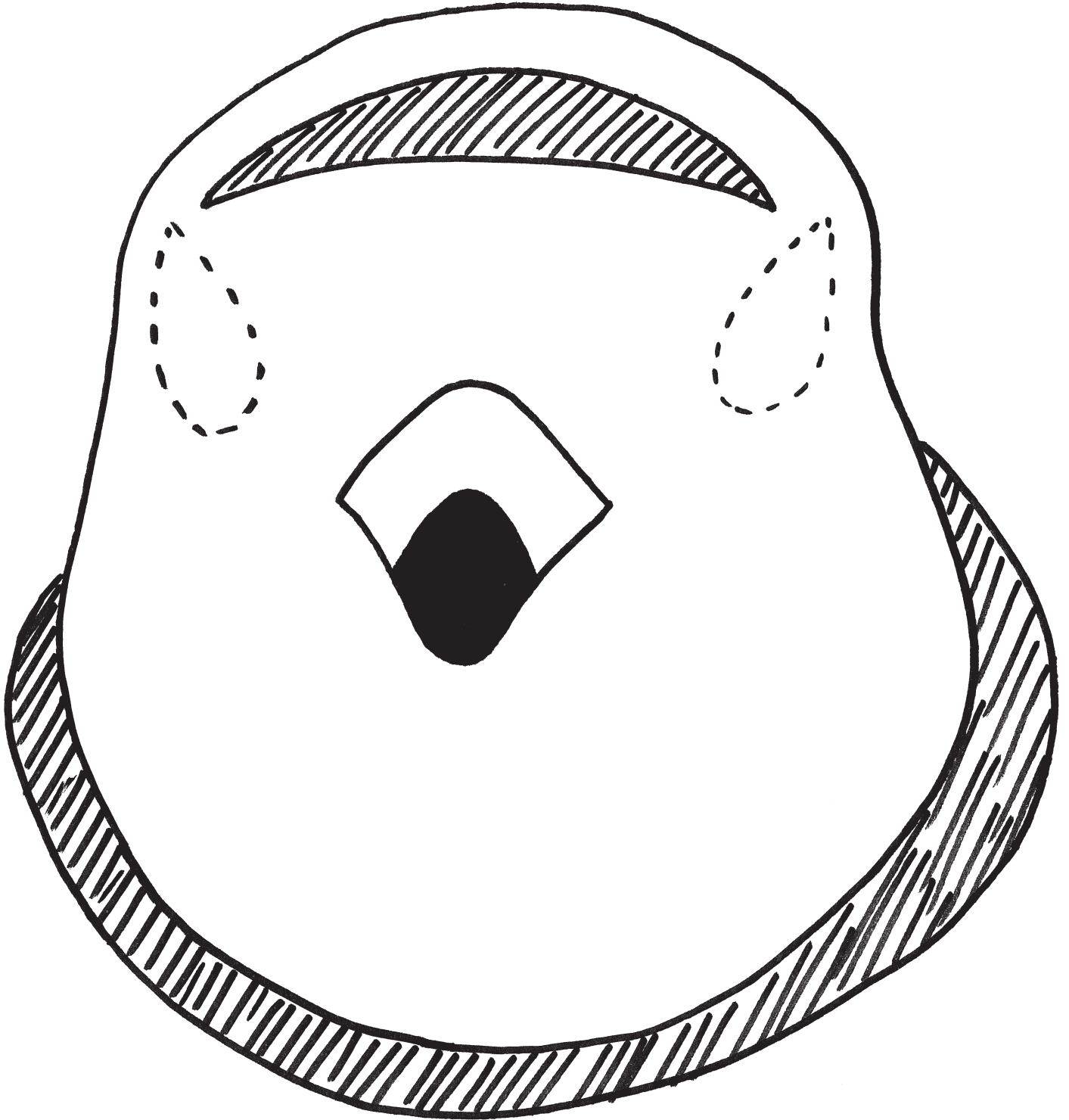
- are found along all major rivers in Nebraska.
- are often playful and curious about new things.
- are great swimmers.
- eat a variety of foods including fish, crayfish, amphibians, and insects.



# PIPING PLOVER

Piping Plover...

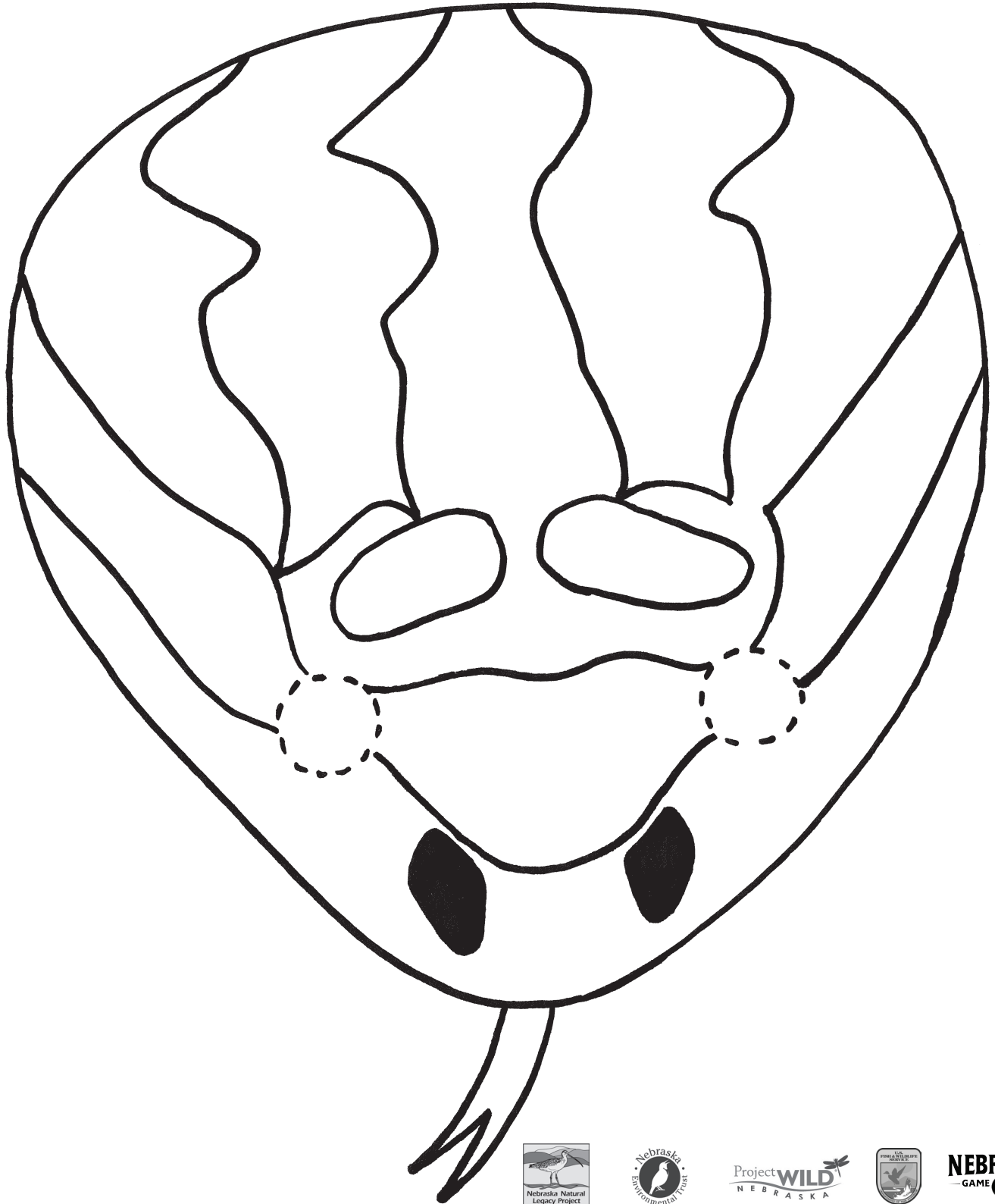
- are found in Nebraska during the spring and summer months along the Platte and Missouri Rivers.
- make their nests on open sandbars in the middle of the river.
- like to eat insects.



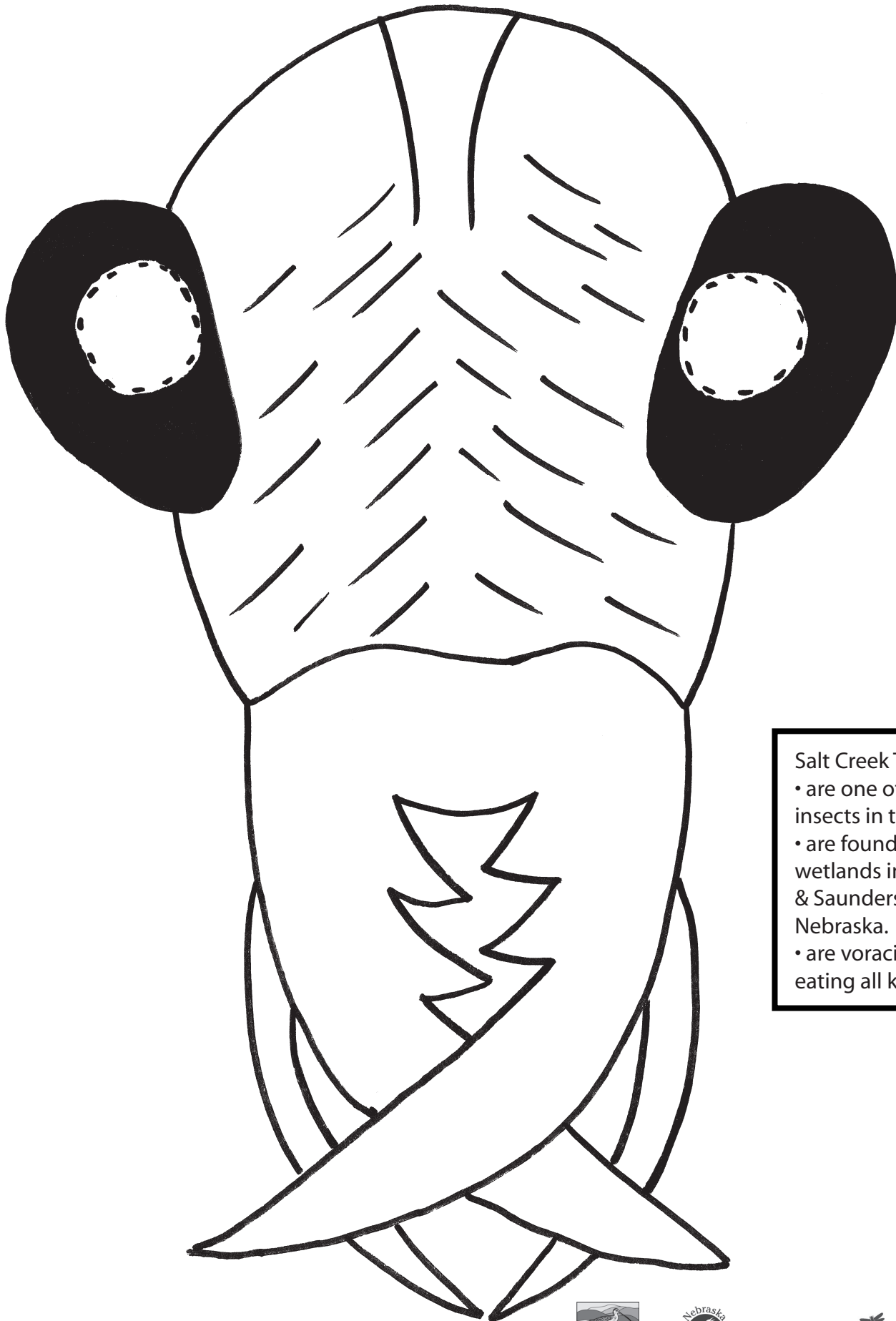
# MASSASAUGA

Massasauga...

- is the smallest rattlesnake in Nebraska.
- are venomous
- are found in wetlands and wet prairies in southeast Nebraska.



# SALT CREEK TIGER BEETLE

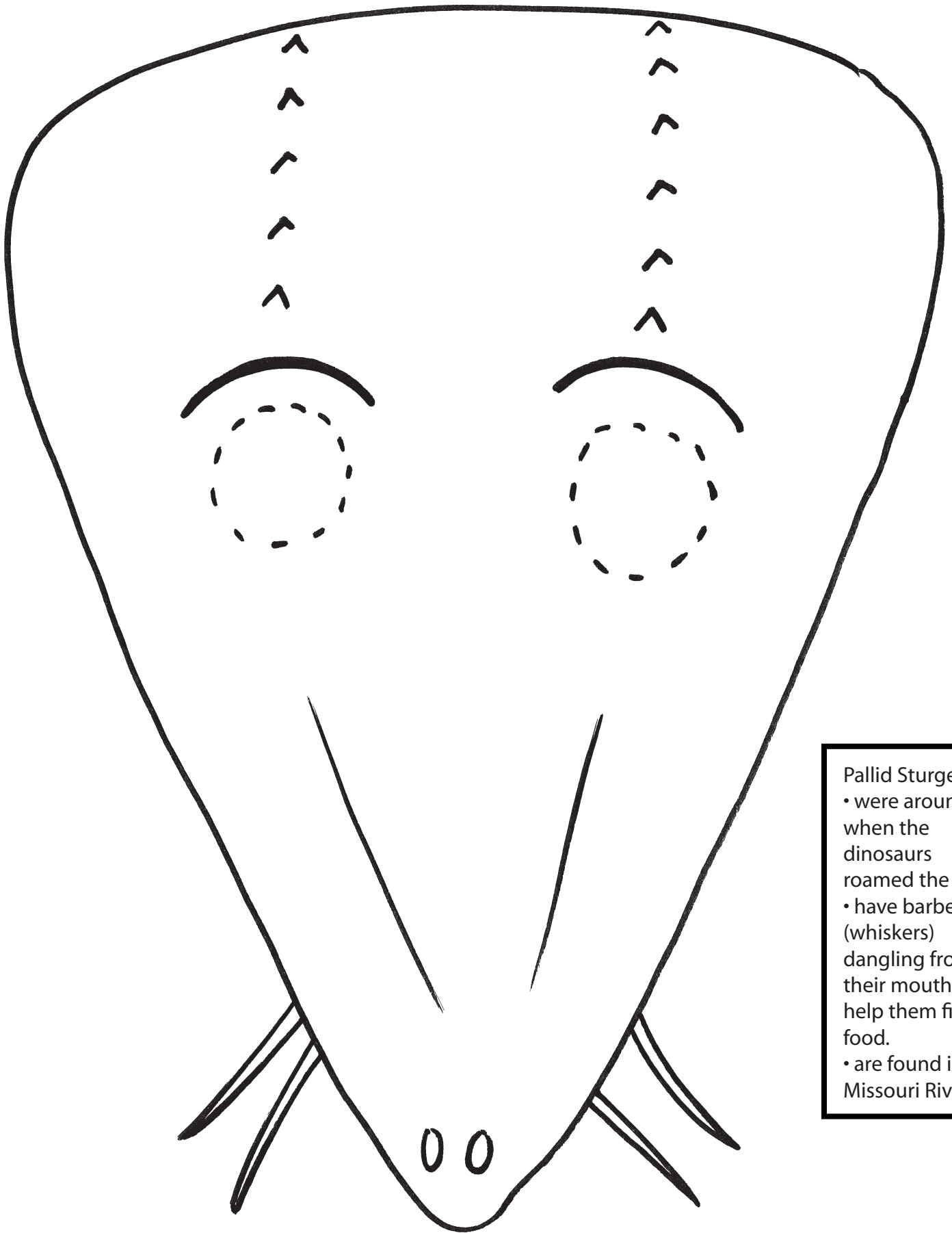


Salt Creek Tiger Beetles...

- are one of the rarest insects in the world.
- are found only in saline wetlands in Lancaster & Saunders Counties in Nebraska.
- are voracious predators eating all kinds of insects.



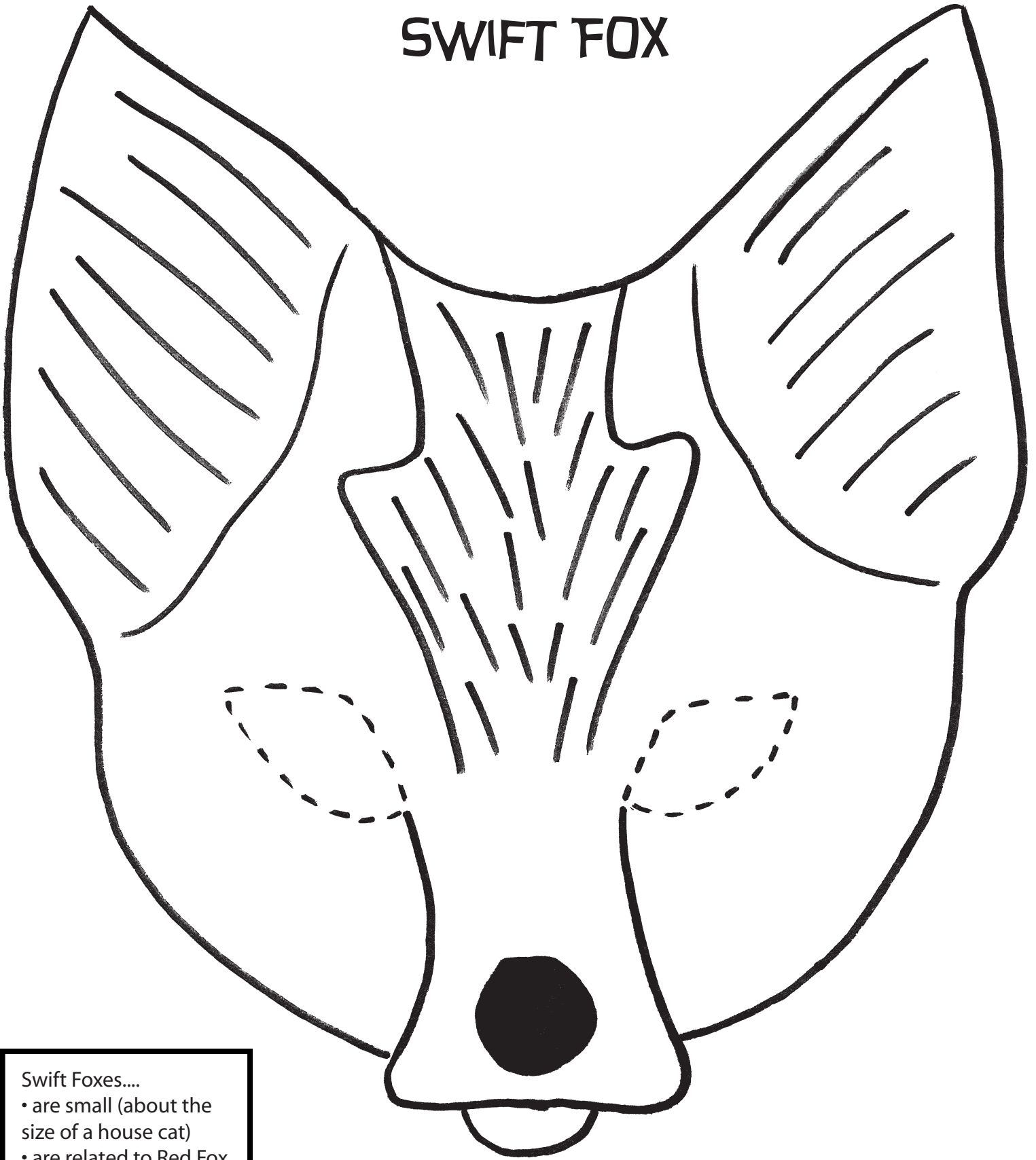
# PALLID STURGEON



Pallid Sturgeon...

- were around when the dinosaurs roamed the Earth.
- have barbels (whiskers) dangling from their mouth to help them find food.
- are found in the Missouri River.

# SWIFT FOX



## Swift Foxes....

- are small (about the size of a house cat)
- are related to Red Fox, Coyotes, and Wolves.
- eat rabbits, prairie dogs, mice, berries and seeds.
- are found in shortgrass prairies.

