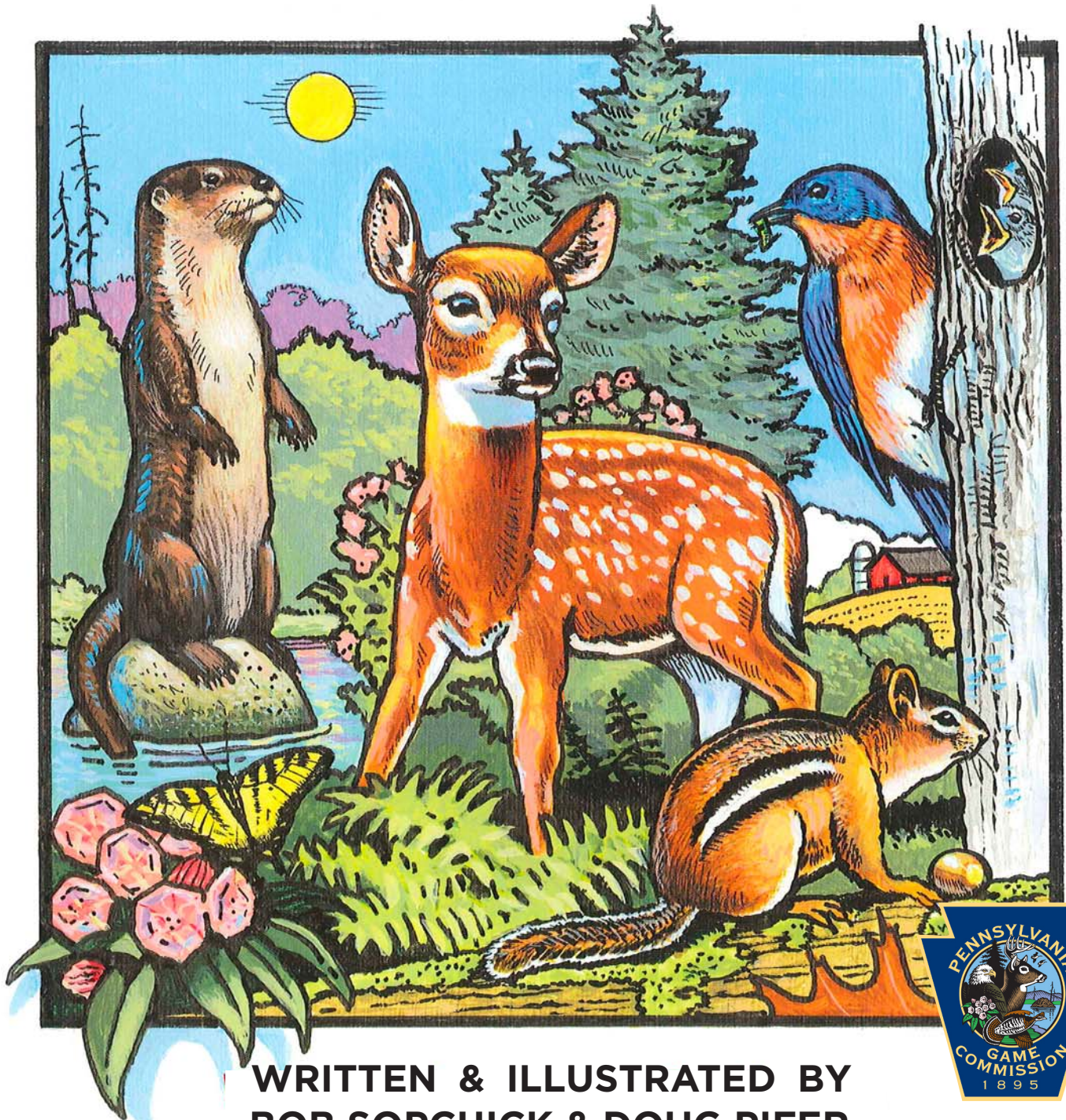


# WILDLIFE OF PENNSYLVANIA



WRITTEN & ILLUSTRATED BY  
BOB SOPCHICK & DOUG PIFER



Dear Teachers and Parents,

In our continuing efforts to bring the wonders of our natural world to the classroom, we are pleased to present this book about Pennsylvania wildlife. It is essential that children have an awareness of Pennsylvania's diverse wildlife species and related habitats. With that in mind, we selected species from wetlands, forests and farmlands, as well as wildlife from cities and suburban neighborhoods. The last section of this book shows ways that children and their families can practice conservation and enjoy the outdoors.

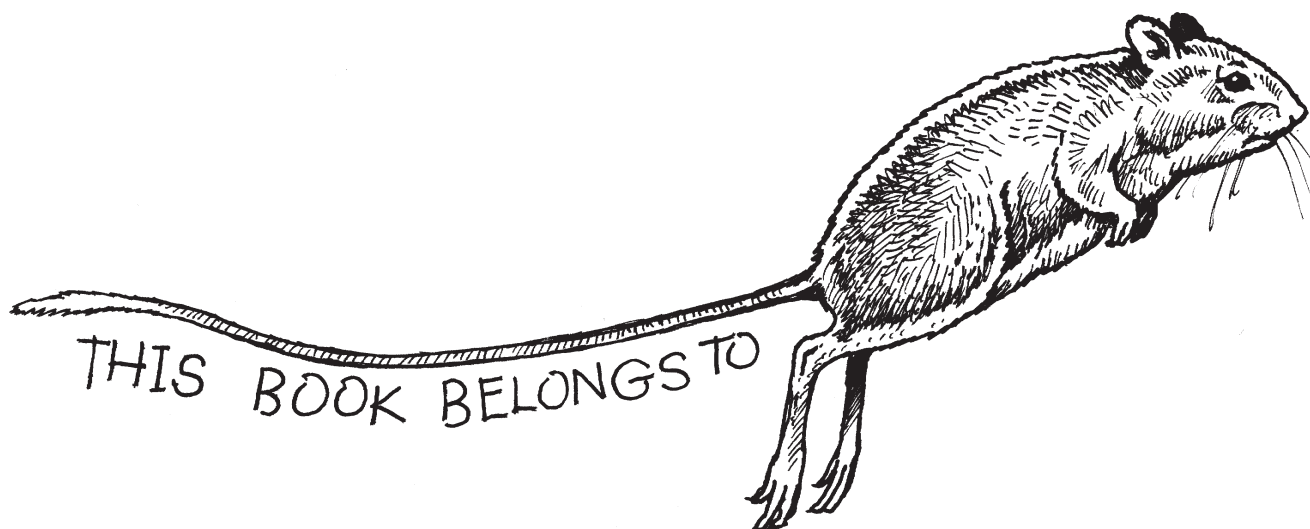
Each section has an introductory habitat page. Most elements depicted in each habitat are not generic, but specific to that habitat. An identifying habitat symbol appears with each animal. Species descriptions provide a platform for further discussion and study.

The illustrations are specially designed. With the several different line weights, students are able to discern shape, spatial relationships and groupings of related elements. They can approximate size and scale of wildlife. The textures of fur, feathers and other tactile elements of the environment are suggested in each image. Most of the illustrations portray wildlife in some form of natural activity as opposed to static portraits. Reflections and shadows describe surface movement and form.

The natural world is alive with motion and vibrancy, as are the fertile imaginations of our children. It is our goal that this publication fosters a desire to learn more about the natural world, and stimulates a respect for our rich natural resources and legacy of wonder in Penn's Woods.

Bob Sopchick  
Author/Illustrator





# **WILDLIFE OF PENNSYLVANIA**

Written and Illustrated by  
**Bob Sopchick & Doug Pifer**

© 1999 Pennsylvania Game Commission  
2001 Elmerton Avenue  
Harrisburg, PA 17110  
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Updated 2024



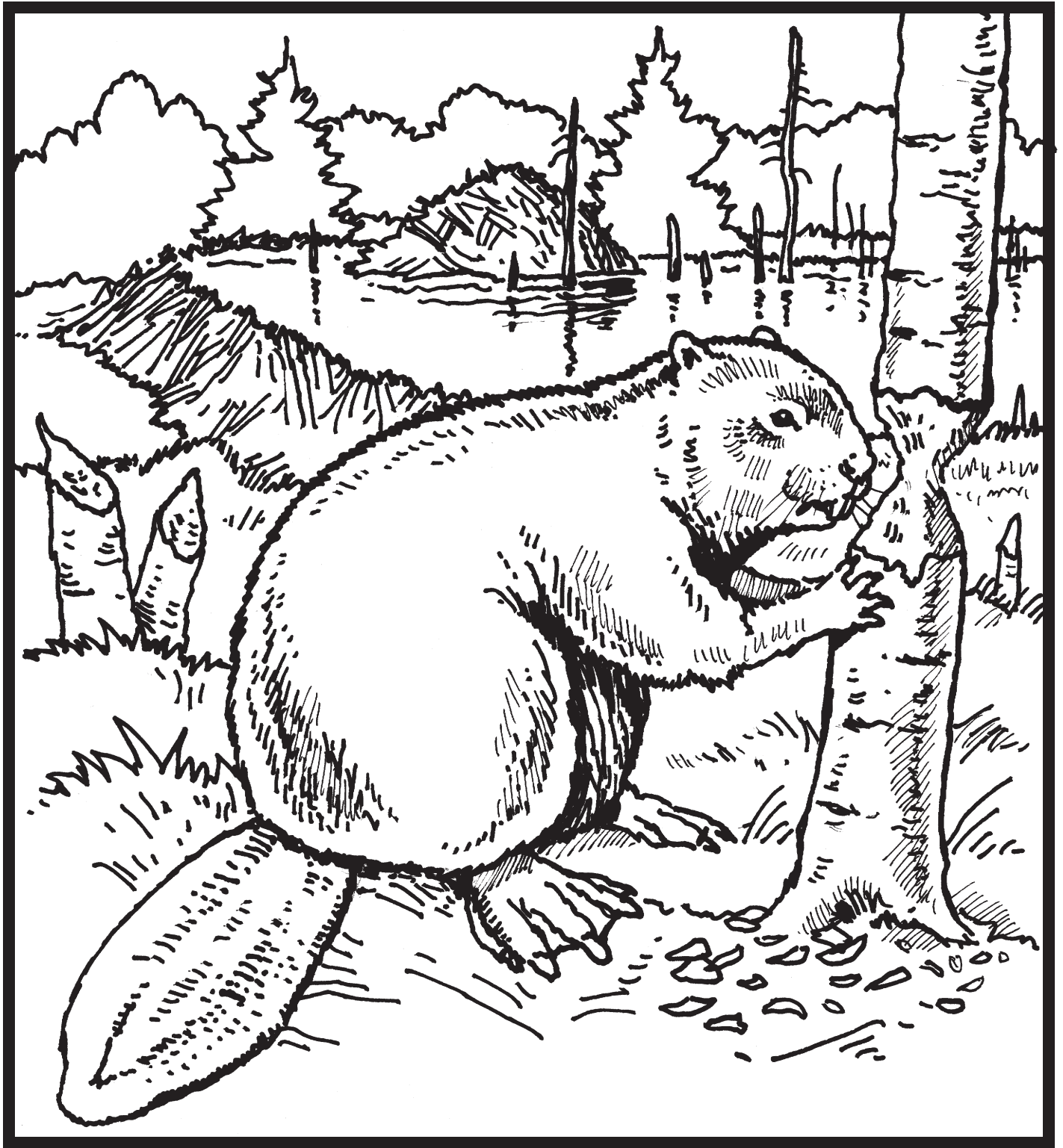
# WETLANDS

All living things need water to survive. Wetland habitats contain water all or part of the year. Wetlands are places where many animals find food, water and shelter. Some types of wetlands are marshes, swamps, bogs, and beaver ponds.



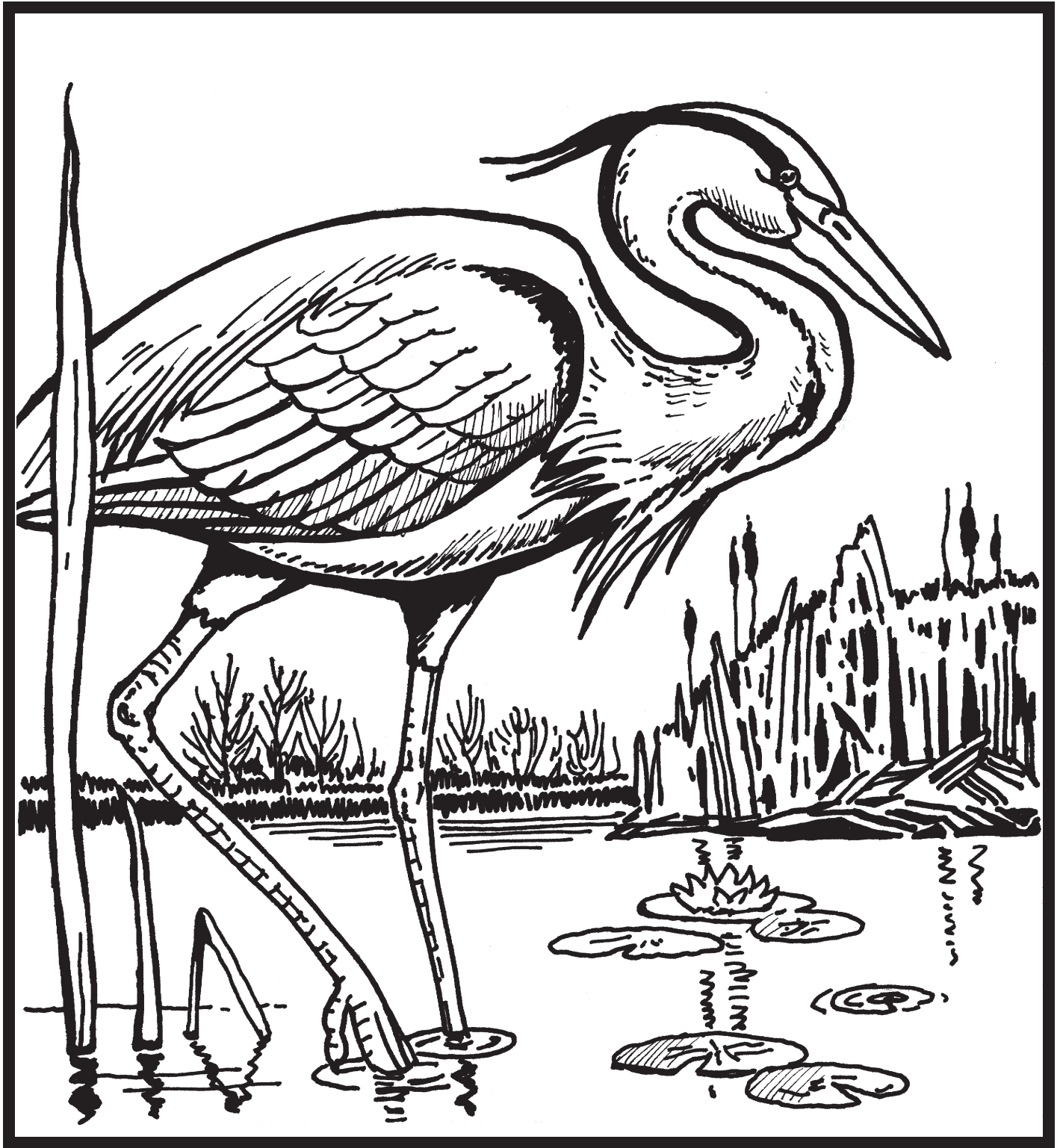
**The lily pad symbol appears with wildlife that live in wetlands.**





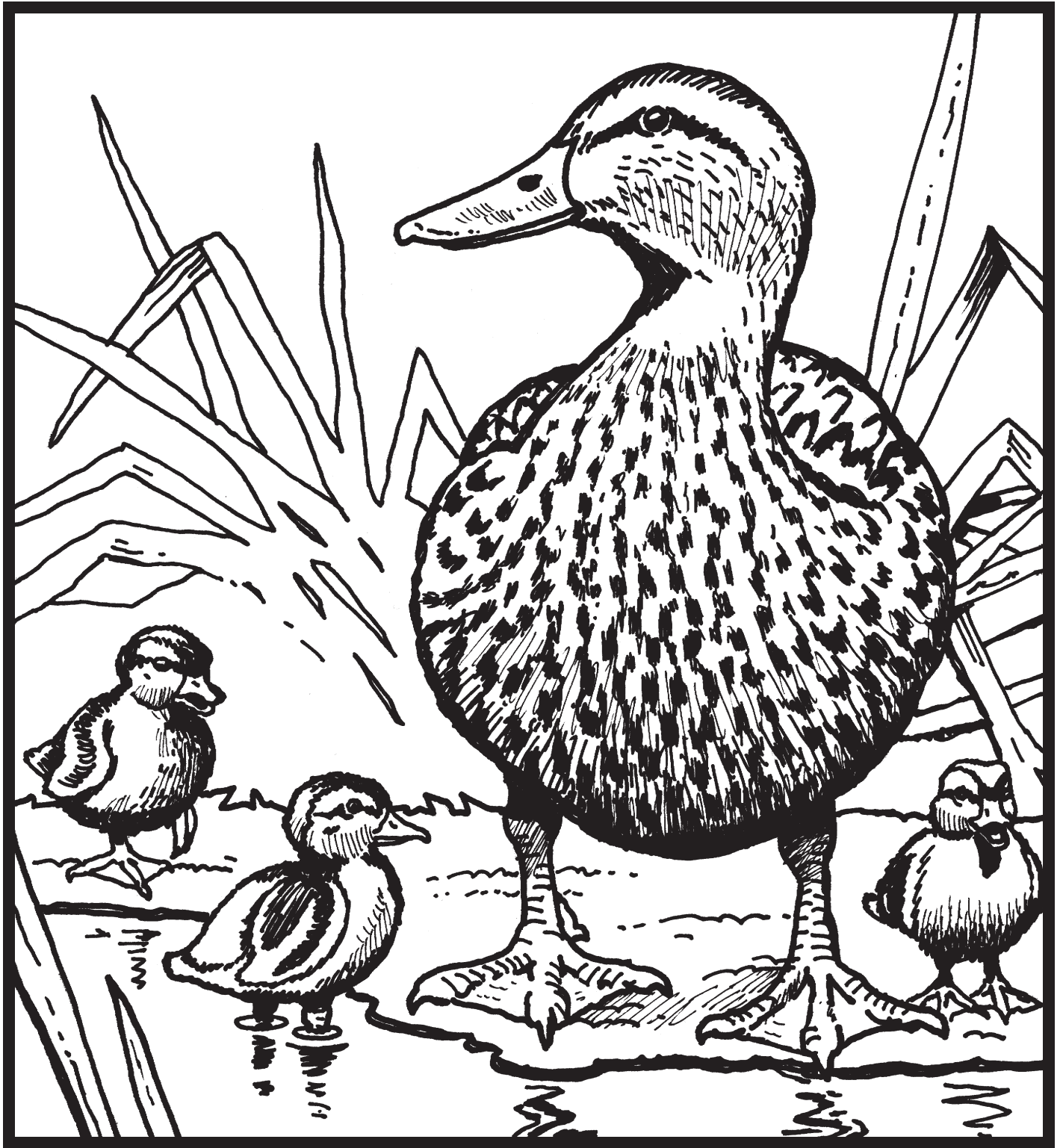
## Beaver

Beavers cut down trees with their teeth. They use the trees to make dams and a house called a lodge. The beaver eats the bark and branches from trees. This busy rodent creates a wetland where many other animals can live.



## Great blue heron

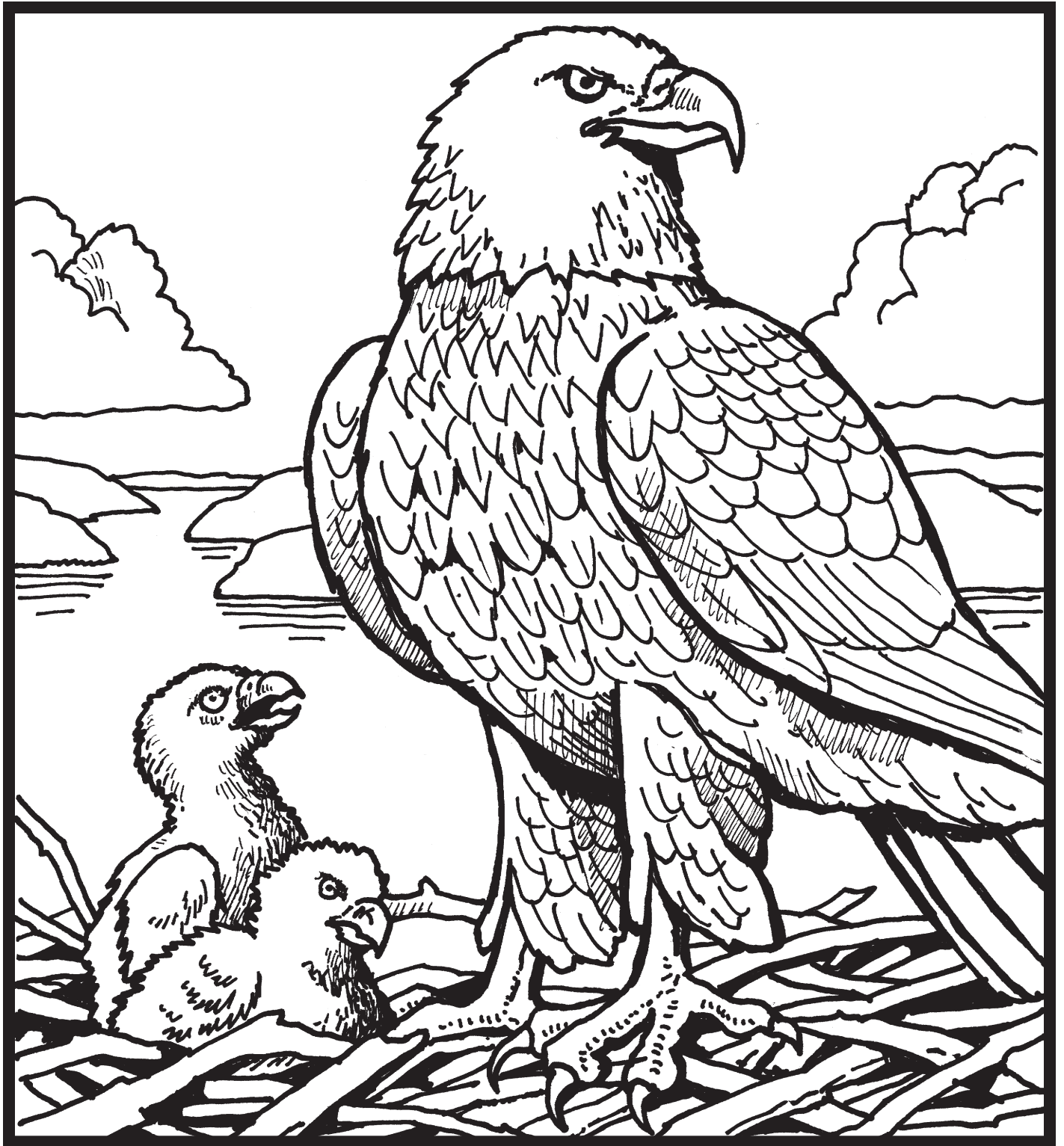
This is the tallest bird in Pennsylvania. It is about four feet tall and has long legs like stilts. The heron wades slowly or stands very still in shallow water. The heron waits for a fish or frog to swim near, then catches it with its long bill.



## Mallard

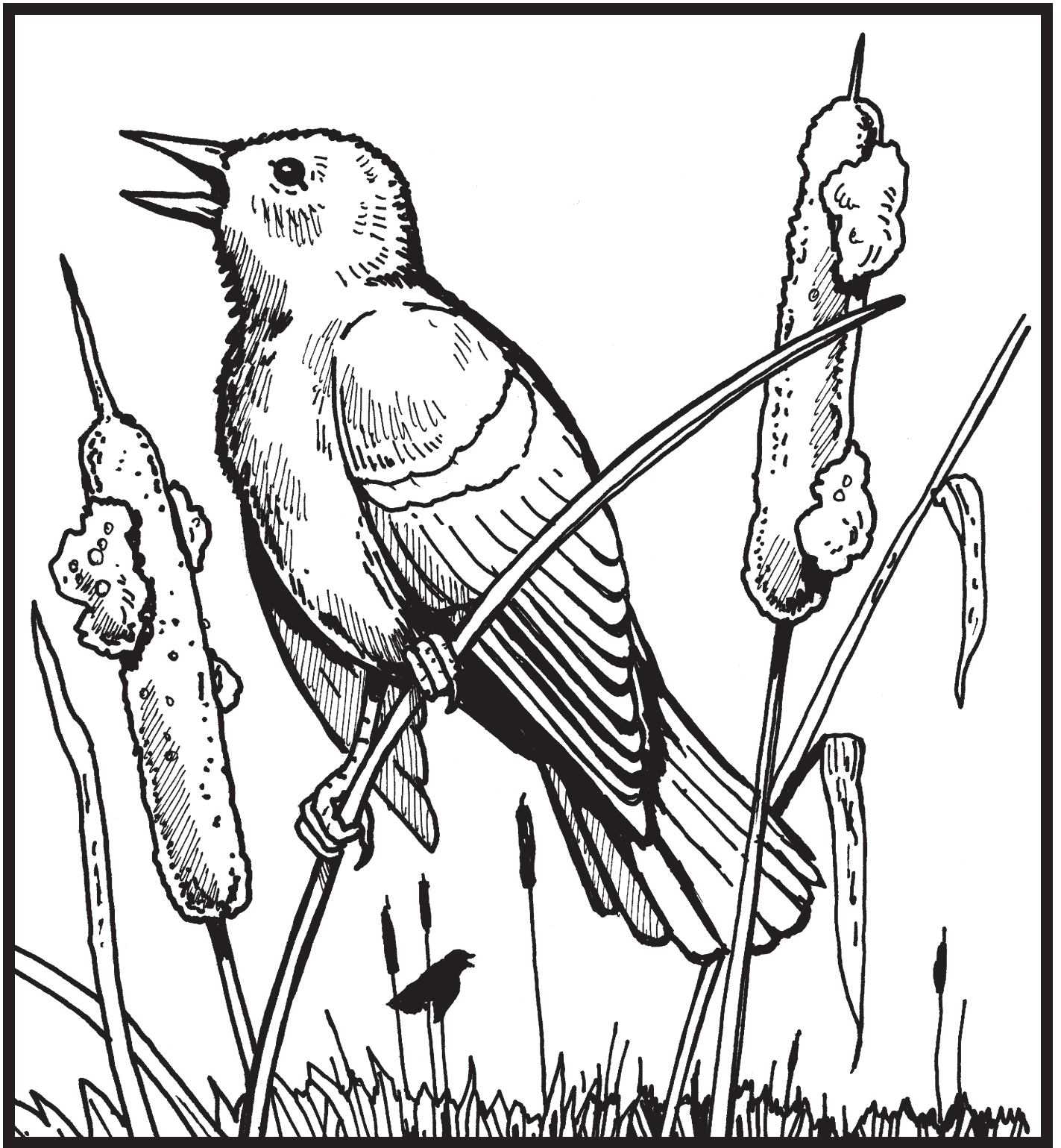
The hen mallard makes her nest in tall grass. She is the color of dried grass and is hard to see while she sits on her eggs. This is called camouflage. Mallards are puddle ducks, living in shallow marshes and rivers rather than of large lakes and bays. They feed by dabbling or tipping rather than diving for food.





## **Bald eagle**

This large bird of prey builds a huge nest in a tree near water. The eagle parents feed their young fish and meat. The bald eagle is not really bald, but has white feathers on its head and tail. The bald eagle was made the national symbol of America in 1782.



## Red-winged blackbird

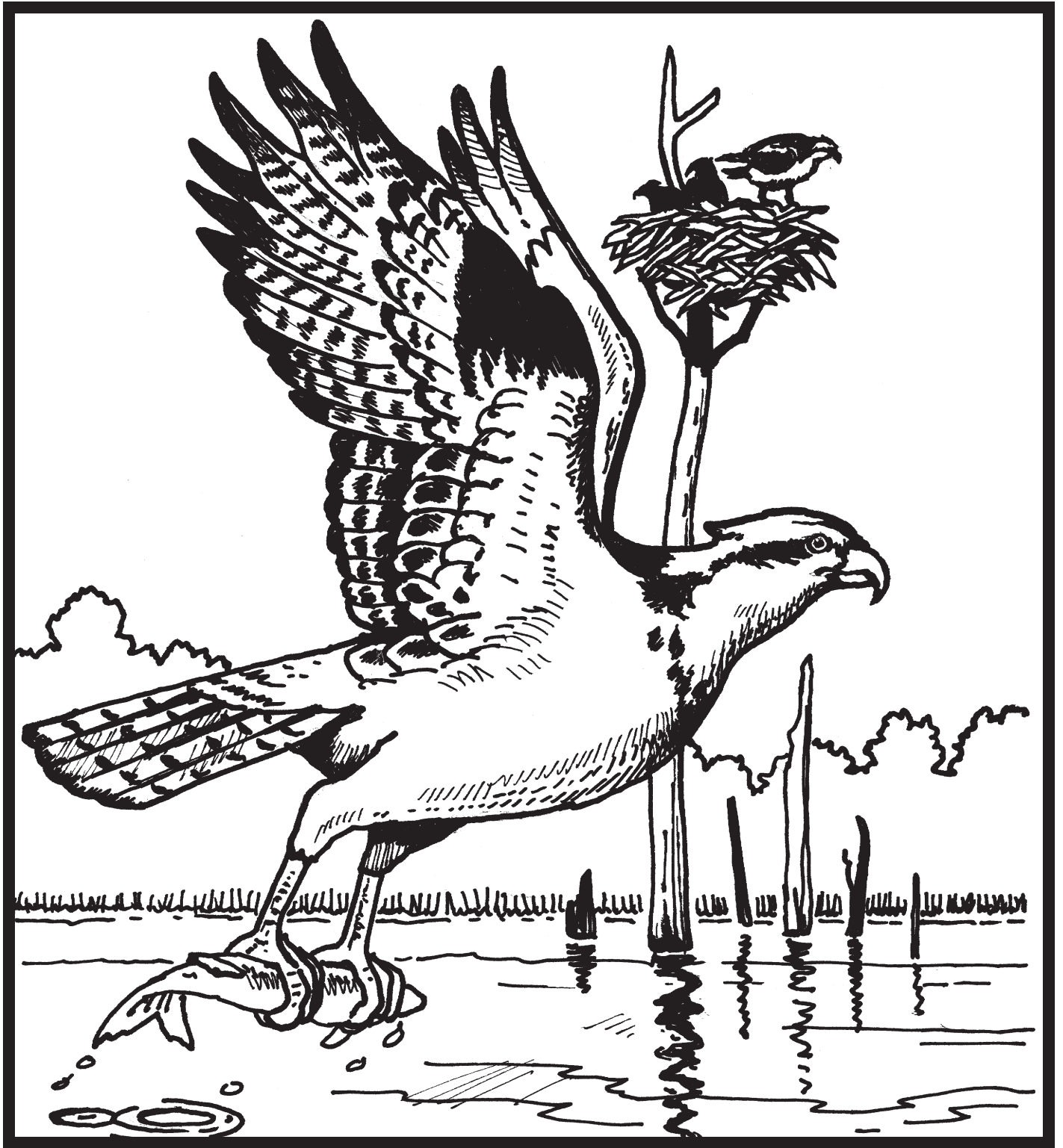
In spring, male red-winged blackbirds flash their red wing patches to attract females. Redwings nest and raise their young in wetlands. Later in the year, red-winged blackbirds may be seen with other blackbirds in large groups called flocks.



## **River otter**

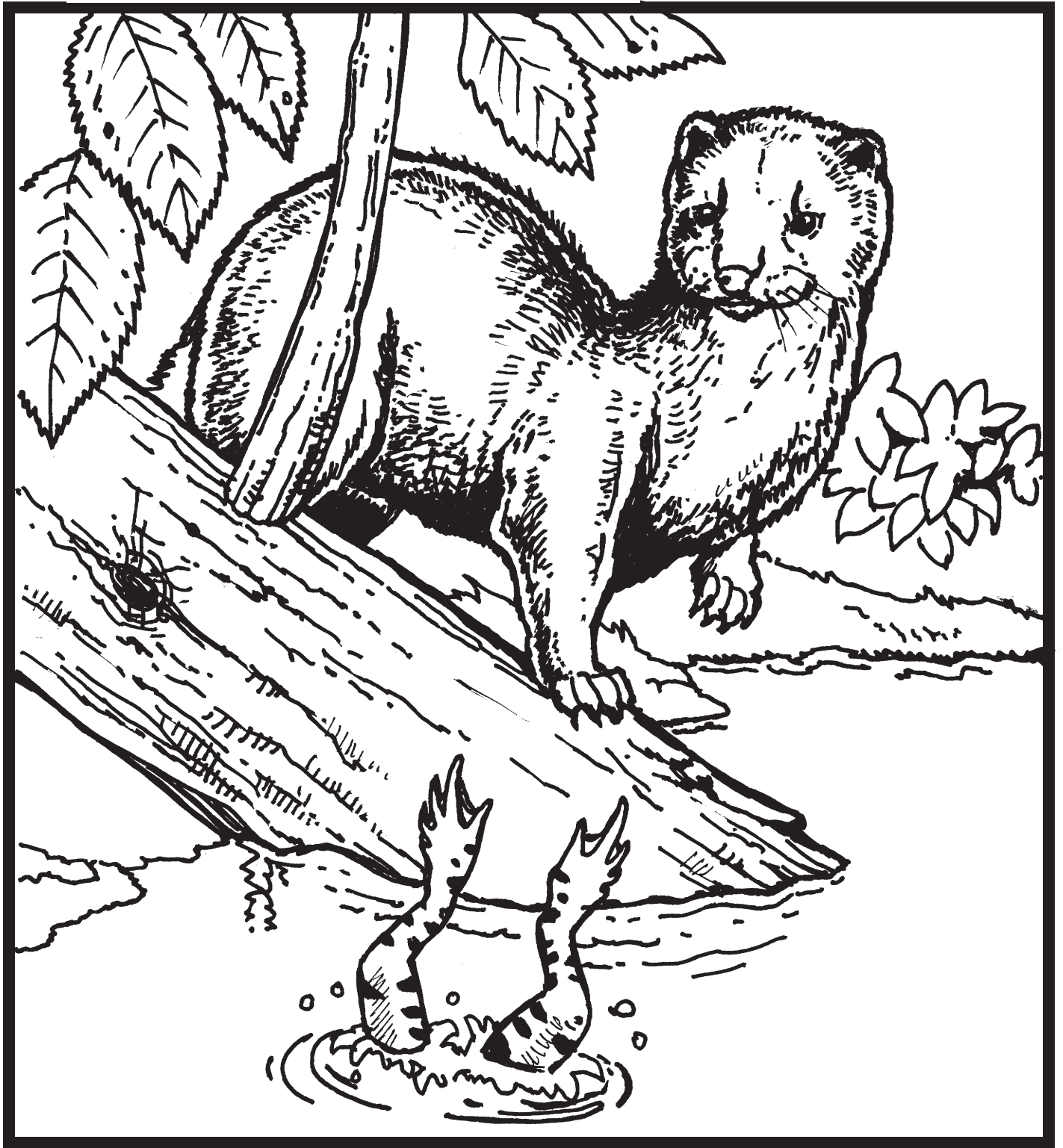
The playful river otter likes to slide into the water. At one time the otter was almost gone from our state. The Game Commission brought some otters from other states to live here. River otters are rich, dark brown in color with lighter underparts and a black nose.





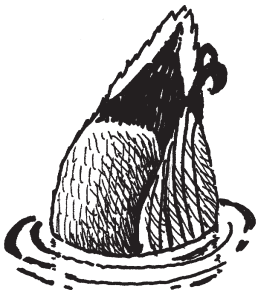
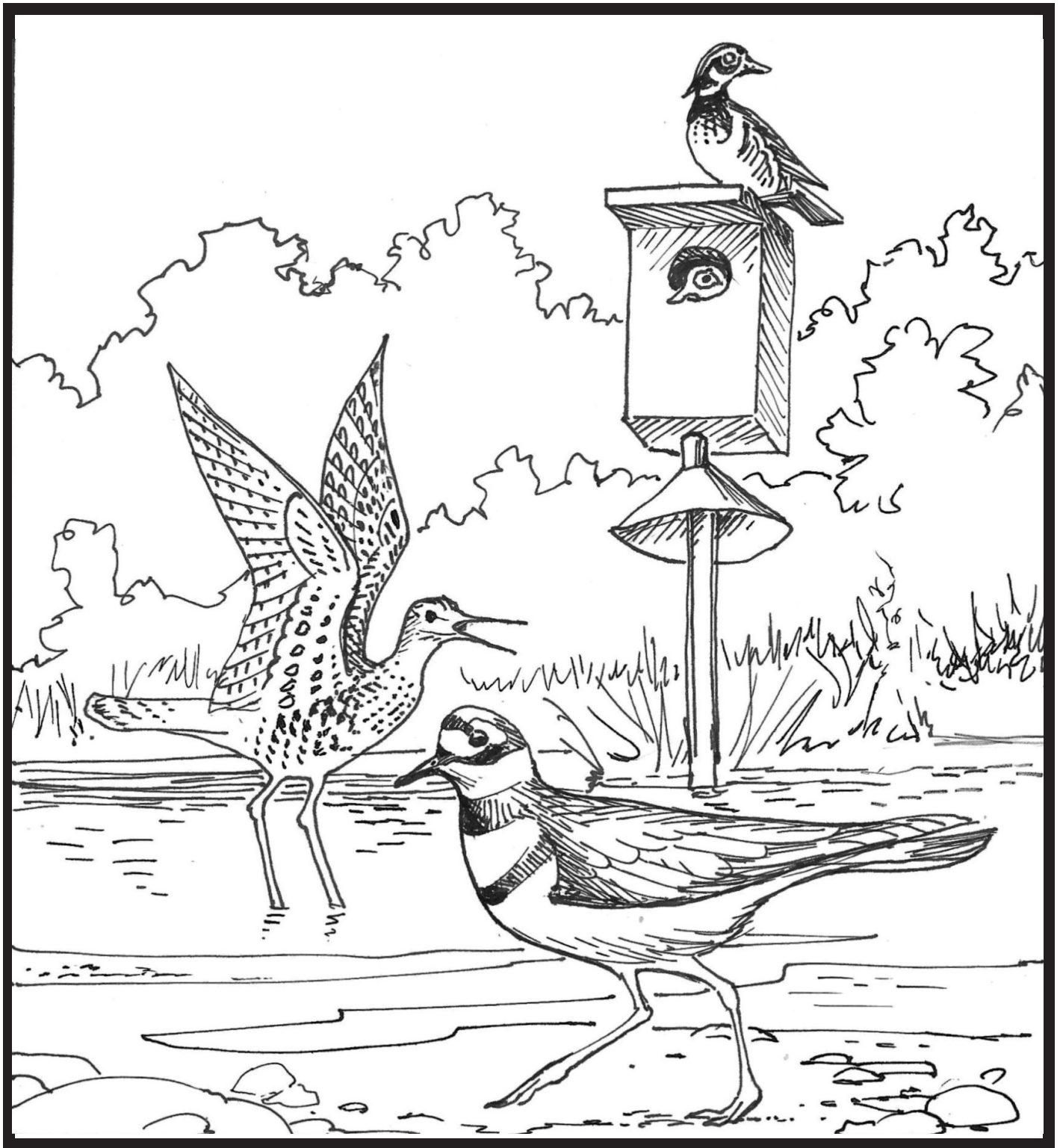
## Osprey

The osprey is sometimes called a fish hawk. It flies over the water until it sees a fish, then drops down onto it with a big splash. It catches the fish with its feet. The osprey has tiny bumps called spicules on its feet and long talons to help it hold the slippery fish.



## Mink

The small, quick mink hunts along the edges of wetlands. Mink are good swimmers. Their soft fur is thick and keeps them warm and dry. Mink are members of the weasel family. This mink almost caught a frog.



Wetlands provide crucial habitats for a diverse range of wildlife, including the wood duck, yellowlegs, and killdeer pictured here! Wetlands improve water quality, protect against flooding, stabilize shorelines, and minimize the effects of climate change.



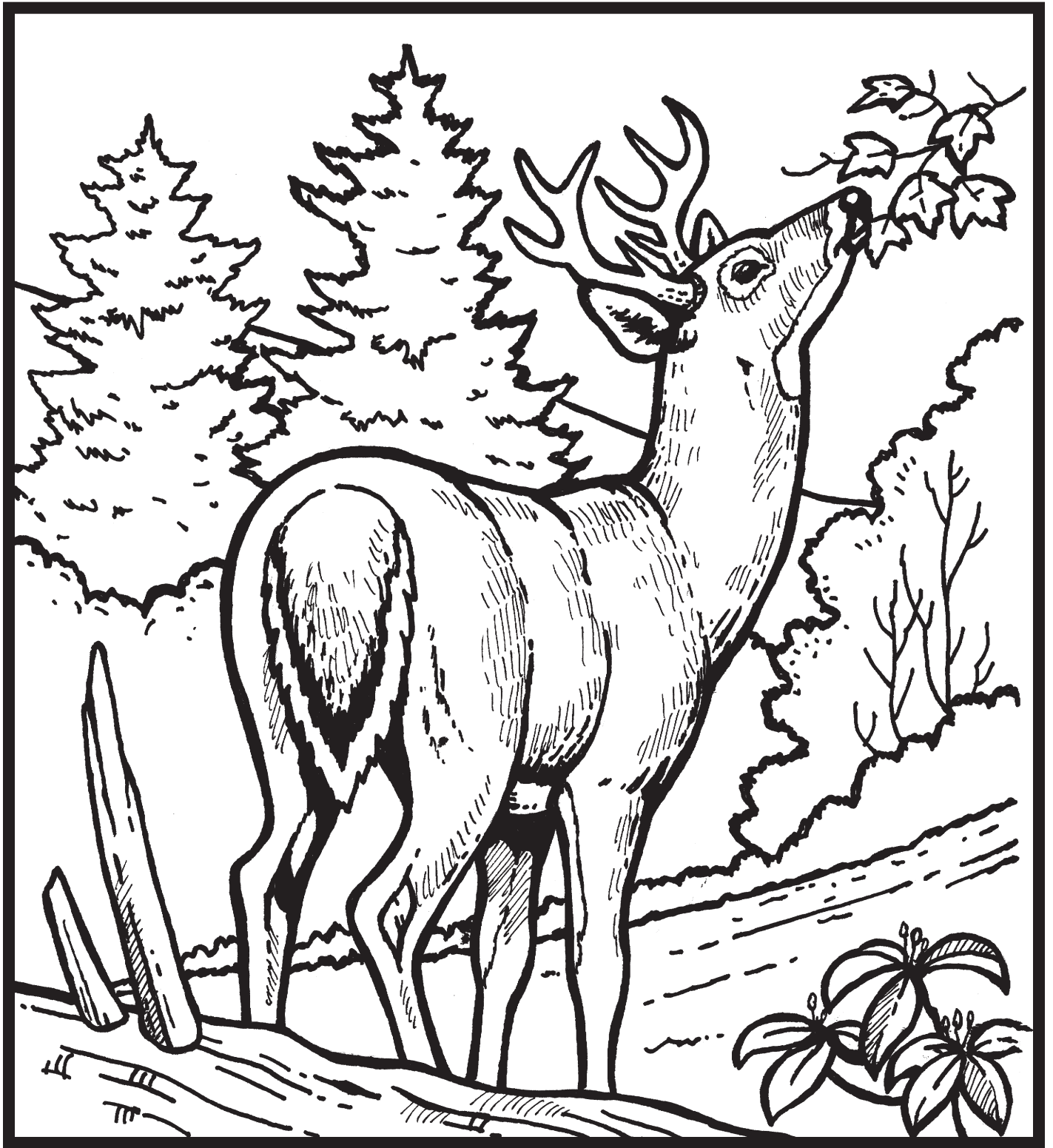


# FORESTS

A forest habitat is made up of tall trees and is home to many wild animals. Shrubs, ferns and wildflowers grow under the trees. Forests are important to people, too. People visit forests to hike, hunt and watch wildlife. The pages of this book are made from trees harvested from the forest.

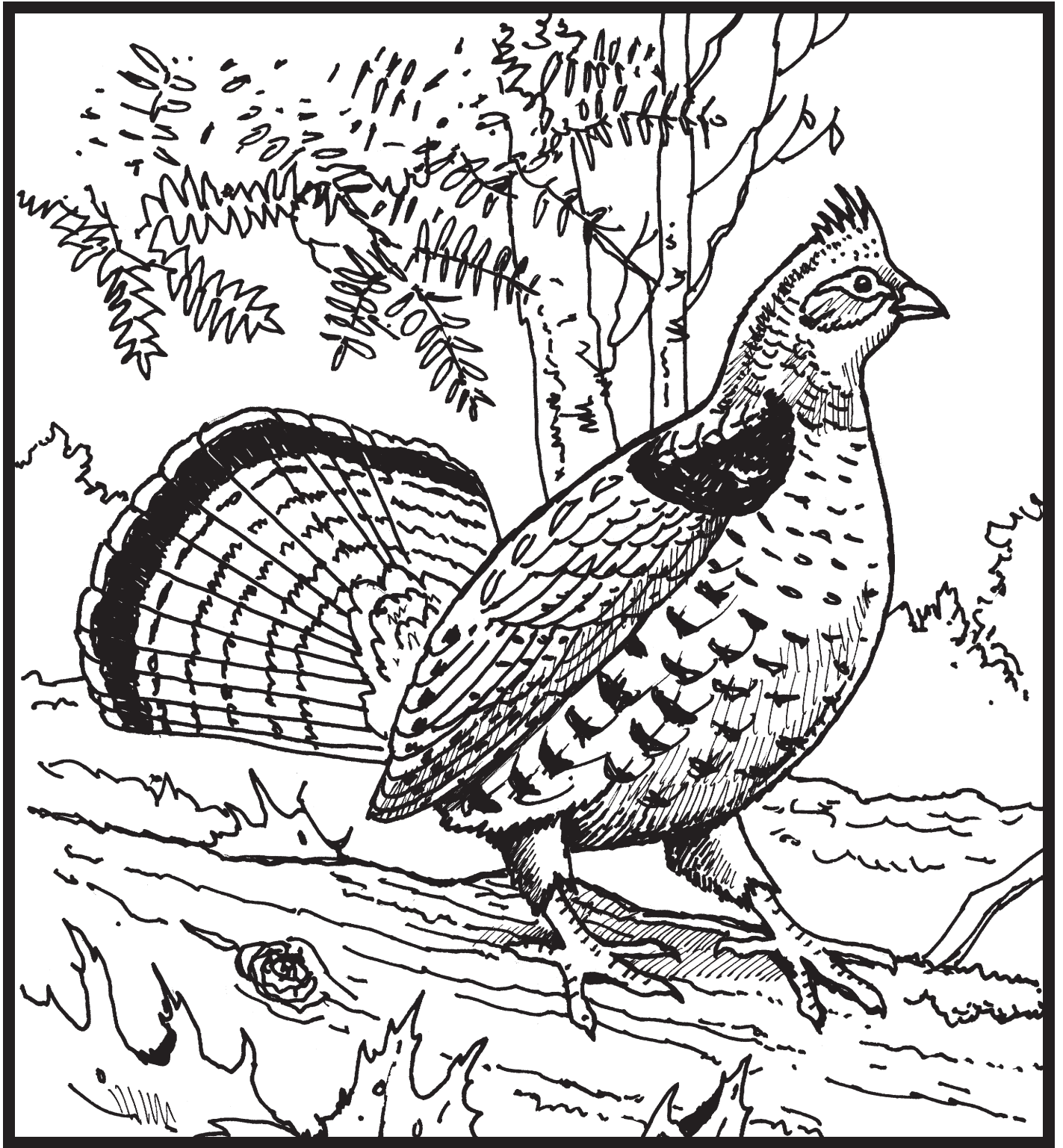


**The acorn symbol appears with wildlife that live in forests.**



## White-tailed deer

The white-tailed deer is the state mammal of Pennsylvania. Female deer are called does. Male deer, or bucks, have antlers. Young deer are called fawns and are covered with white spots that look like spots of sunlight. Deer eat small twigs, acorns and many kinds of plants.



## Ruffed grouse

This is our state bird. The grouse has special dark feathers around its neck called a ruff, which is where it got its name. Grouse blend in with the brown leaves of the forest floor where it lives. Grouse can fly very fast to escape danger.



## Black bear

The black bear is the only kind of bear that lives in Pennsylvania. Bears eat plants, animals, insects, garbage, berries, nuts, fruit, honey and corn. In winter, bears hibernate in dens or nests. Bear cubs are born in dens in January.





## Great horned owl

Owls hunt for food at night. You may not see an owl but you can hear it hoot—Hoo hoohoo, hoo-hoo. Its large eyes let them see well in the dark. Owls also have great hearing. The “horns” standing up on the owl’s head are not horns or ears, but only feathers.



## **Pileated woodpecker** (pie-lee-ate-ed)

This large woodpecker chips away the bark of trees to look for insects. They carve deep, rectangular holes in trees with their powerful beaks when they are ready to nest. The pileated woodpecker makes a loud, laughing call as it flies through the forest.



## Coyote

The coyote looks like a large, brown dog. It hunts other animals for food, but will eat almost anything. It is a fast, smart animal. Coyotes are very wary. Sometimes at night coyotes will howl. Coyotes also live near farms and cities.



## Wild turkey

Wild turkeys are like farm turkeys, but are smaller and sleeker. Male turkeys are called gobblers. They gobble loudly, fan their tails, and strut to attract hen turkeys. On the gobbler's chest is a group of special feathers called a beard. Turkeys can run and fly fast.





## Fisher

Long ago, the fisher disappeared from Pennsylvania. Like the otter, fishers were brought from other states by the Game Commission and live here once more. The fisher is a predator. It hunts animals like squirrels and porcupines, but does not fish. It is an expert tree climber.



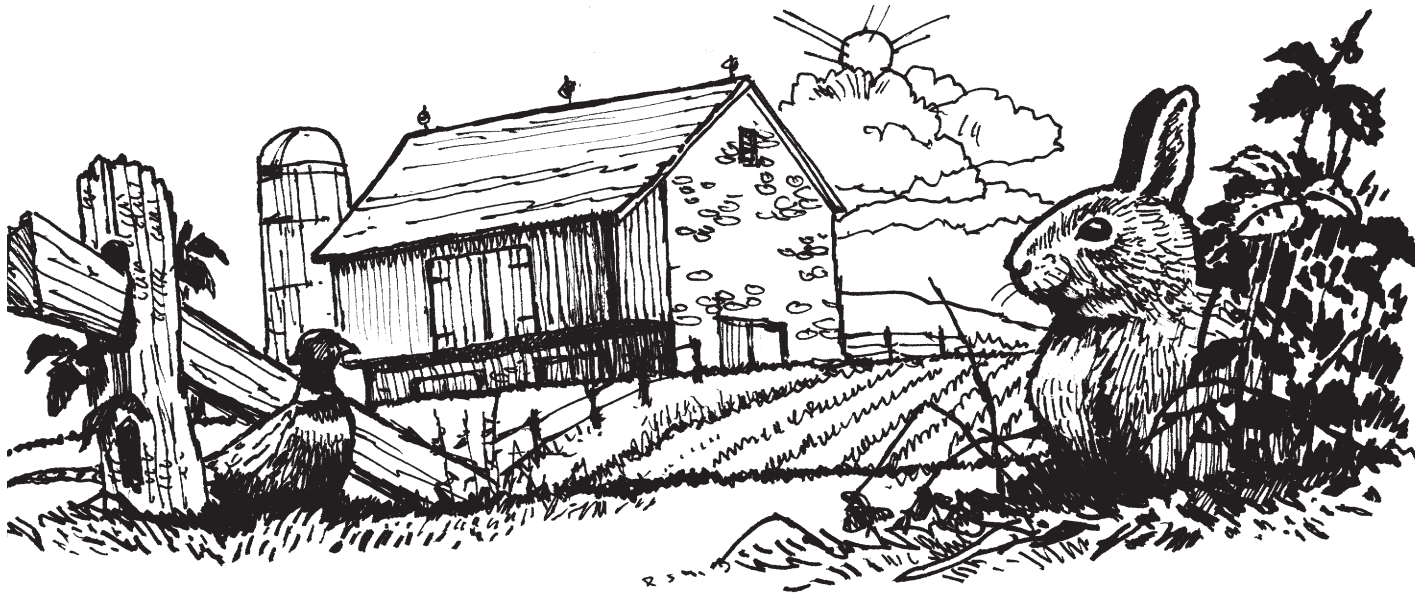
## Elk

Elk look like white-tailed deer but are much larger. Male elk, called bulls, grow large antlers every year. Antlers are bones and are sometimes used to fight other bulls. Squirrels, mice and porcupines chew on the calcium-rich antlers after the elk have shed them in the springtime.



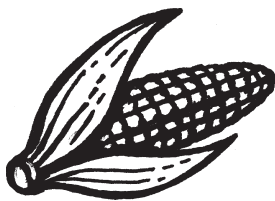
## Bobcat

The bobcat is the only wild cat in Pennsylvania. Slightly larger than a house cat, it has short black tufts of hair on its ears and a short, 6-inch tail. Kittens are born in spring and stay with their mother for almost a year. Bobcats prey upon small animals like mice, squirrels, rabbits, and birds.



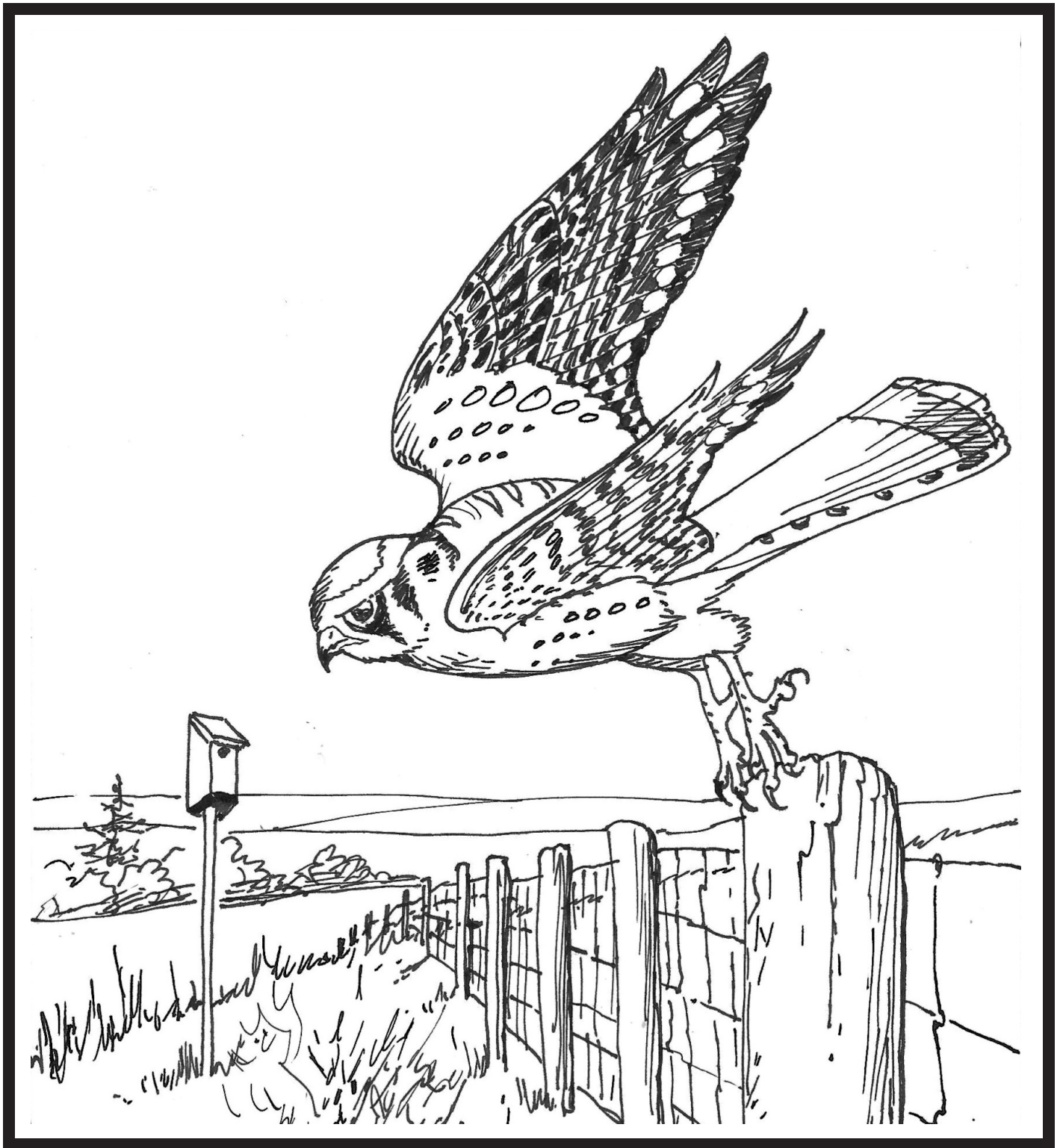
# FARMS

Farmers grow crops and raise animals on their farms. Farms are also places where wild animals live. Some wildlife need open spaces to live, like farm fields. Other animals live in the brushy areas between fields called fencerows or along the edges of fields. Some animals help the farmer by eating insects or mice that damage crops.



**The ear of corn symbol appears with wildlife that live on farms.**





## **American kestrel**

American kestrels are one of Pennsylvania's smallest raptors about the size of a robin. Kestrels have rusty red heads, backs and tails, and a black and white face pattern. Males have blue-gray wings and females have brown wings. Insects and other invertebrates make up the bulk of their diet.



## Ring-necked pheasant

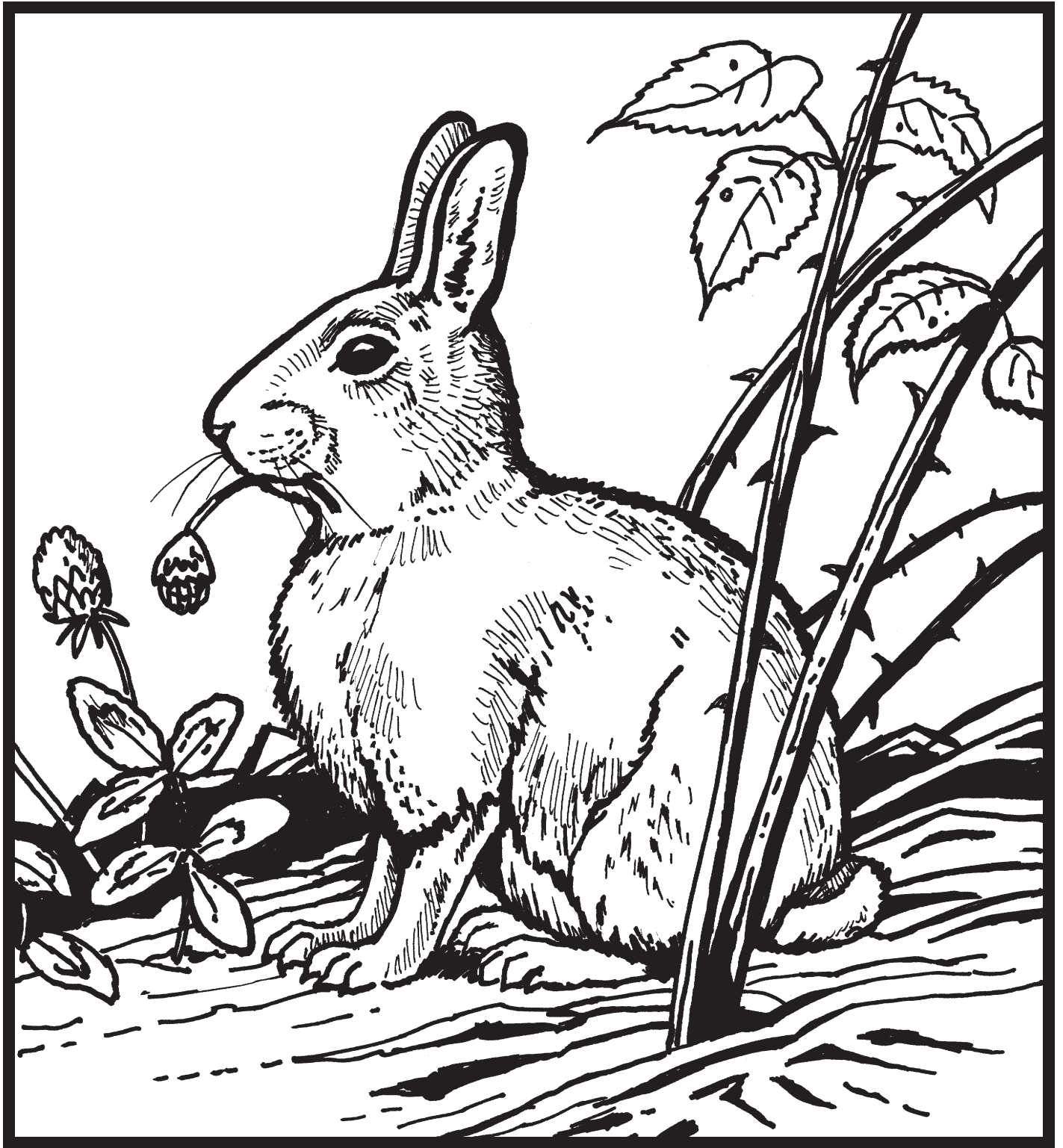
Pheasants are not native to Pennsylvania. They were brought here from Asia long ago. Pheasants are about the size of chickens. They live in fields where they eat weed seeds, corn and insects. The male is very colorful and has long tail feathers. The tan colored female is called a hen.



## Groundhogs

Groundhogs are sometimes called woodchucks. Groundhogs live in holes they dig called burrows. They can be seen along roads or standing in farm fields. These large rodents eat grass, clover, leaves and fruit.

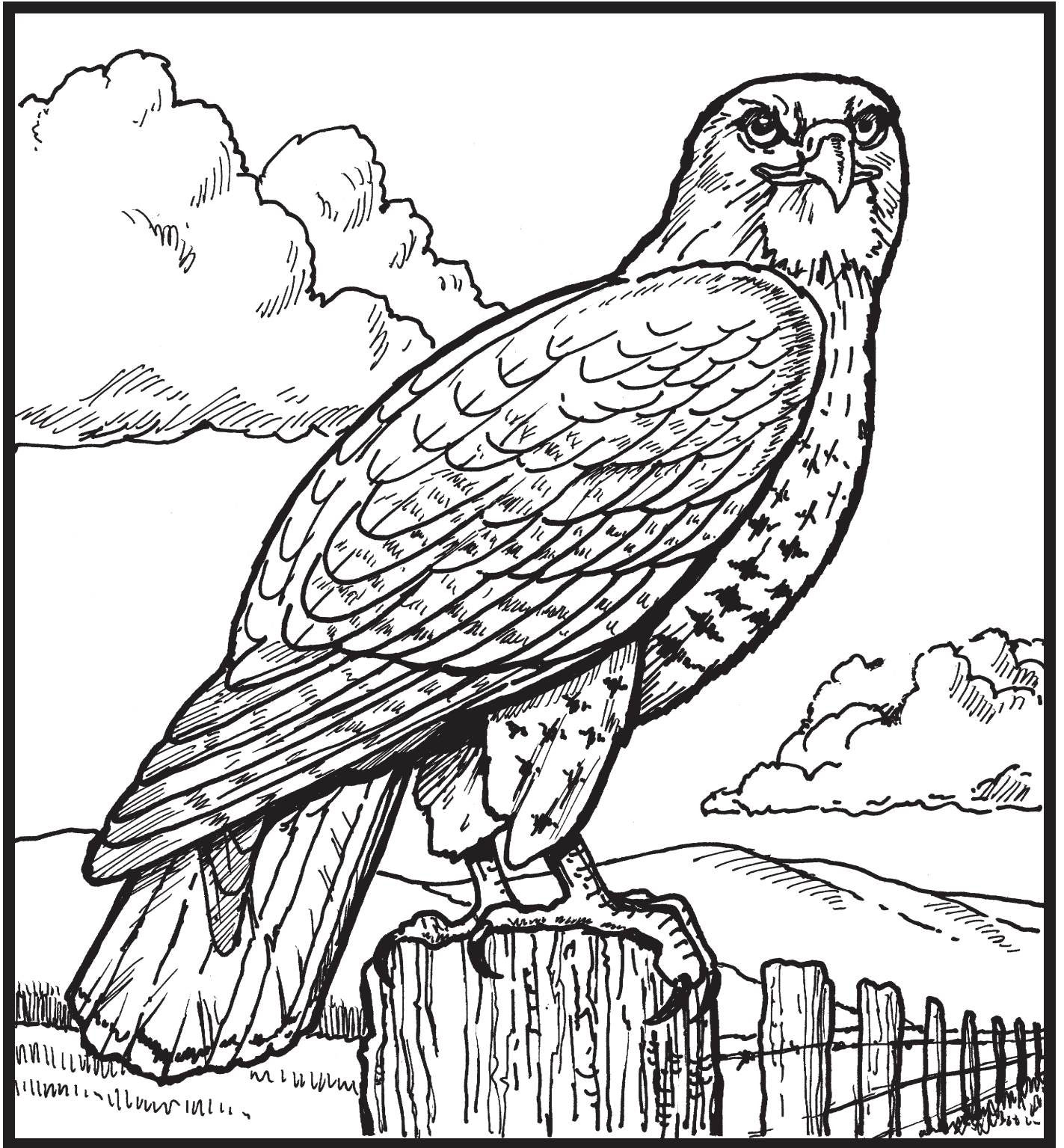




## Cottontail rabbit

These rabbits live in brushy places where thorny briars protect them from danger. They also hide in groundhog holes. Rabbits can jump far and run fast, too. The cottontail eats the same foods as woodchucks. Do you know how this rabbit got its name? From its white, bushy tail that looks like a cottonball!





## **Red-tailed hawk**

This hawk with a red tail has amazing eyesight. The redtail can spot a mouse or rabbit from great distances. Redtails also eat snakes. This large bird of prey can be seen perching on fence posts, telephone poles and in trees. They soar over fields looking for prey.



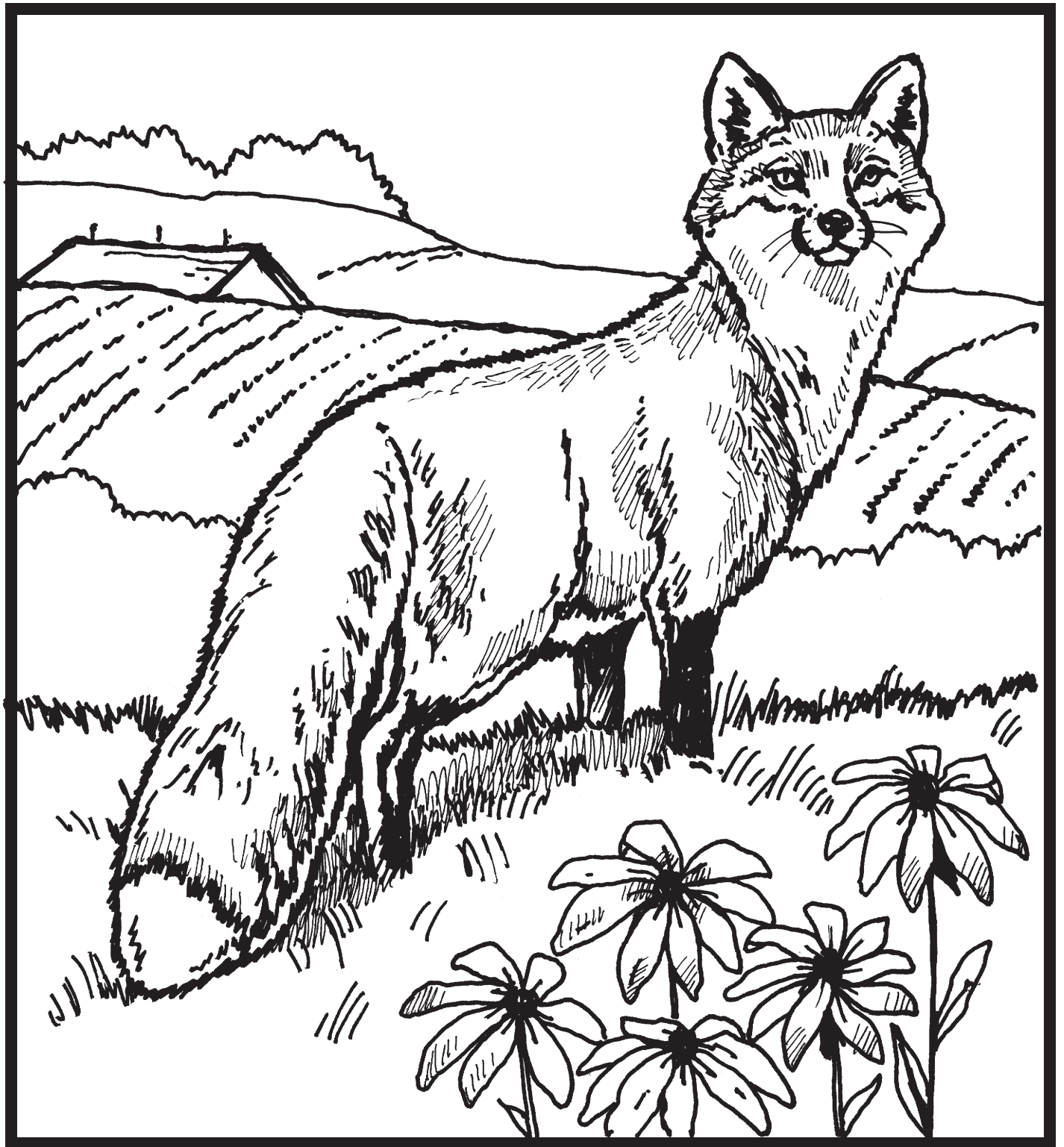
## Eastern bluebird

Bluebirds help the farmer by eating harmful insects that eat crops. Bluebirds nest in holes in trees called cavities. They also nest in hollow fence posts. People can help bluebirds by building and erecting bluebird nesting boxes.



## Eastern meadowlark

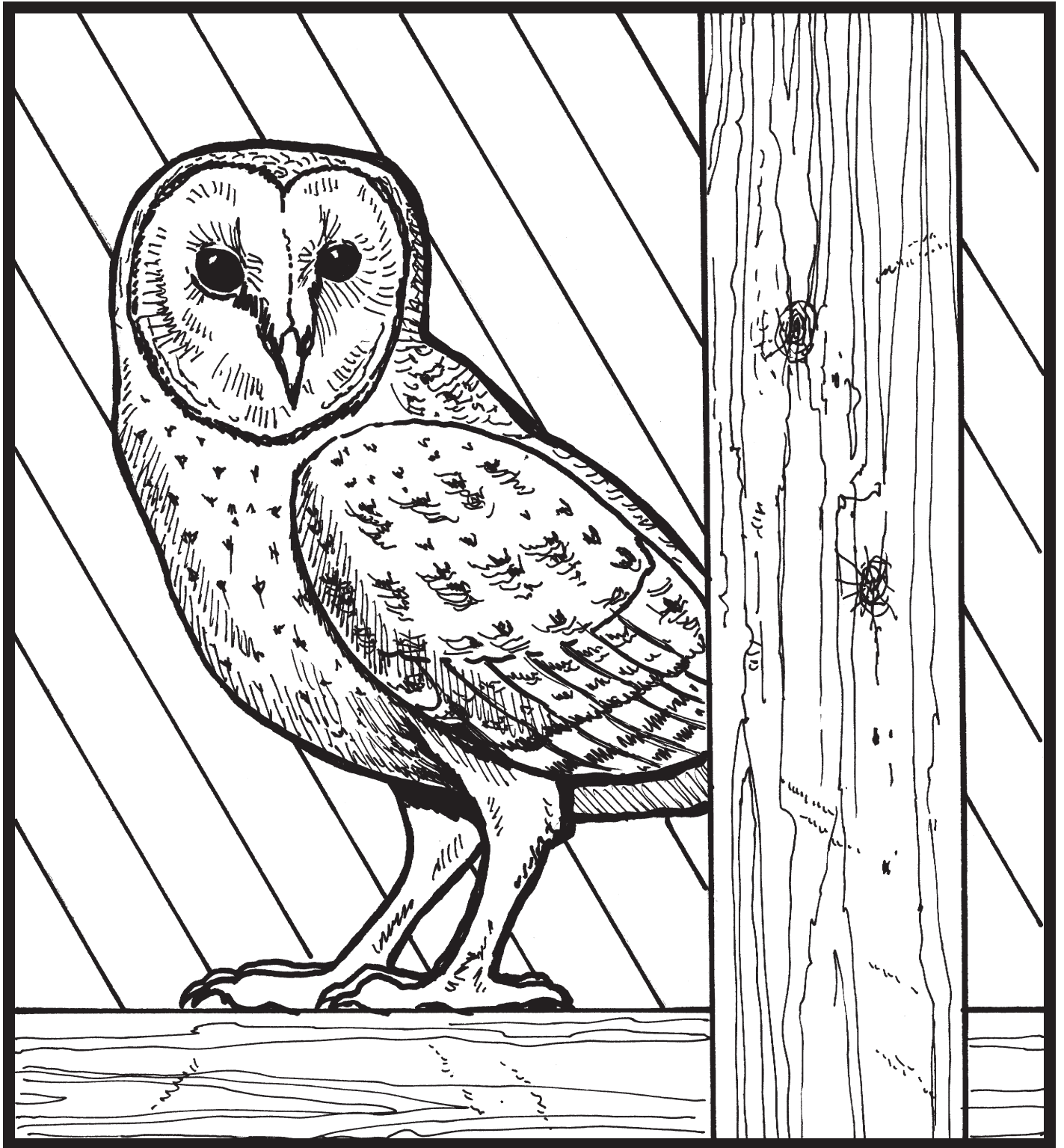
The beautiful meadowlark sings from a perch at the edge of a farm field. Meadowlarks nest on the ground. Their nests are hidden in tall grasses or alfalfa fields. This songbird eats many kinds of insects and weed seeds.



## Red fox

The red fox hunts farm fields for mice, birds and other small animals. Foxes also eat insects, berries and some kinds of fruit. The red fox is really more orange than red. It has a long, bushy tail with a white tip.





## Barn owl

The barn owl sometimes lives in barns. This owl does not have the feathery ear-tufts like the great-horned owl and has dark eyes. Barn owls hiss and whistle, but don't hoot. The barn owl helps farmers by eating rats and mice that live in barns.



# NEIGHBORHOOD

Some wild animals live in cities, towns and neighborhoods. Wildlife from nearby forests and farms may visit neighborhoods. Birds stop here to feed and rest, or even build a nest. People and animals can live together. It is important to have trees and shrubs and water in neighborhoods for wild animals.



**The house symbol appears with wildlife that live in neighborhoods.**



## Skunk

The skunk is mostly black with white up the middle of its forehead and stripes along the animal's back. The tail is bushy and black and usually has a white tip. A skunk's defensive weapon is the stinky musk it can spray to deter predators. Skunks are omnivores and eat a lot of insects.

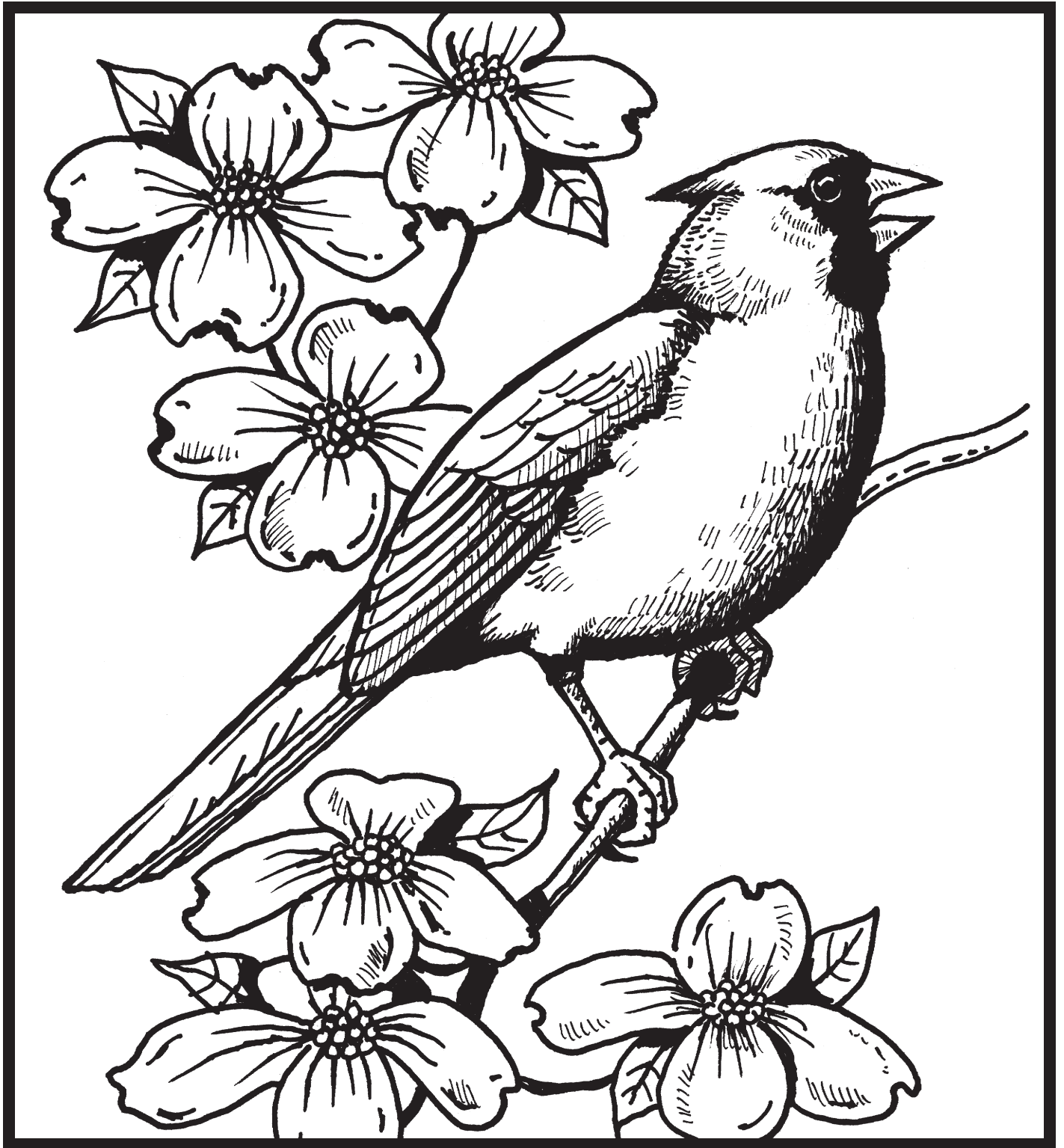




## Little brown bat

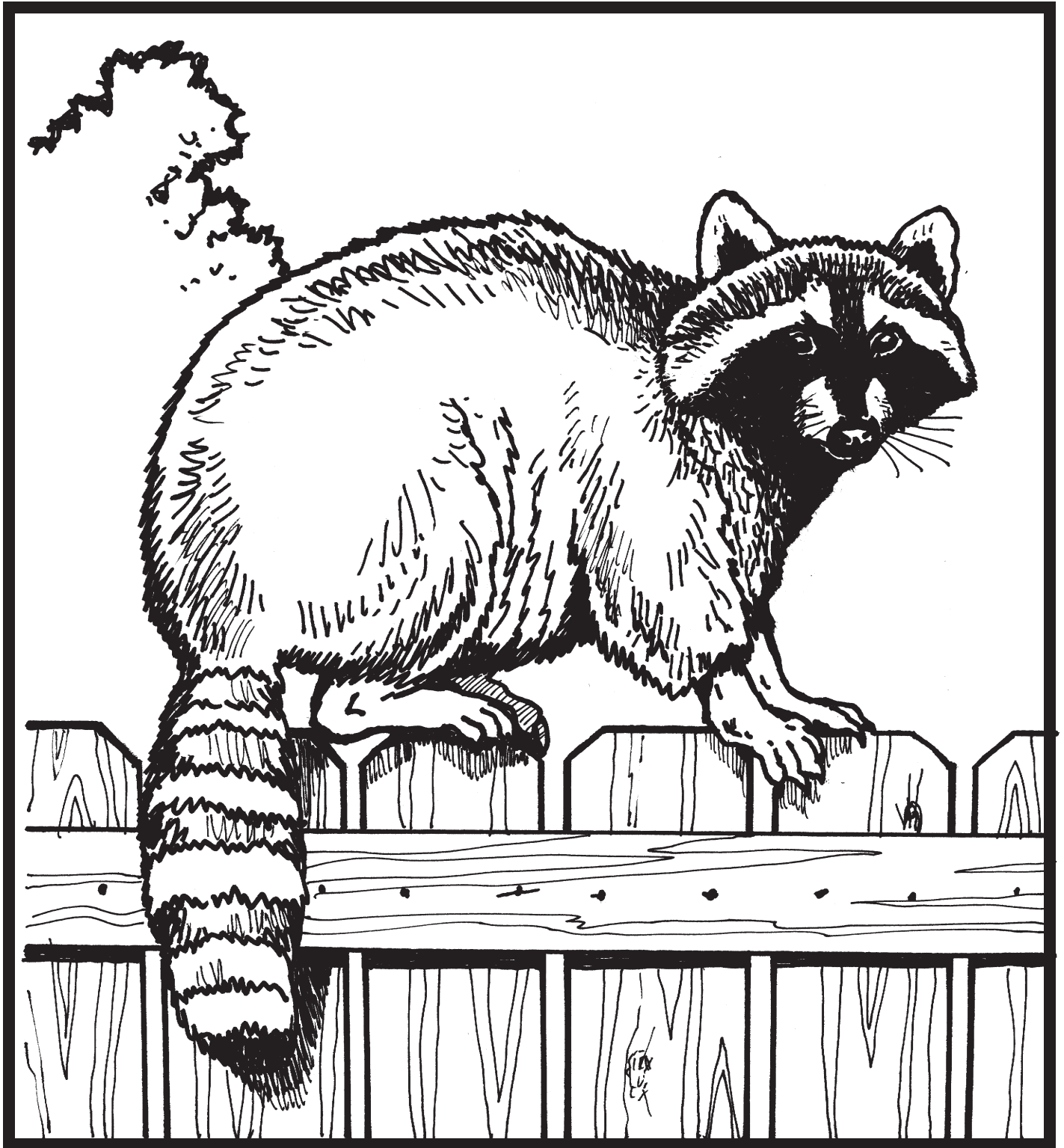
The little brown bat is one of nine mammals that can fly in Pennsylvania. Bats can be seen at dusk and after dark under street lamps. They sleep during the day by hanging upside down in attics, old buildings or on trees. Bats help people by eating insects.





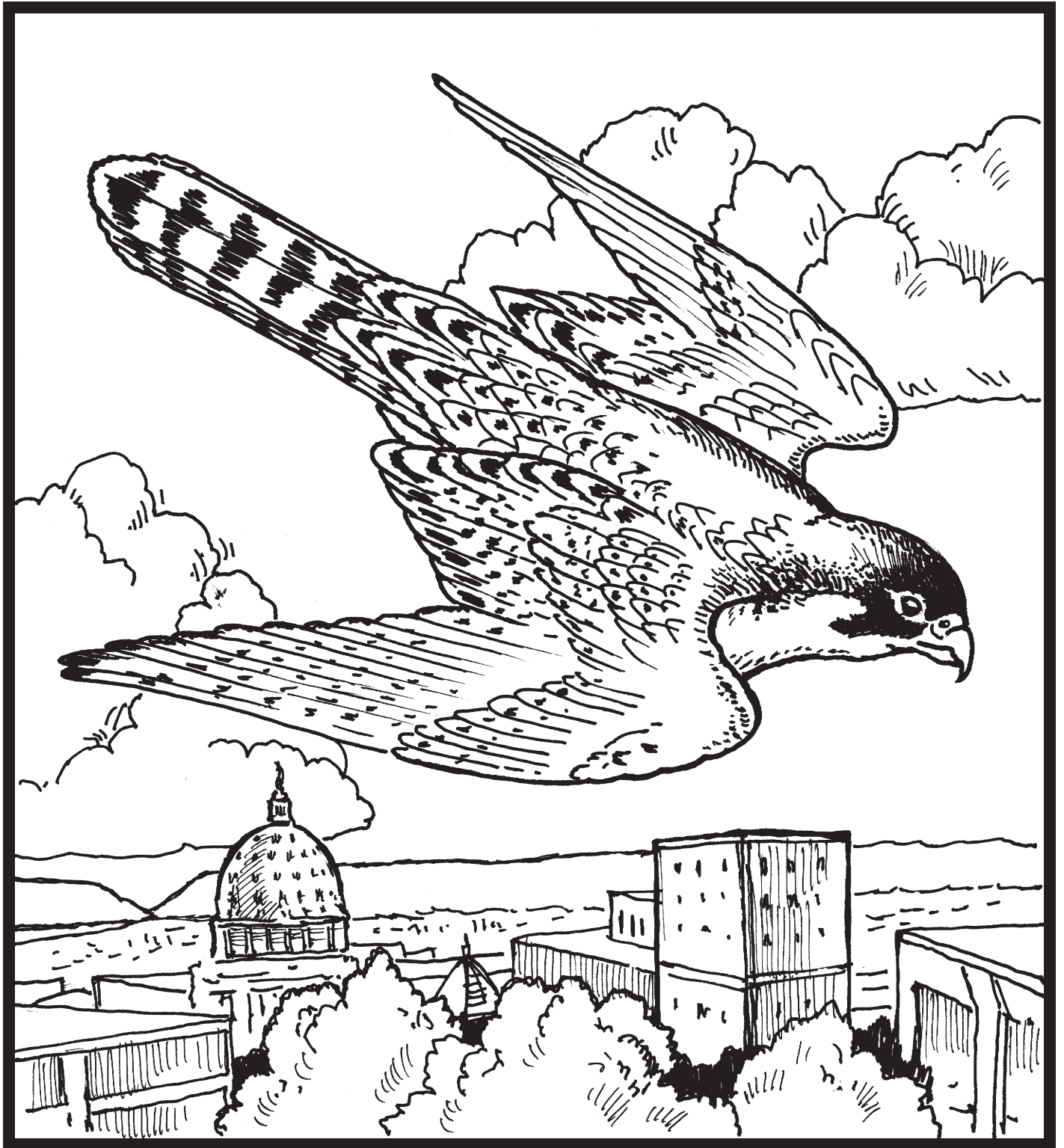
## Northern cardinal

The bright red male cardinal sings cheer, cheer, cheer. Cardinals have strong, heavy bills to break seeds. The pointed feathers that stand up on top of their heads is called a crest. The female cardinal is reddish-brown. This cardinal is perched on a dogwood branch.



## Raccoon

Raccoons look for food along streams and rivers. At night, they sometimes visit towns to look for food. Raccoons like to raid garbage cans. They like to sleep in hollow trees, or chimneys, during the day. The raccoon looks like it is wearing a black mask.



## **Peregrine falcon**

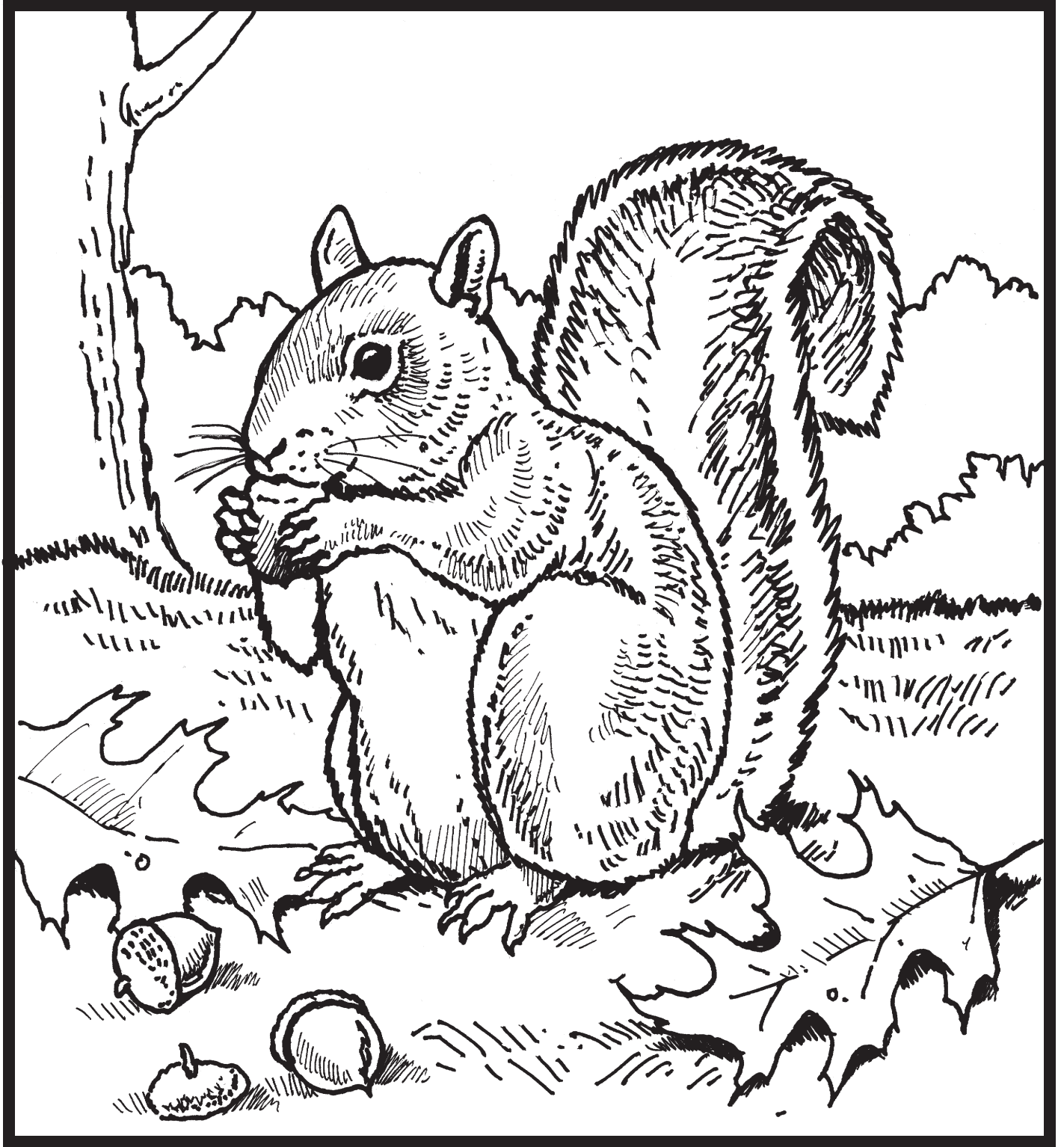
The peregrine falcon is a raptor. Some peregrines live in big cities. They nest on tall buildings. They swoop down and capture birds like pigeons and starlings. The peregrine falcon is one of the fastest birds in the world. Diving after prey they may reach 200 miles per hour!



## American robin

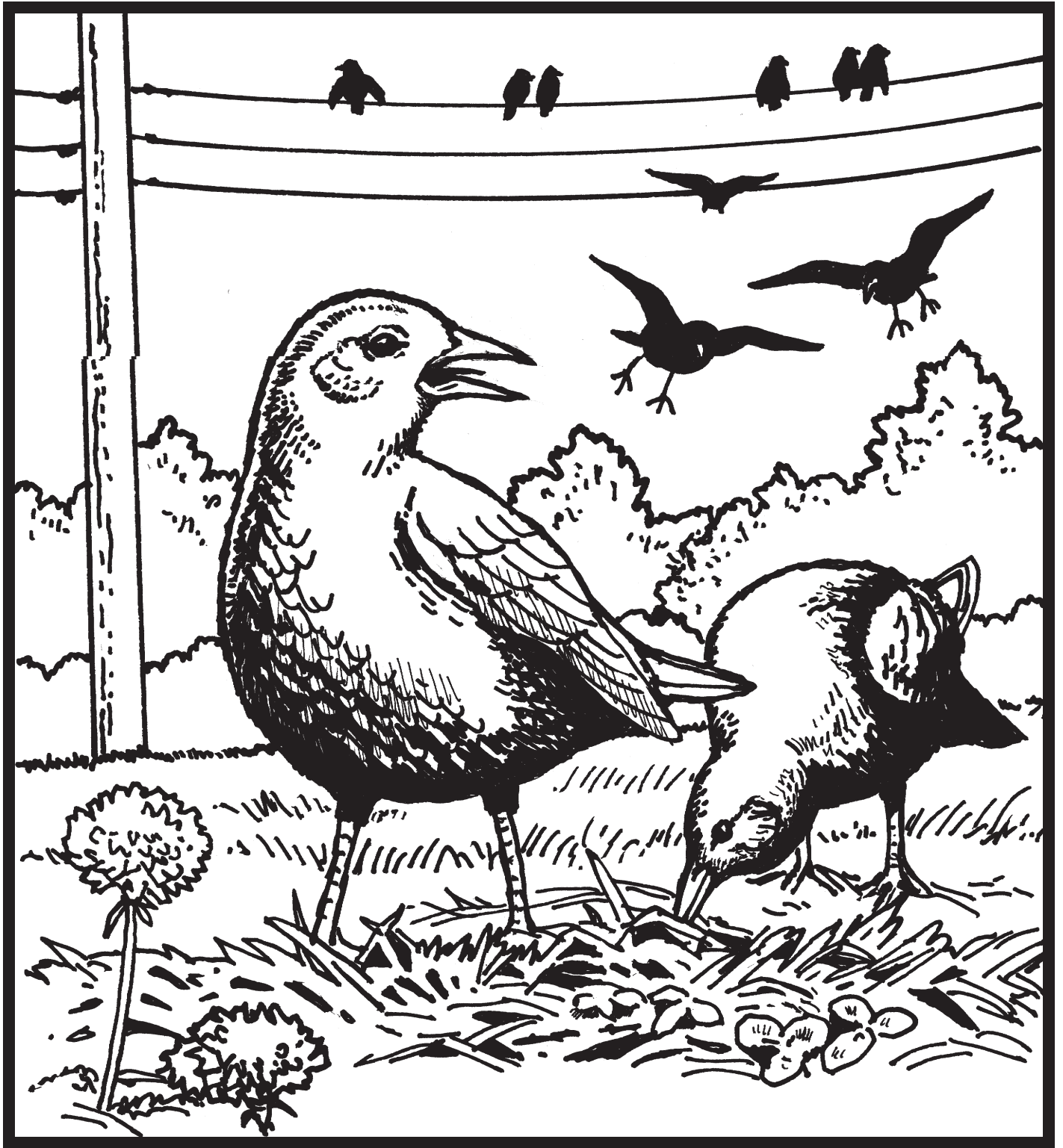
An American robin nest typically has four light blue eggs in it. Robins are seen on lawns looking for worms. In late summer robins travel, or migrate south to warmer places where it is easier to find food in winter. Robins return each spring to their same nesting sites.





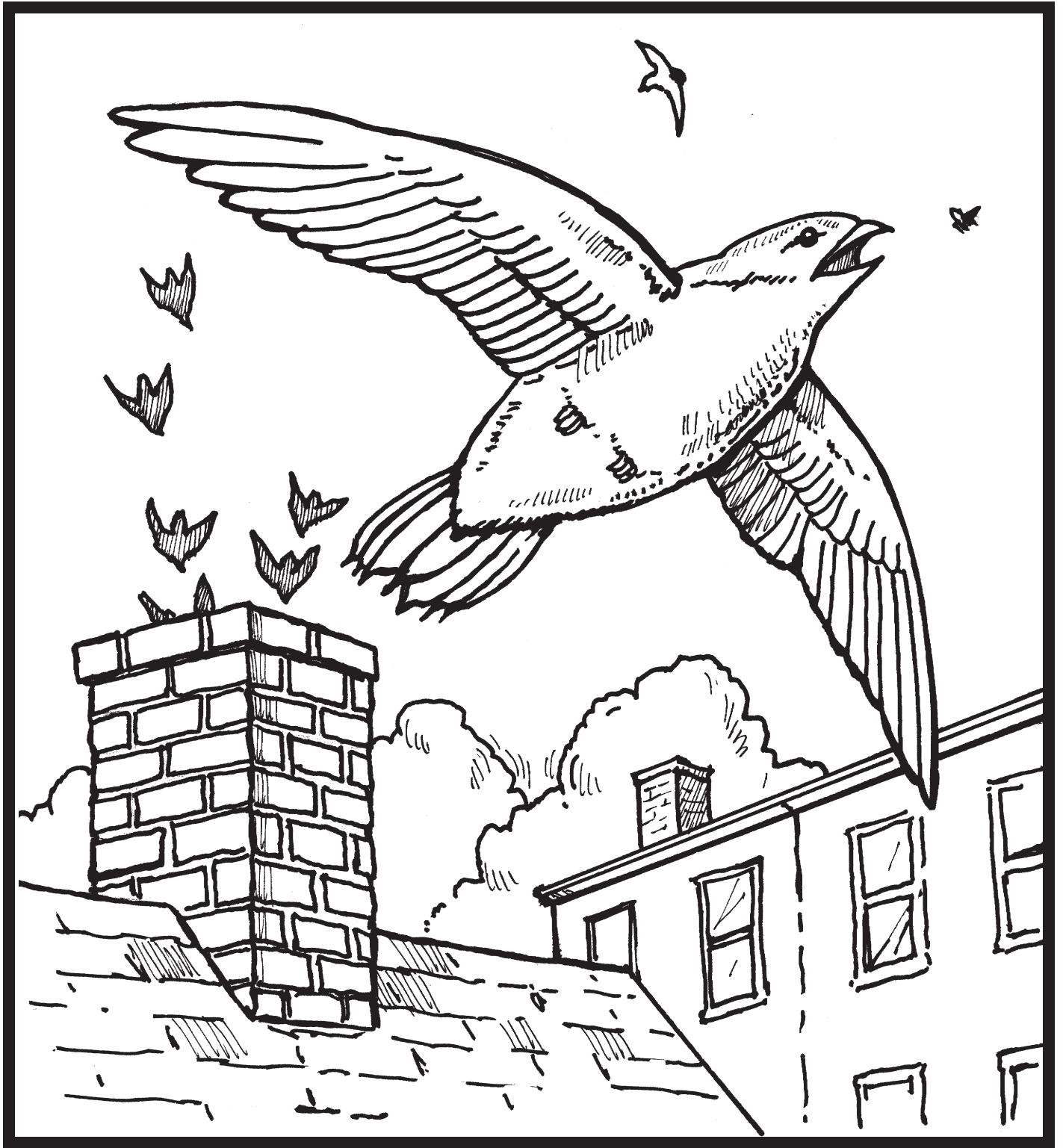
## Gray squirrel

Squirrels live in hollow trees and in round nests made of leaves. Squirrels eat acorns. They bury them in the ground to eat in winter. If they forget to dig up an acorn, it might grow into a big oak tree. Some gray squirrels are all black.



## European starling

Starlings may be seen walking in backyards or along roads. They eat seeds and insects. These black birds nest in holes in trees and buildings. Starlings were brought to America from Europe long ago. In winter, big flocks of starlings roost in trees.



## Chimney swift

These birds fly and twitter all day long over the city. They stop flying at night when they rest inside buildings or chimneys. As chimney swifts fly, they capture insects from the air.



## Chipmunk

Chipmunks carry acorns and seeds in their cheek pouches. They store the food in underground burrows. Chipmunks are forest animals that also live in neighborhoods. This quick little rodent makes loud squeaking noises when alarmed.



# START A NATURE JOURNAL!

In the space below draw a wild animal that lives in your neighborhood.  
See the chickadee example for ideas!



**DATE:** October 7, 2024

**TIME:** 11:00 a.m.

**WEATHER:** Sunny and warm

**LOCATION:** My backyard

**NOTES:** Saw a chickadee pecking at a branch.  
It was looking for insects. The chickadees song  
sounds like its name — chick-a-dee-dee

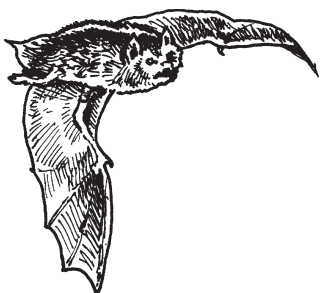
**DATE:**

**TIME:**

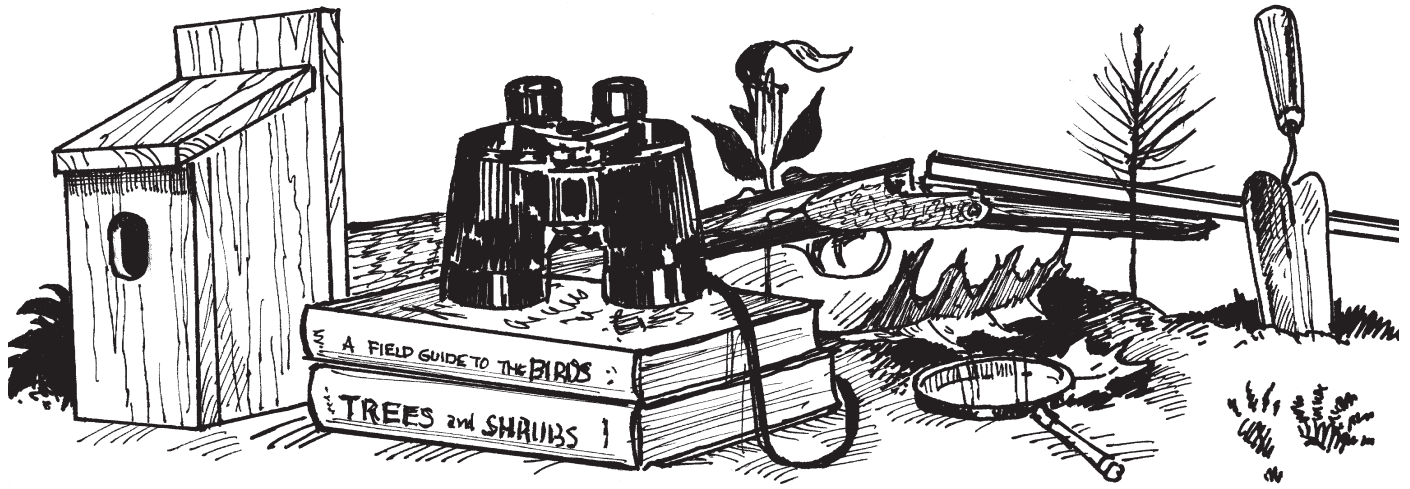
**WEATHER:**

**LOCATION:**

**NOTES:**



What neighborhood animal has wings but is not a  
bird? Bats!



# CONSERVATION

Wild animals are fun to watch and study. People can help animals by learning about them and creating habitats for them. School groups can help wildlife by working on habitat and conservation projects. Sometimes these projects can be done on school grounds, parks or backyards.



**The tree seedling appears with activities that help wildlife.**



## Building nest boxes

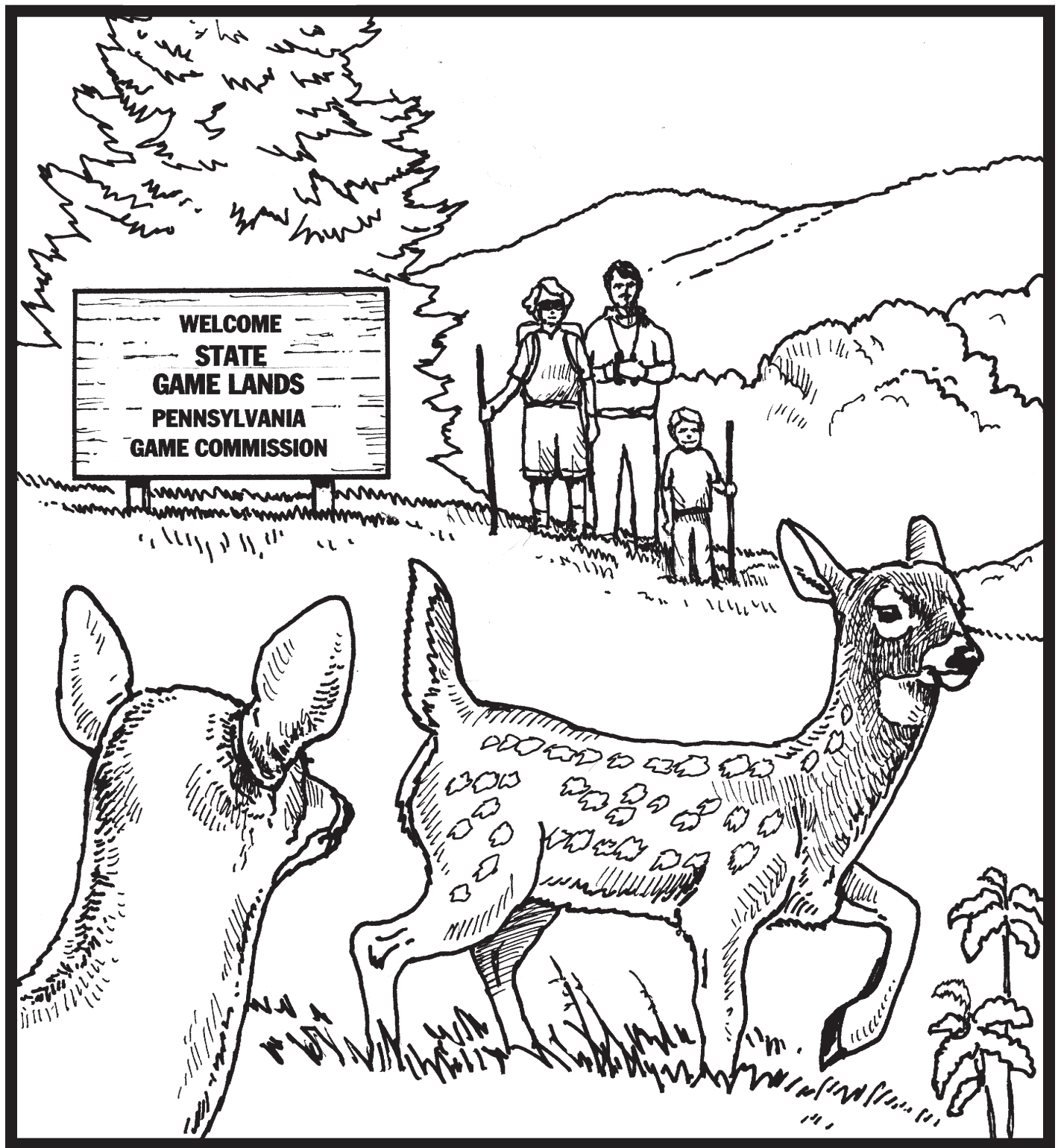
A State Game Warden is helping these children make bluebird nesting boxes. They will put the boxes on posts near fields. They will check to see if the bluebirds are using them.



## Planting trees

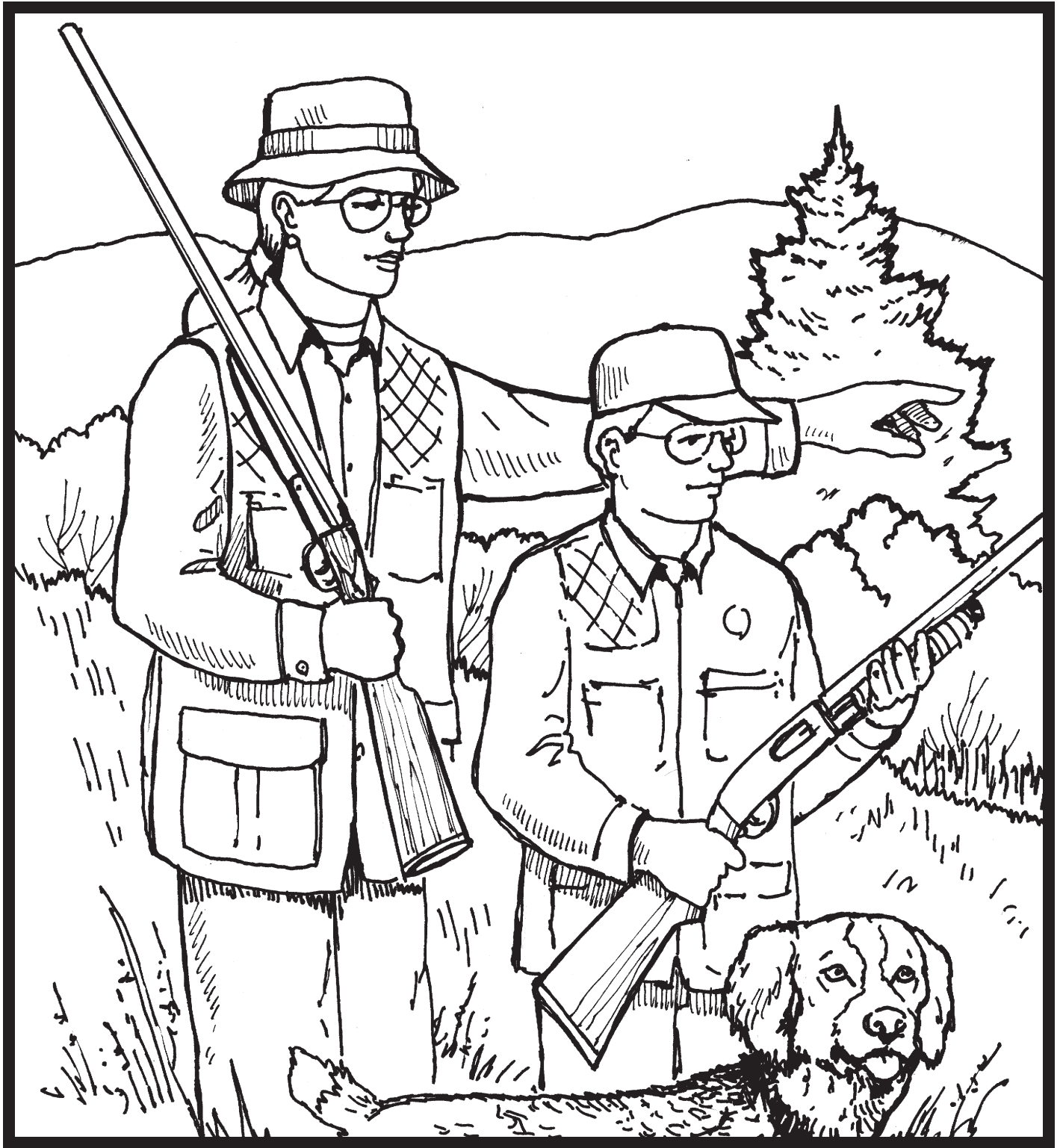
These children are planting pine seedlings on a hillside. Pine trees grow quickly and provide a place for wildlife to live. In winter, many animals find shelter in the pines where they are protected from cold winds and snow storms.





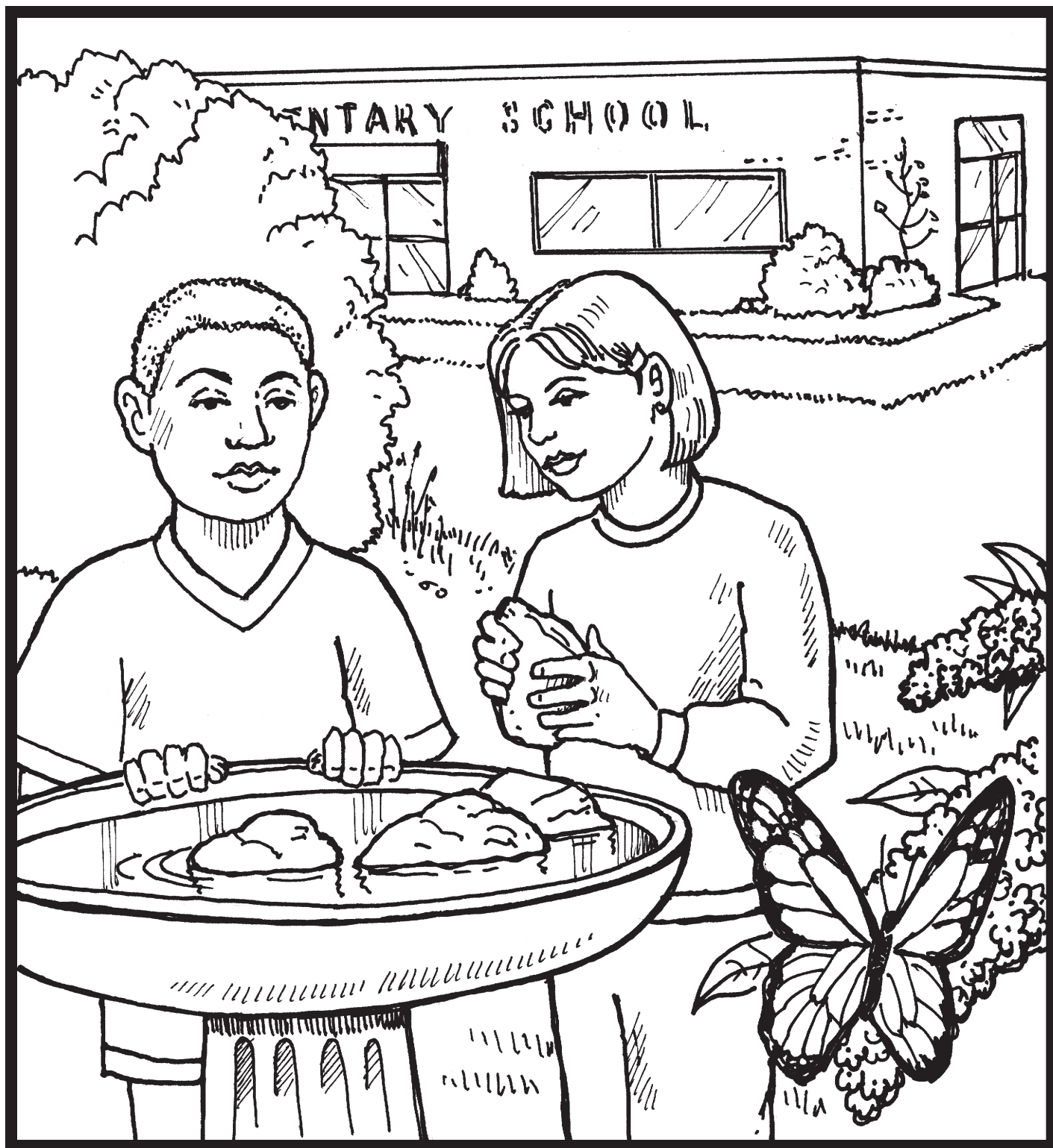
## Wildlife watching

We can help animals by learning about them. This family is watching wildlife on a state game land. Game lands are wild areas managed by the Game Commission for all people to use. There are over 1.5 million acres of public state game lands across Pennsylvania.



## Hunting

Many animals in this book are hunters. People are hunters, too. This mother and son are enjoying the outdoors by hunting together. Hunting is fun and a good way to learn about nature.



## Creating habitat

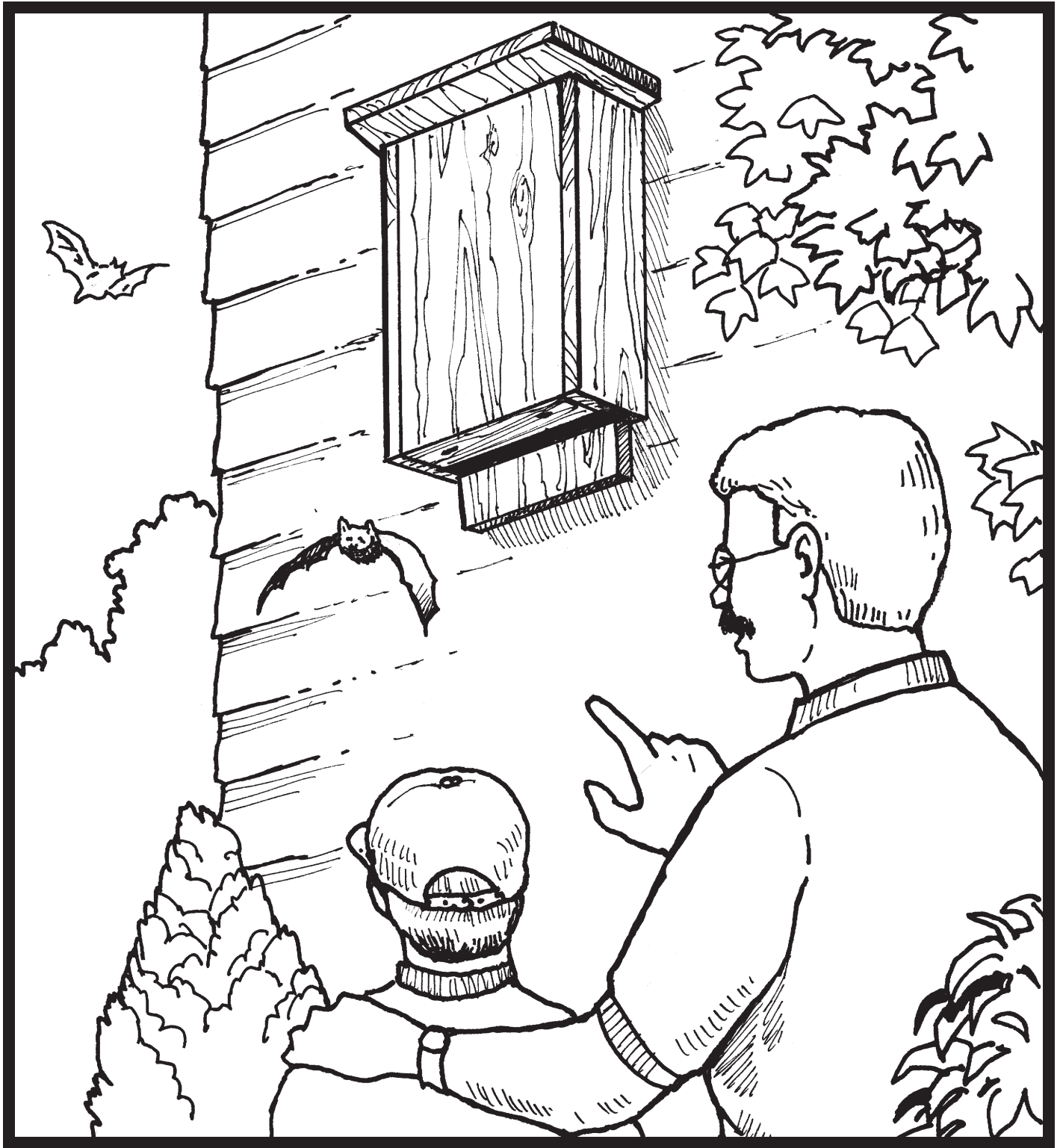
A good place to build wildlife habitat is at school. This boy and girl are helping to build a small wildlife habitat at their school. Does your school have a wildlife habitat project?



## Trapping

This father and daughter are making a trapline. They are going to trap furbearers like mink, beavers and foxes. Native Americans used the fur and hides of animals to make clothes, shoes, blankets and many other things.



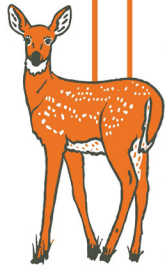


## Wildlife neighbors

This family has built a bat box and hung it on the side of their house. Bats will sleep in the box during the day. At night the bats will fly out and eat mosquitoes and other insects in the neighborhood. Bats are good neighbors!

# 6 THINGS YOU CAN DO FOR WILDLIFE

## 1 LET WILDLIFE BE WILD



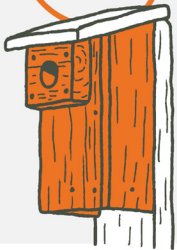
Springtime means wildlife like rabbit kits, nestling songbirds, and deer fawns are born! If you spot newborn or young wildlife, please do not disturb them. While some young animals might appear to be abandoned, many wildlife parents will leave their young alone and hidden to avoid attracting predators, only coming back to nurse them a few times a day.

## 2 PLANT NATIVE PLANTS



Planting native trees, shrubs, and flowers provides both food and cover, for many wildlife species. Native plants benefit birds, bats, bees, butterflies, beetles, and small mammals, which play an important role in sustaining healthy ecosystems. Non-native or invasive plants can have harmful ecological impacts because they outcompete native plant species and do not provide nearly as many benefits to wildlife.

## 3 INSTALL A NEST BOX



Placing a nest box on your property can provide safe nesting areas for many species of birds and small mammals to raise their young. Properly managed nest boxes can be critically important to cavity-nesting species like blue birds, prothonotary warblers, and purple martins.

## 4 CREATE LEAF & BRUSH PILES FOR HABITAT



Songbirds, small mammals, reptiles, and amphibians, will use brush piles for nesting, resting, escaping from predators, and sheltering from harsh weather conditions.

## 5 SECURE FOOD, GARBAGE & RECYCLING



Once a bear finds easy access to food, they are likely to come back for more. To limit human-bear interactions, be sure to bring pet food containers and bird feeders inside at night; keep trash cans and recycle bins inside until collection day; and regularly clean and remove grease from outside grills.

## 6 SLOW THE MOW



Wait until after nesting season to begin mowing fallow fields and large yards to benefit a variety of grassland-nesting bird species and support pollinators like bees, moths, and bats. Being a lazy lawnmower and only cutting grass every 2-3 weeks can also lead to more lawn flowers that attract a diversity of pollinators to boost wildlife habitat.



PENNSYLVANIA  
GAME COMMISSION



SCAN FOR MORE INFO

PA.GOV/PGC

**For more information on Pennsylvania wildlife and classroom resources visit: [www.pa.gov/PGC](http://www.pa.gov/PGC).**

**1-833-PGC-HUNT**

**833-742-4868**

or

**1-833-PGC-WILD**

**833-742-9453**

**Northwest Region**

Butler, Clarion, Crawford,  
Erie, Forest, Jefferson,  
Lawrence, Mercer, Venango,  
Warren counties

**1509 Pittsburgh Rd  
Franklin, PA 16323**

**Northcentral Region**

Cameron, Centre, Clearfield,  
Clinton, Elk, Lycoming, McK-  
ean, Potter, Tioga, Union  
counties

**1566 South Route 44 Hwy  
PO Box 5038  
Jersey Shore, PA 17740**

**Northeast Region**

Bradford, Carbon, Colum-  
bia, Lackawanna, Lu-zerne,  
Monroe, Montour,  
Northumberland, Pike,  
Sullivan, Susquehanna,  
Wayne, Wyoming  
counties

**3917 Memorial Hwy Dallas,  
PA 18612**

**Southwest Region**

Allegheny, Armstrong,  
Beaver, Cambria, Fayette,  
Greene, Indiana, Somerset,  
Washington, Westmoreland  
counties

**4820 Route 711  
Bolivar, PA 15923**

**Southcentral Region**

Adams, Bedford, Blair, Cum-  
berland, Franklin, Fulton,  
Huntingdon, Juniata, Mifflin,  
Perry, Snyder, York counties

**8627 William Penn Hwy  
Huntingdon, PA 16652**

**Southeast Region**

Berks, Bucks, Chester, Dau-  
phin, Delaware, Lancaster,  
Lebanon, Lehigh,  
Montgom-ery,  
Northampton, Philadel-phia,  
Schuylkill counties

**253 Snyder Rd  
Reading, PA 19605**

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