



Now You See Me!

Audience

Activity designed for 4 years old and up, needs 2 or more people.

Goal

Students will learn about how some reptiles use camouflage to survive better in the wild.

Objective

- To better understand reptiles in the wild.
- To learn about camouflage.

Conservation Message

There are a lot of reptiles here in Oklahoma. We have lizards, snakes and turtles and even alligators! Reptiles serve an important role in their ecosystem and help keep down rodent populations as well as pesky insects.

Background Information

There are many animal species that use camouflage in the wild. Camouflage is a term used to describe the coloration and pattern on animals. These colors and patterns help them blend in with their environment or pretend to be something they're not.

Some reptiles use their camouflage to protect themselves. Their coloration will keep them hidden from predators that may want to make a meal of them.

Native Snake Species: Many snakes use camouflage to hide. They may have camouflage that makes them look like the forest floor, a tree branch, a pile of rocks or something else. Some snakes are even brightly colored which can help them camouflage with green leaves or flowers. Snakes, however, are using their camouflage so that prey animals will not see them and will get close to them. When the prey gets a little too close, the snake will strike, and the prey will never have seen it coming!

Copperhead snakes have a very distinct pattern that helps them blend in well to dead leaves and dirt. When baby copperheads hatch, they are born with a bright yellow tail. Baby copperheads will hide their bodies in the brush and wiggle their bright yellow tails to simulate a worm; this attracts frogs and birds within striking range.

A non-venomous snake known as the Broad-banded water snake is an aquatic snake that has wide dark bands running down the length of their body. This alternating pattern helps them blend into the tall grasses along the banks of bodies of water. They use their camouflage to catch prey like frogs, toads and fish.

The Rough green snake, often called a grass snake, is a bright green nonvenomous snake that occurs throughout Oklahoma. This snake is one of two completely green snakes in the state and uses its camouflage to blend into grass and agricultural crops.

The Speckled kingsnake, sometimes called the Common kingsnake, is black with greenish yellow speckles. This kind of pattern confuses prey and allows the kingsnake to get within striking distance. Kingsnakes are nonvenomous and harmless to people. Their favorite thing to eat is other snakes, even venomous ones like copperheads and cottonmouths. They can eat the venomous snakes because they are immune to the venom.

Lastly, Cottonmouths are venomous aquatic snakes. They get their name from the white cotton color inside their mouths. They are dark brown along their back with light and dark colored bands that span the length of their body. These snakes can be found swimming in the muddy water of creeks, rivers and lakes, or along the banks basking in the sun.

Native Lizard Species: In Oklahoma, we have a variety of lizards that occur around the state. We have everything from horny lizards to lizards without legs!

One species of lizard that is native to Oklahoma are Green anoles. These small lizards are bright green and spend their time blending into leaves and branches of trees eating insects. They have vivid reddish-pink flaps of skin under their jaws called dewlaps. They flash their dewlap to defend their territory and to attract mates.

Broad-headed skinks are lizards with scales that are very smooth and shiny. While both the males and females have orange coloring on their heads, the males have very wide head that are also completely orange. The body of these lizards are coppery brown on top and a light cream color on the belly. They blend in with dead leaves and sticks on the forest floor.

Another species of skink that we have here in Oklahoma is the Five-lined skink. This lizard has a black body with distinct bright stripes down their back. Young five-lined skinks have a bright blue tail. Skink species break off their tails as a defense; while a predator is distracted by released tail, the rest of the lizard can run away to safety.

Often referred to as the Horny toad, the Texas horned lizard is not a toad at all! They are light brown, cream colored, and dark brown with small spikes all over their body. This kind of camouflage helps them blend into arid habitats with sparse vegetation.

Native Turtle Species: We have a handful of turtles here in Oklahoma, all of which are unique in their own way.

One larger species of turtle we have here is the Common snapping turtle. These turtles spend a lot of time in the water catching fish and sometimes even birds. They are generally a deep dark green and will often have moss growing on their shells.

Eastern river cooters are commonly found in rivers, lakes and ponds. They are different shades of green with yellow designs on the back of their shell. They blend in well in grass and along the banks of bodies of freshwater.

Another turtle that is relatively common throughout Oklahoma is the Ornate box turtle. These turtles have a more domed shell and are considered a terrestrial species meaning they predominately on land. These turtles blend well into their habitats of grasses and prairie lands. They are also able to completely close their shell if they are attacked by a predator.

Native Crocodilian Species: Believe it or not, we have alligators right here in Oklahoma! They are found in Southeastern Oklahoma, primarily in the Red Slough Wildlife Management Area.

American alligators are great at making themselves almost invisible in the water as well as on land. They are darker in color and can blend in with the tall grass in a marsh area or even resemble a log floating down a river, just waiting for an unsuspecting bird to land on it!

Materials Needed

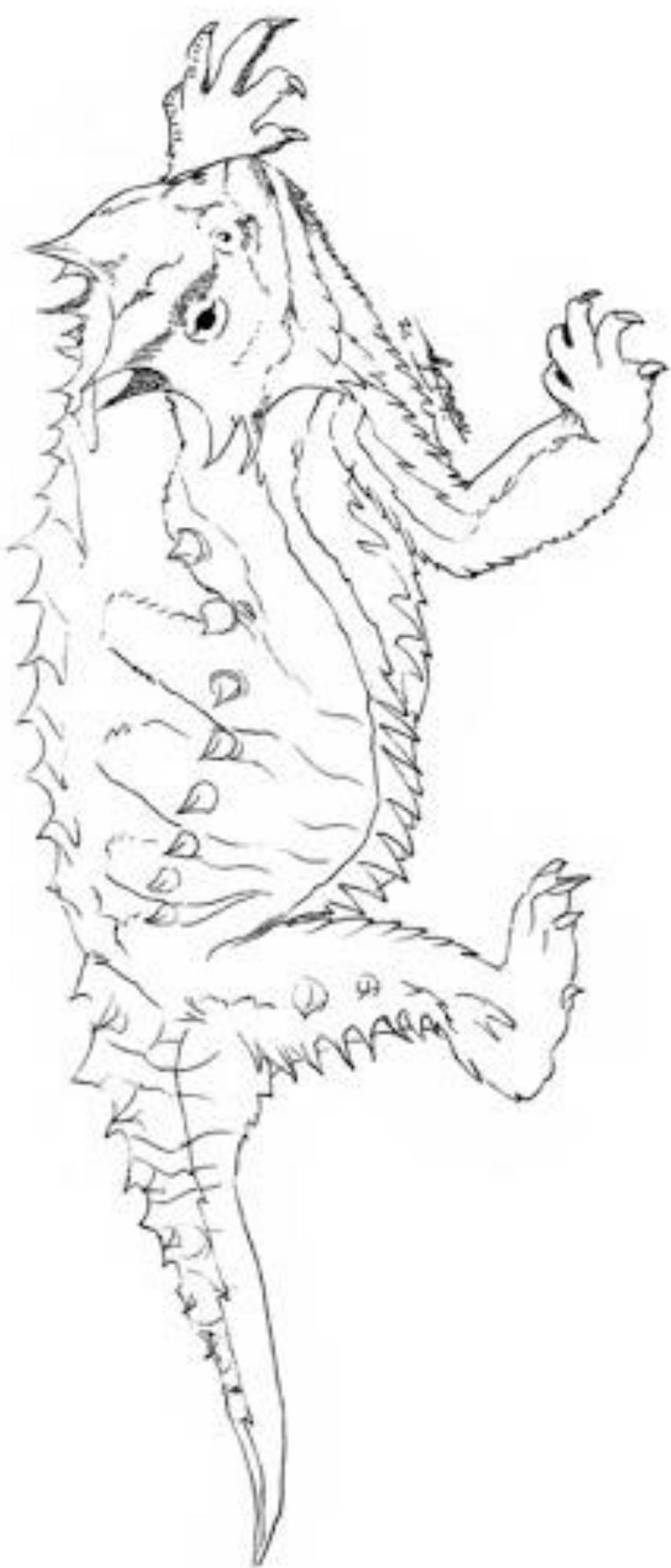
- Reptile Color Sheets (provided)
- Markers, paint, crayons or colored pencils

Length of Activity

30 minutes

Procedure

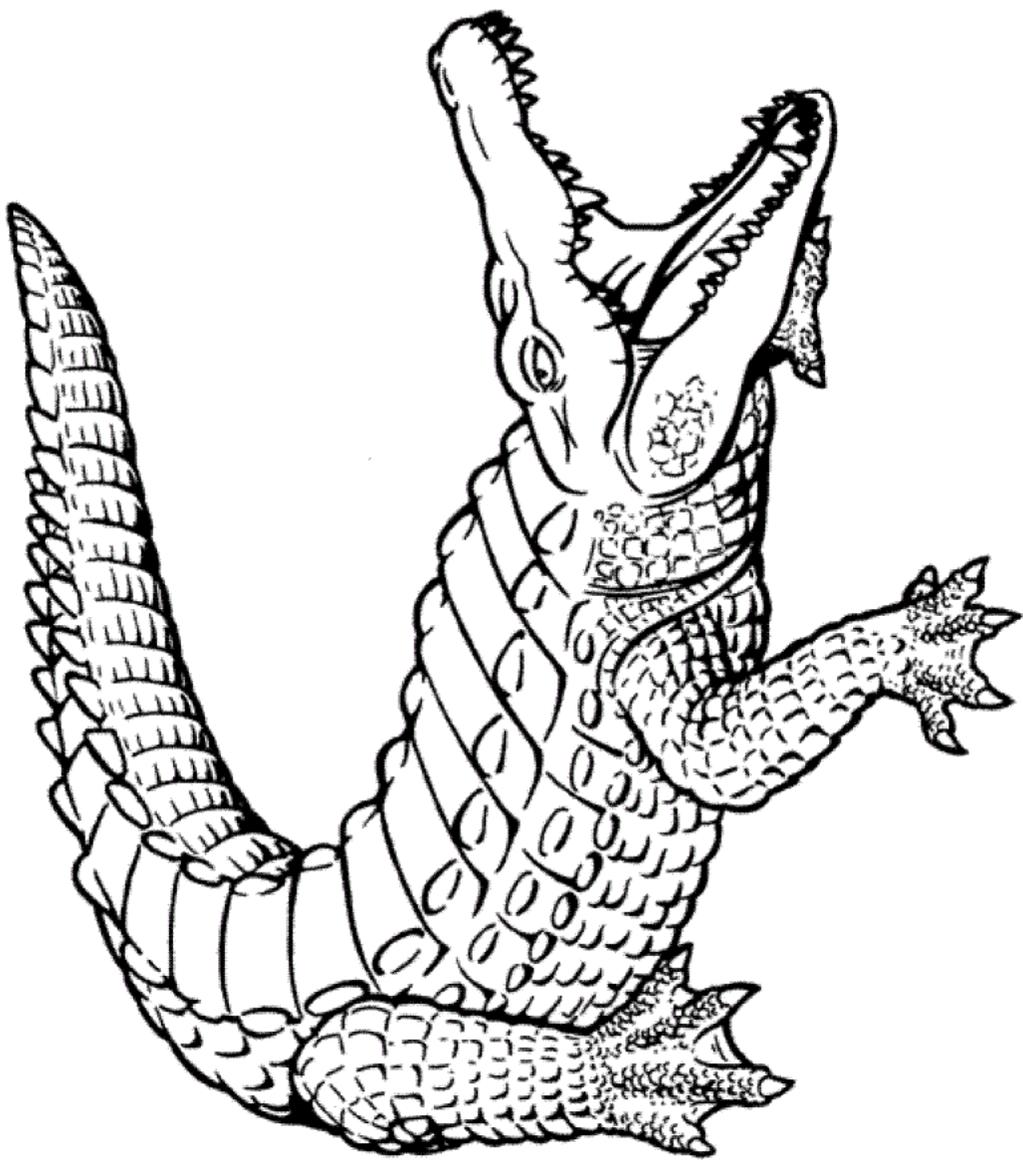
- Print out the Reptile Color Sheets.
- Color the reptiles anyway you would like and then cut them out.
- Look around, either inside your house or outside, to find an area that your reptile could camouflage. Hide your reptile in that spot!
- Have another person try to find the reptiles that you hid.
- Once all the reptiles have been found, have the other person hide them for you.



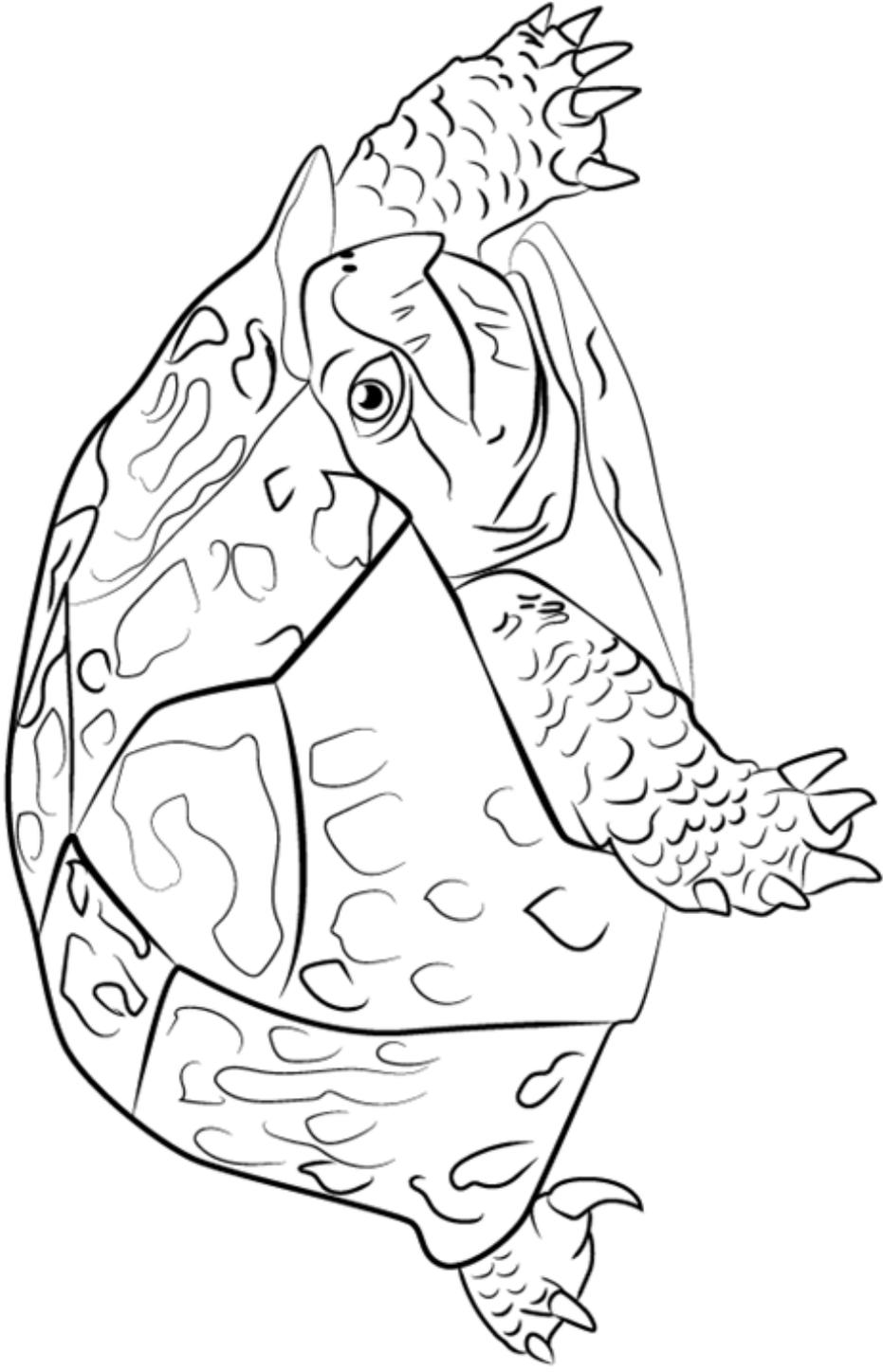
Texas horned lizard



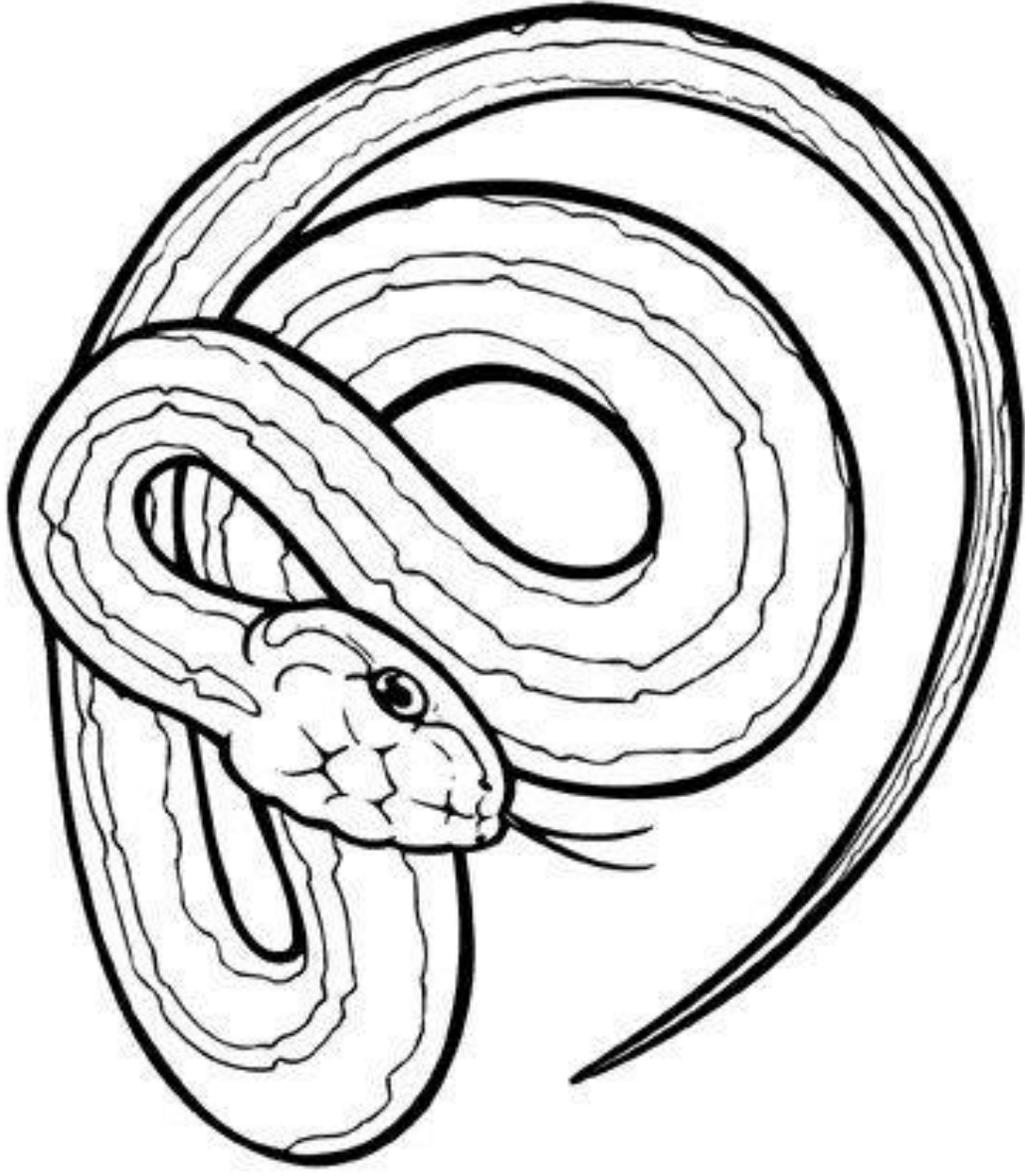
Green anole



American alligator



Ornate box turtle



Ribbon snake