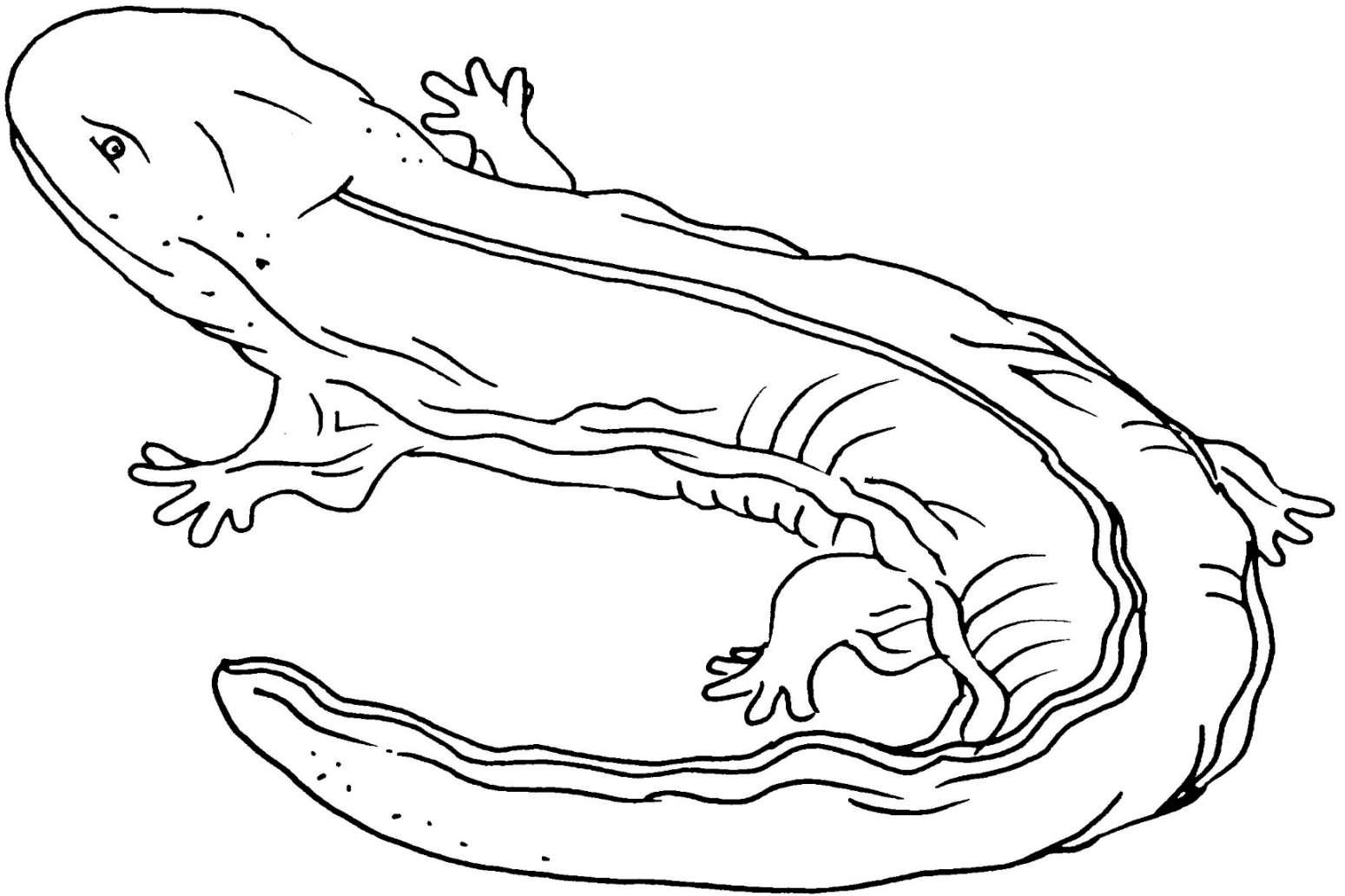




PA's Amphibian and Reptile Coloring Series

Eastern Hellbender



All About Me: I am a Hellbender, a member of the Giant Salamander family. We are Pennsylvania's official state amphibian! We can grow from 11 to 20 inches long. People long ago believed we had a venomous bite, but that's not true. We are completely aquatic and nocturnal. We are usually gray in color, but some of us are brown or even black. Our belly is light in color. Sometimes we have black spots on our backs and sides. Our bodies and heads are flattened. Several flaps of wrinkled skin hang along our lower sides. We have tiny eyes. We start out with external gills that we lose when we reach four or five inches in length. You may see gill openings on adults. Our legs are short and stout. Our tails are flat and rudderlike to help us swim. We are found in the Susquehanna and Ohio River watersheds; but we don't live in the Delaware River watershed. We live in fast-moving, mid-sized streams and the channels of clear rivers. We prefer habitat with plenty of boulders, large stones, snags and other large, loose debris. We take refuge beneath this cover by day, coming out to forage for food at night. We eat crayfish, snails, aquatic insects, and worms.