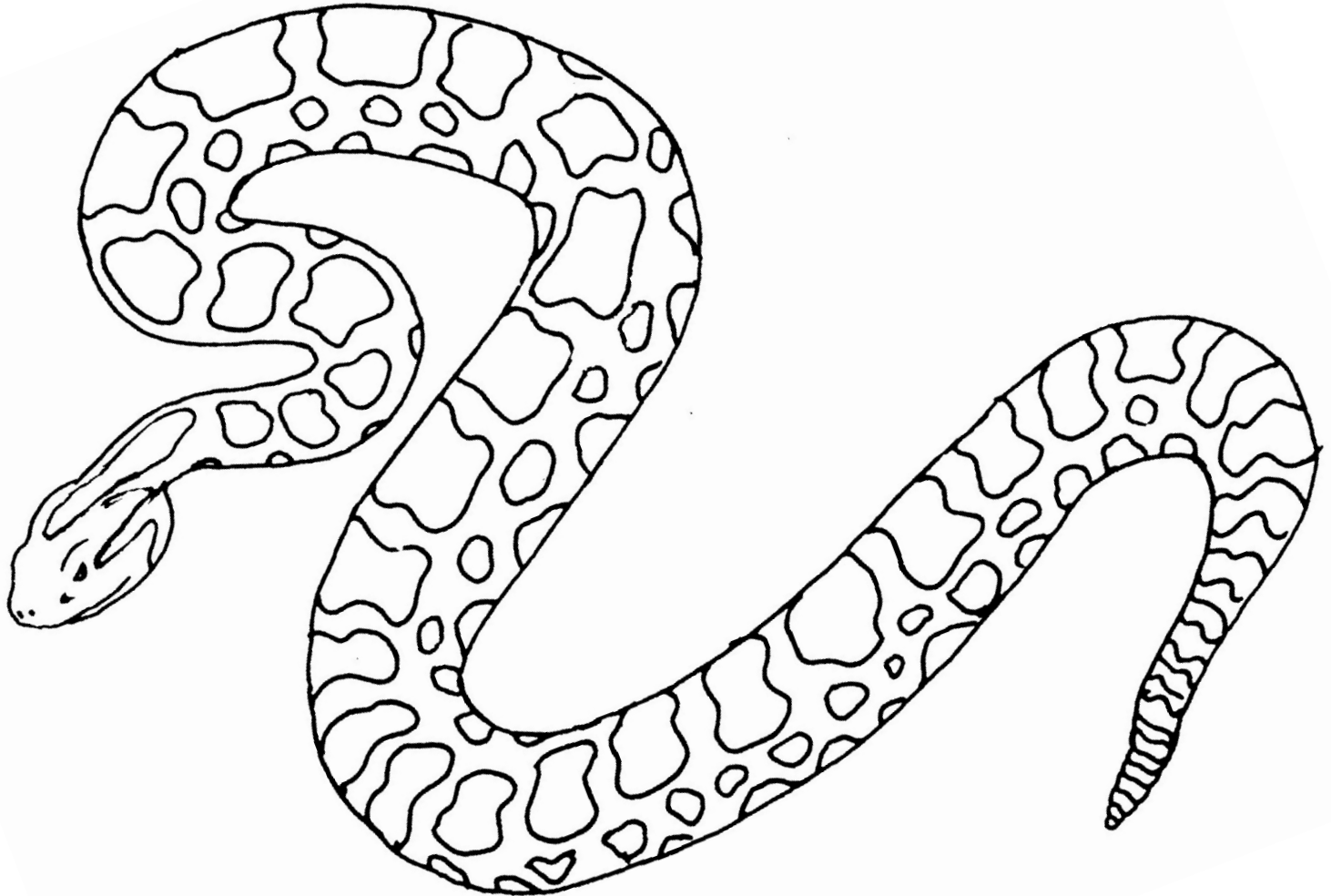




PA's Amphibian and Reptile Coloring Series

Eastern Massasauga



All About Me: Hello! I am an Eastern Massasauga. We are rattlesnakes, and we are the smallest of Pennsylvania's three venomous snakes. We only grow to be 20 to 30 inches long. We are brown, gray to black on our back and sides with a row of round, dark-brown or black blotches running down the middle of the back. We usually have three rows of smaller and lighter spots that stretch along each side. A dark bar, bordered with a lighter color, extends from our eye to the jaw, and several dark bars start at the top of the head and flow onto the neck. We have facial pits between our eye and nostril. Our bellies are black with scattered white or yellow markings. Nine plates (large scales) cover the crown of our heads, compared to timber rattlesnakes, which have many small scales. Our tail is stocky, ending in a small rattle. We prefer marshy areas with swampland, flood plains and wet meadows. One of the biggest challenges for us is that we are losing habitat as swampy areas are drained or have dried up. We love to eat frogs and other amphibians. We also eat small rodents and birds sometimes. In PA, we are found in portions of only five or six counties in the west-central edge of the state.