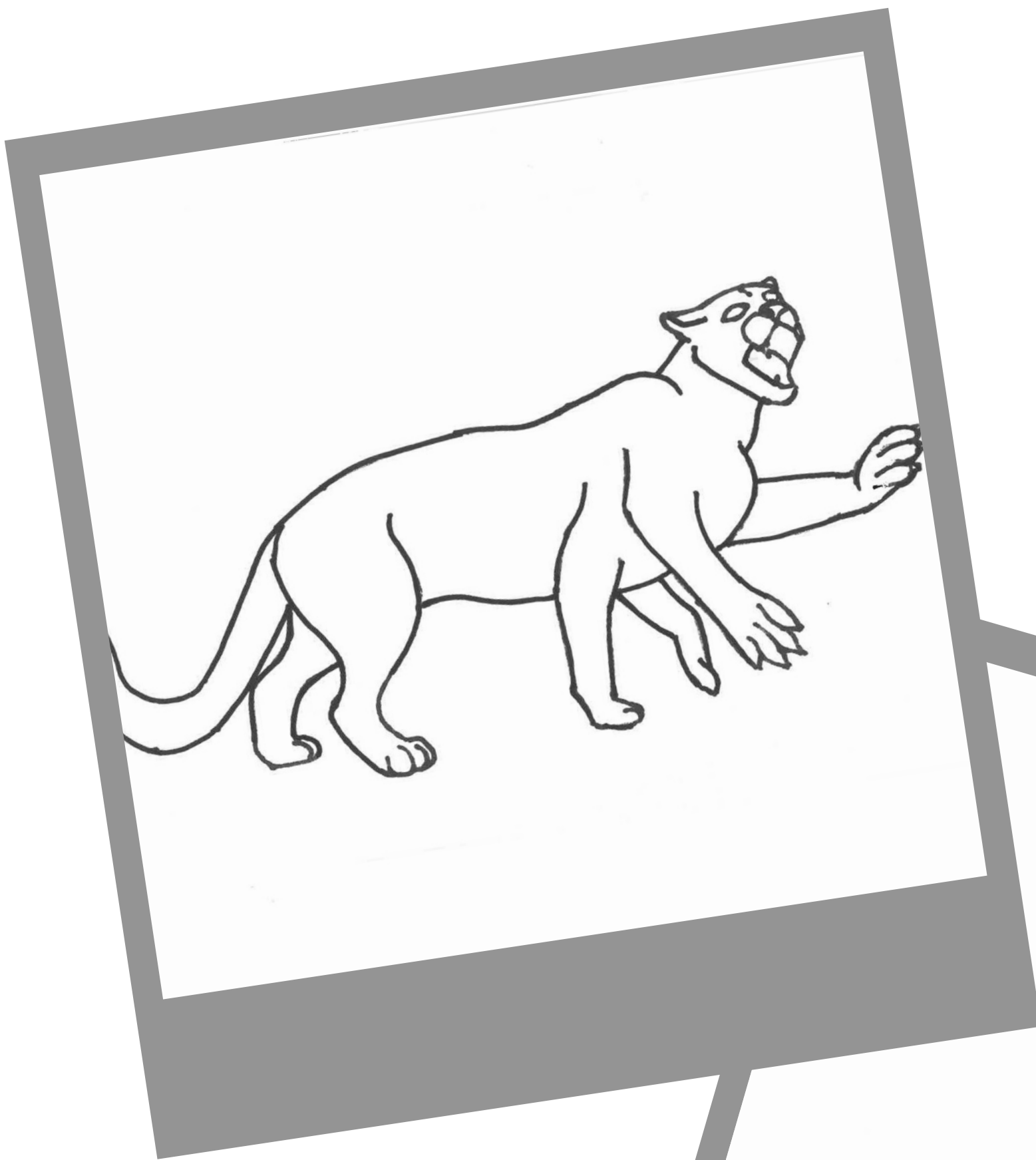
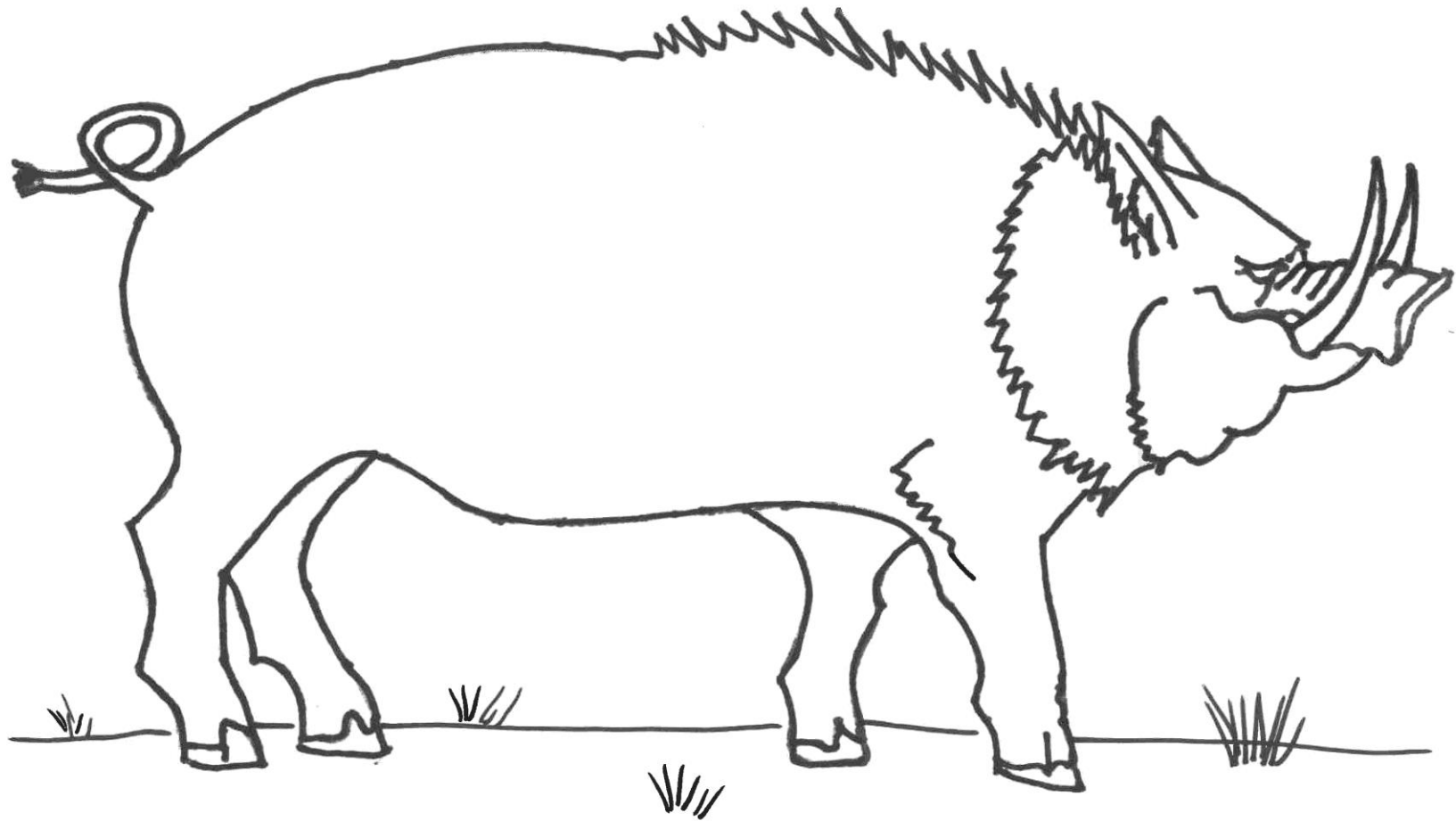


THE FLORIDA CRYPTID COLORING BOOK

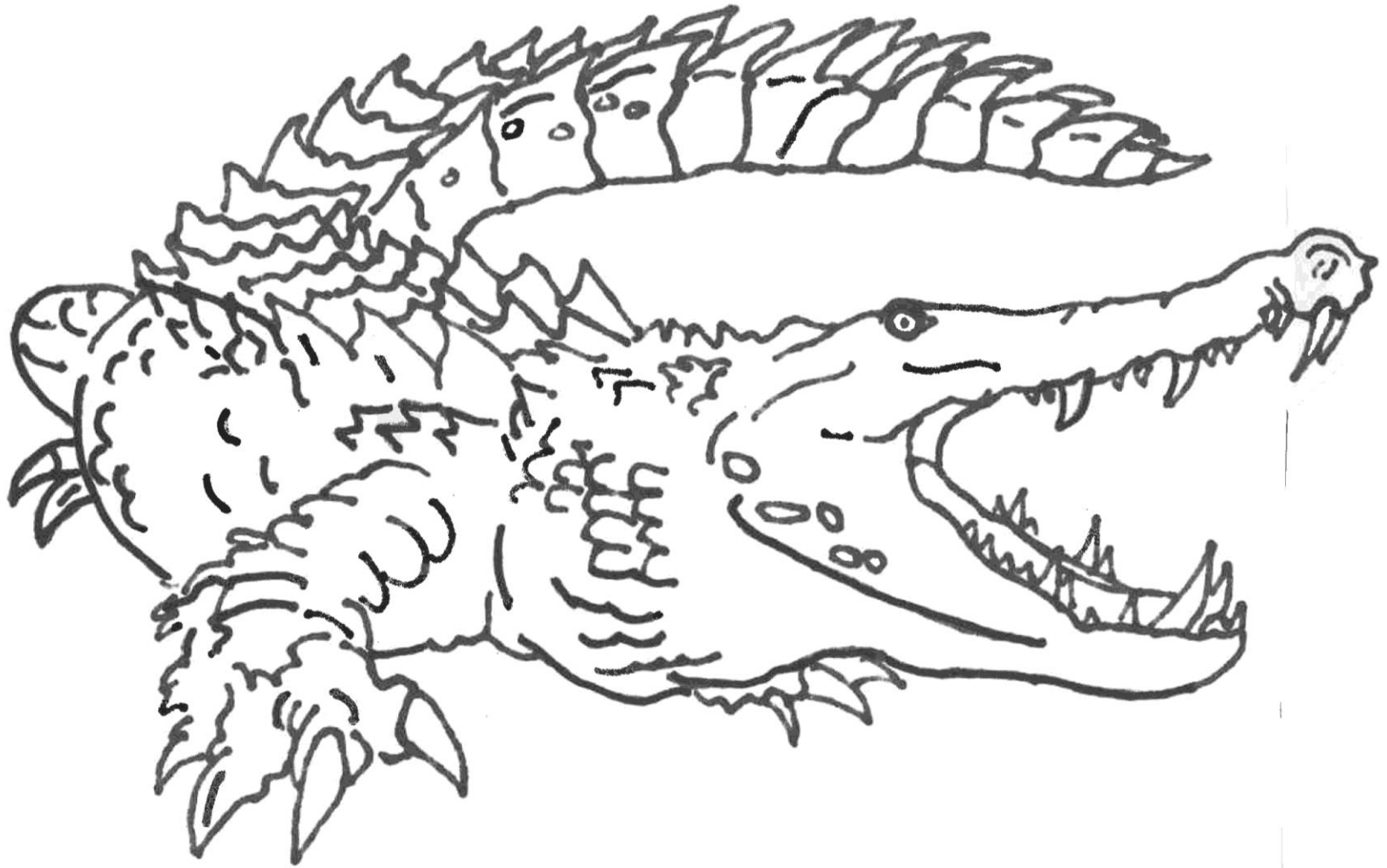


Wampus Cat,
Skunk Ape, Hog
Kong and more!

HOG KONG OR GIANT WILD HOG



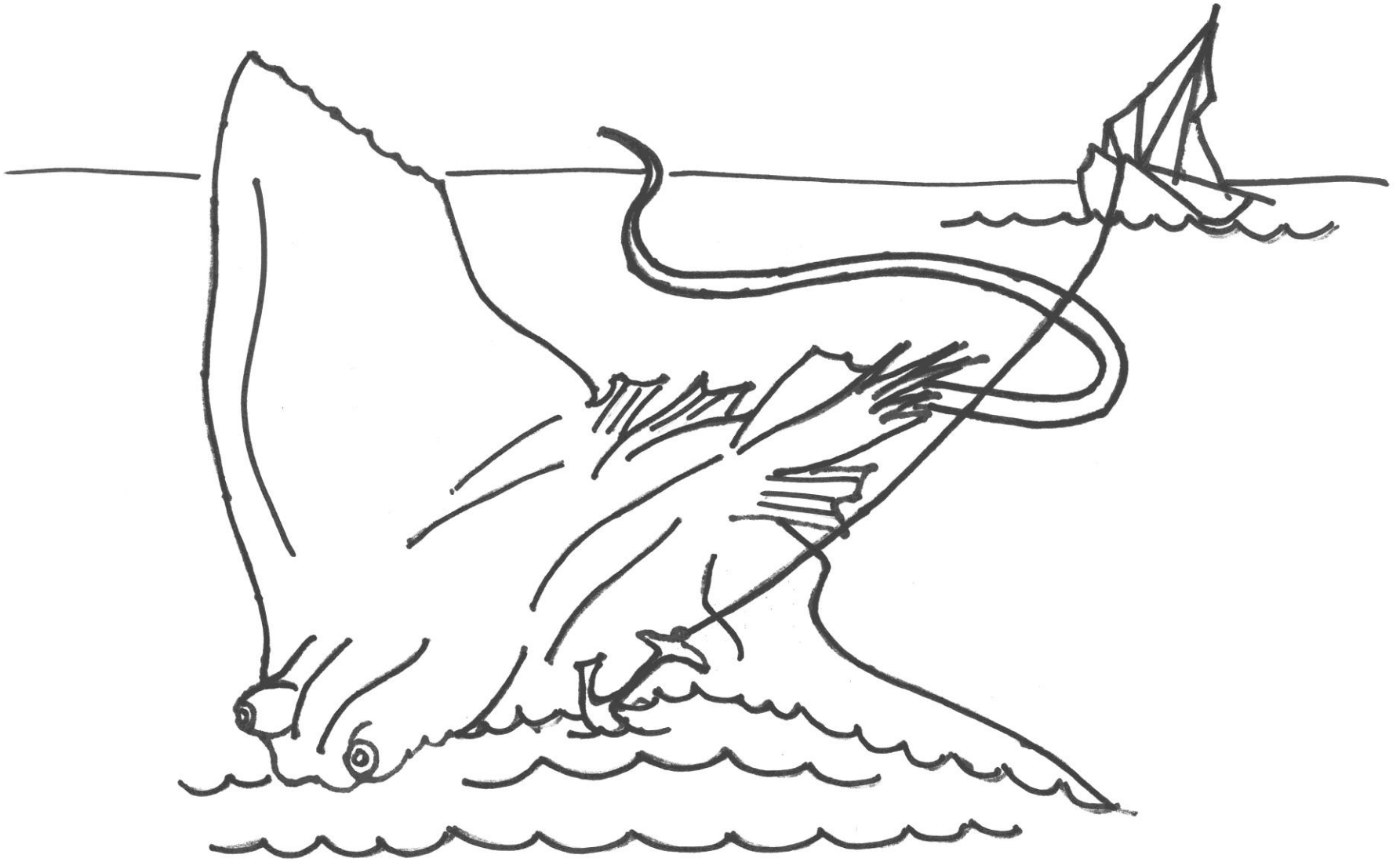
MEGA ALLIGATOR



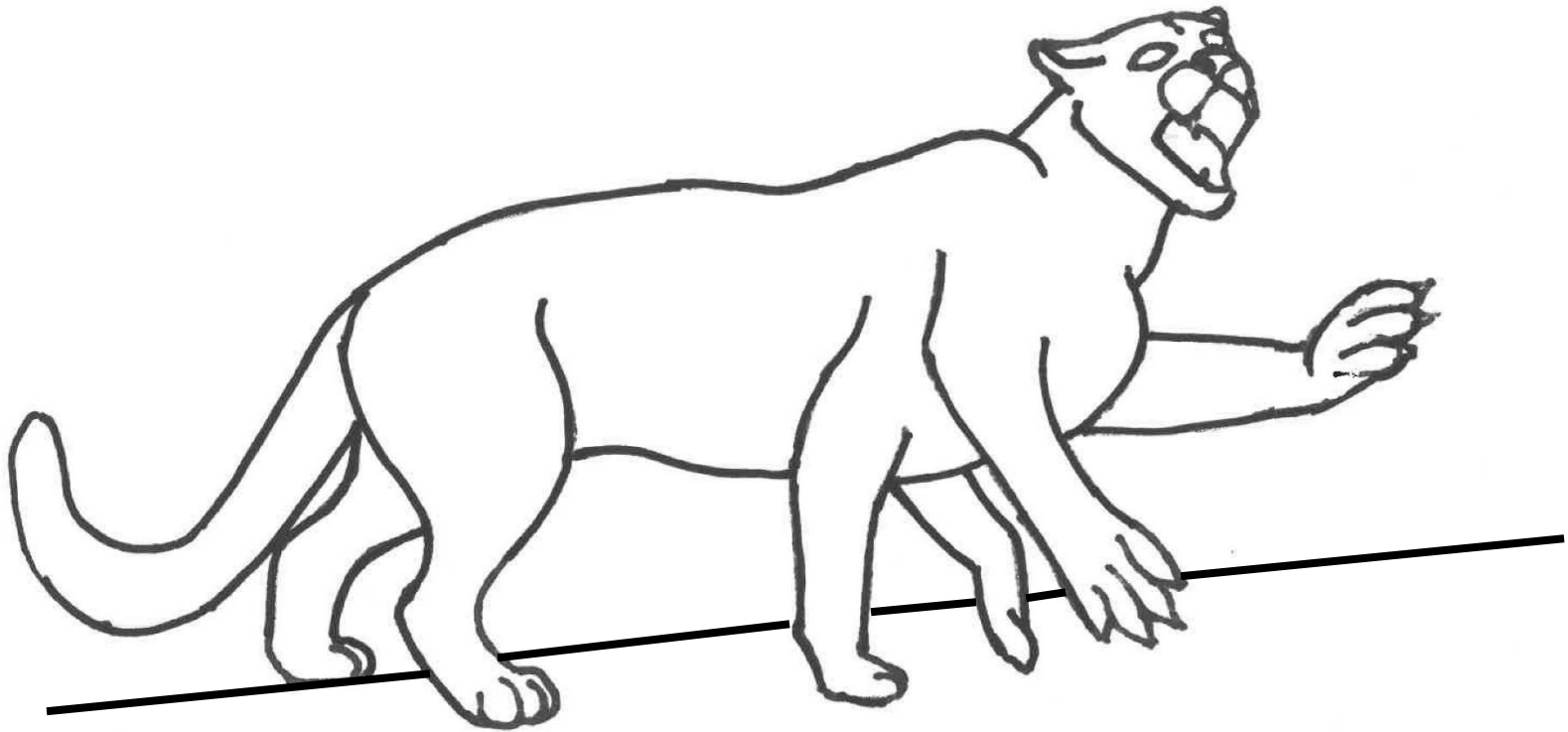
THE FLORIDA SEA DEVIL



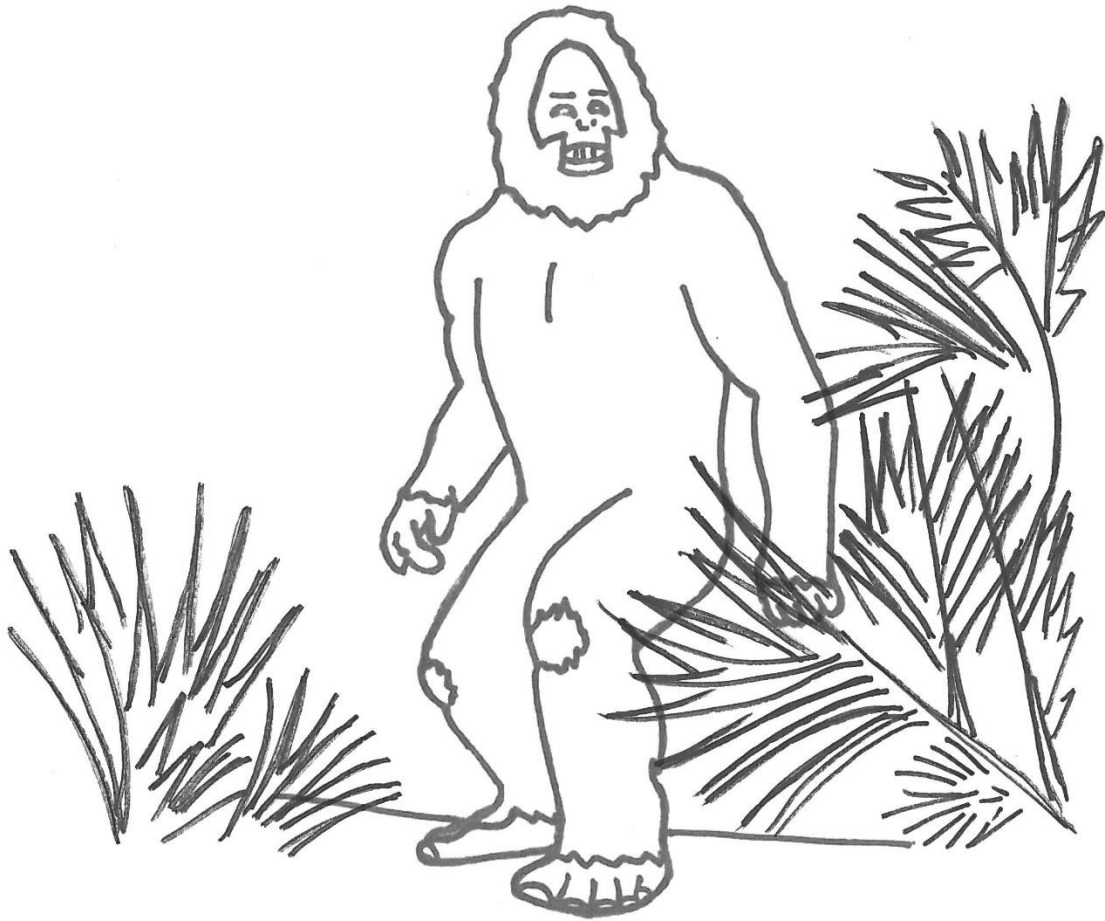
THE FLORIDA SEA DEVIL



WAMPUS CAT



SKUNK APE



Cryptid Creatures Background Information

Vocabulary to think about:

Cryptozoology: the study of cryptids. *Cryptozoologists* study cryptids.

Cryptids: An animal or creature that has been claimed to exist but no one has ever truly proven it exists. Only minimal evidence has been documented. Sometimes cryptids are real animals of unusually large size.

Evidence: clues left behind by an animal that can be studied to better understand the animal.

Cryptids reported to live in Florida: skunk or swamp ape, wampus cat, giant hogs, sea devils, mega-alligators, and giant boa constrictors.

Real animals that may have inspired these legendary creatures: monkeys living in Silver Springs and the Ocala National Forest; Florida panthers/mountain lions or black-furred bobcats; feral hogs of unusual size (the same goes for alligators, snakes, or other reptiles); sting rays and manta rays living off the coast of Florida being reported by early settlers as “sea monsters.”

Monkeys were brought into Florida a few different ways. In 1938, there was a tour boat operator who worked along the Silver River. His name was Colonel Tooley and he bought a few rhesus macaque monkeys to release on an island on his route. He wanted to enhance the river boat tour for his visitors. The area was a popular tourist destination after the filming of several Tarzan movies, like *Tarzan the Ape Man* and *Tarzan Finds a Son!*. But guess what Colonel Tooley didn't know? He didn't know macaques were very strong swimmers!

The macaques swam off the island and grew their population to nearly 100 monkeys in the next thirty years.¹ Several troops still live around the river and in the surrounding Ocala National Forest. There are also family groups in south Florida, which may have escaped during different hurricanes damaging zoos and parks in the area. Squirrel monkeys and vervet monkeys have been calling Florida their home since the midcentury.²

In Florida, wild hogs have been in residence since the Spanish first brought them here in the 1500s to provide food for themselves and future settlers. Because wild hogs are *omnivorous*, eating both plants and small animals, they have no problem growing to large sizes. But what if a hog just grew and grew, foraging for years and years? That's when we get news reports about giant hogs being hunted in the southeast.

¹ Jon Mooallem, “What’s a Monkey to Do in Tampa?” (New York Times Magazine August 22, 2012) <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/26/magazine/tampa-monkey.html?pagewanted=all>

² Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, “Nonnative Monkeys,” <https://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/nonnatives/mammals/monkeys/>

In 2004, a hunter showed Hog Kong to the world.³ That hog weighed over 1,000 pounds. Imagine camping at night, the woods are quiet, the campfire has turned to just glowing coals... and you hear a rustling, snorting, grumbling sound. And a huge, hulking shadow between the tree trunks...

Wild hogs can be very dangerous when scared. Their tusks grow long and sharp and they can charge at you. Mother hogs are especially protective of their young.

There's another creature prowling the Florida woods known as the wampus cat. It's supposed to have green, glowing eyes and six legs and it can be heard whining or crying at night. What do you think the wampus cat might have been?

Has anyone heard the word "catawampus?"⁴ What does it usually mean? Well, it may be a different way of saying *catamount*, which is a word shortening (portmanteau) the phrase "cat of the mountain." Does Florida have mountains? What about mountain lions? The Florida mountain lion, or Florida panther, is a real animal. They live in forested areas and swampy lands. Although they've got spots when they're kittens, they grow up to have tan fur with a white belly and their ears have a little black coloring on the very tips.

We also have bobcats in Florida, which are smaller cats with short tails. They can sometimes have black fur. Neither of these big cats can roar like a lion or tiger. They instead can chirp, growl, or sometimes make a screaming sound. There's a good chance that what people hear in the woods at night whining are these Florida cats.⁵

³ Natalie O'Neill, "Hog Huntin' in the Glades," *Miami New Times* (December 25, 2008), <https://www.miaminewtimes.com/news/hog-huntin-in-the-glades-6362987>

⁴ "Catawampus," Online Etymology Dictionary, <<https://www.etymonline.com/word/catawampus/>>

⁵ Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, "Florida Panther Program: Description and Range," <<https://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/wildlife/panther/description/>>