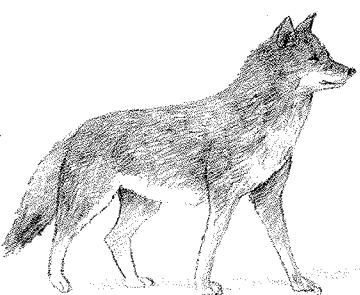





The Better to Eat You With...

Match the creature with its hunting method. Then, in the space provided, draw one of its prey. Label your drawing. (Find the answers on the preceding pages.)

Hunting methods: a) impales its prey on a thorn or twig b) sets a trap
c) may hunt in pairs d) holds its prey with front legs e) eats its prey whole

CARNIVORE	PREY
<p>Coyote Hunting method: _____</p> 	_____
<p>Loggerhead shrike Hunting method: _____</p> 	_____
<p>Mantid Hunting method: _____</p> 	_____
<p>Blue racer Hunting method: _____</p> 	_____

How many other grassland carnivores can you think of? Make a list of carnivorous birds, mammals, insects, reptiles and amphibians. What do you think might happen if one of the carnivores could no longer find food? How might this affect other creatures living in the grassland?

Contact the FON for more information about Ontario's carnivorous creatures.

Jumbo Book of Nature, Habitats, Introducing Series: Mammals, Birds, Insects, Reptiles.

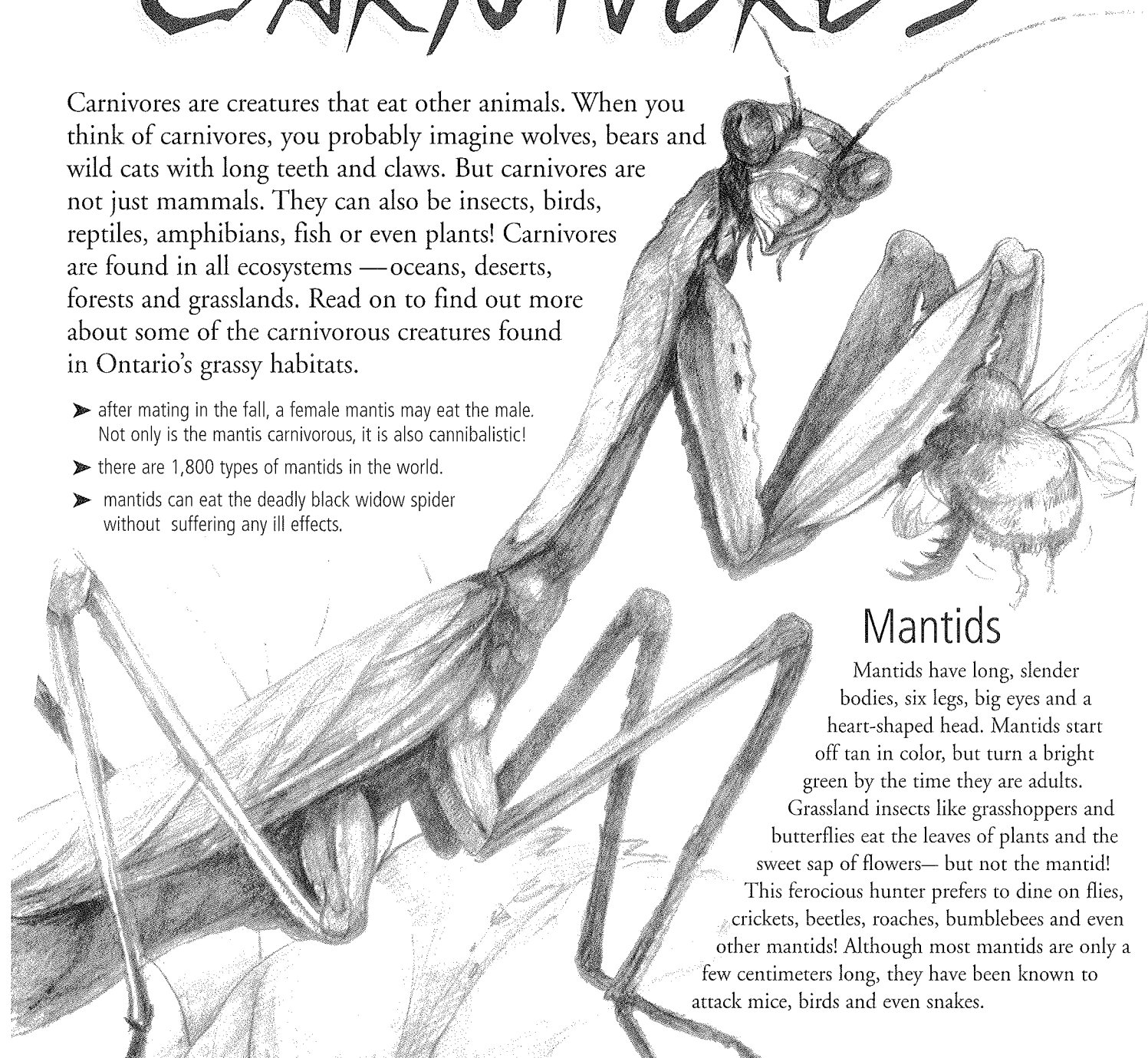


What does a loggerhead shrike, blue racer, praying mantis and a coyote have in common? They're all....

GRASSLAND CARNIVORES

Carnivores are creatures that eat other animals. When you think of carnivores, you probably imagine wolves, bears and wild cats with long teeth and claws. But carnivores are not just mammals. They can also be insects, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish or even plants! Carnivores are found in all ecosystems — oceans, deserts, forests and grasslands. Read on to find out more about some of the carnivorous creatures found in Ontario's grassy habitats.

- ▶ after mating in the fall, a female mantis may eat the male. Not only is the mantis carnivorous, it is also cannibalistic!
- ▶ there are 1,800 types of mantids in the world.
- ▶ mantids can eat the deadly black widow spider without suffering any ill effects.



Mantids

Mantids have long, slender bodies, six legs, big eyes and a heart-shaped head. Mantids start off tan in color, but turn a bright green by the time they are adults.

Grassland insects like grasshoppers and butterflies eat the leaves of plants and the sweet sap of flowers— but not the mantid!


This ferocious hunter prefers to dine on flies, crickets, beetles, roaches, bumblebees and even other mantids! Although most mantids are only a few centimeters long, they have been known to attack mice, birds and even snakes.



Coyote

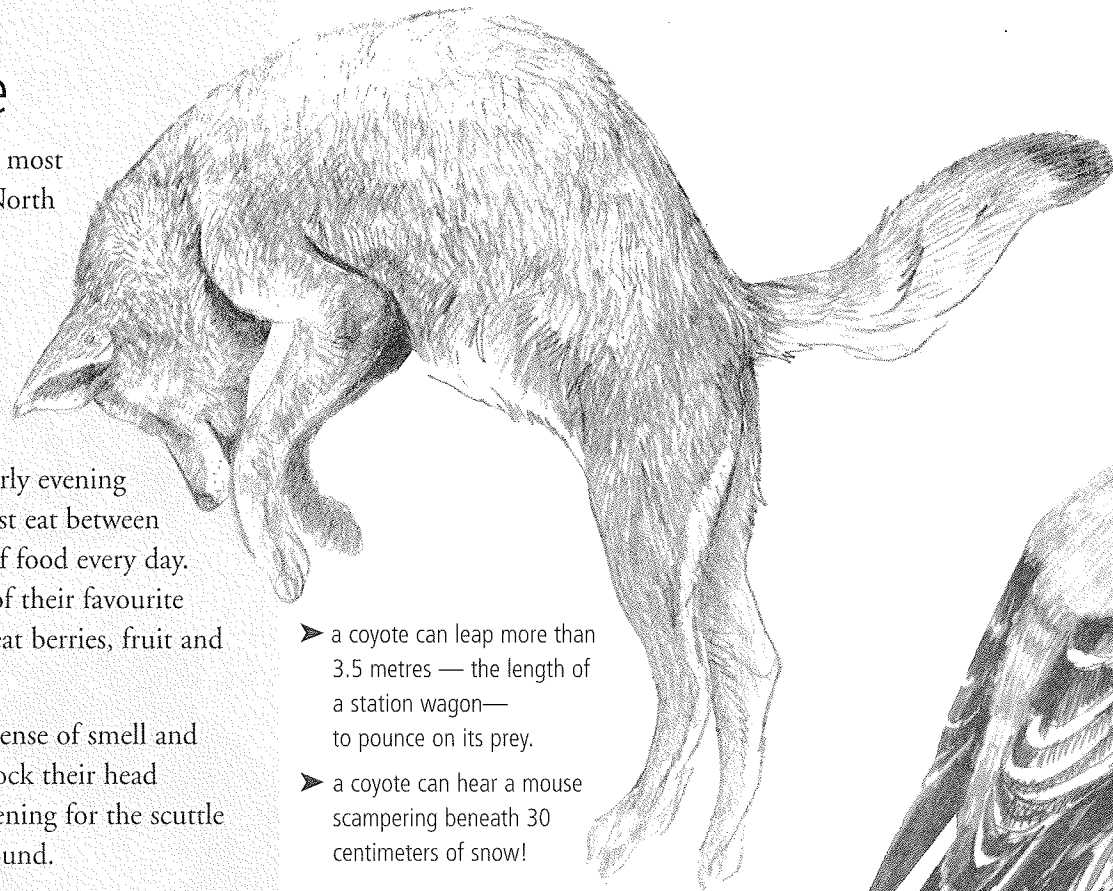
The coyote is one of the most common carnivores in North American grasslands. Sometimes called the "prairie wolf" or "brush wolf" this dog-like mammal hunts small rodents, rabbits and hares. Hunting in the early evening or at night, a coyote must eat between one and 1.5 kilograms of food every day. Although mice are one of their favourite foods, coyotes will also eat berries, fruit and insects.

Coyotes have a keen sense of smell and hearing and will often cock their head towards the ground, listening for the scuttle of mice beneath the ground.



Coyotes are usually solitary hunters — except when hunting deer or rabbits. Many types of rabbits run in circles when chased. However, coyotes have caught on to this habit.

One coyote chases the rabbit while the other crouches in the spot where the chase began, waiting for the rabbit to return. When a coyote is hunting a small rodent, it creeps and slinks like a cat with its body close to the ground... waiting... silently... creeping closer... and closer...until it POUNCES!



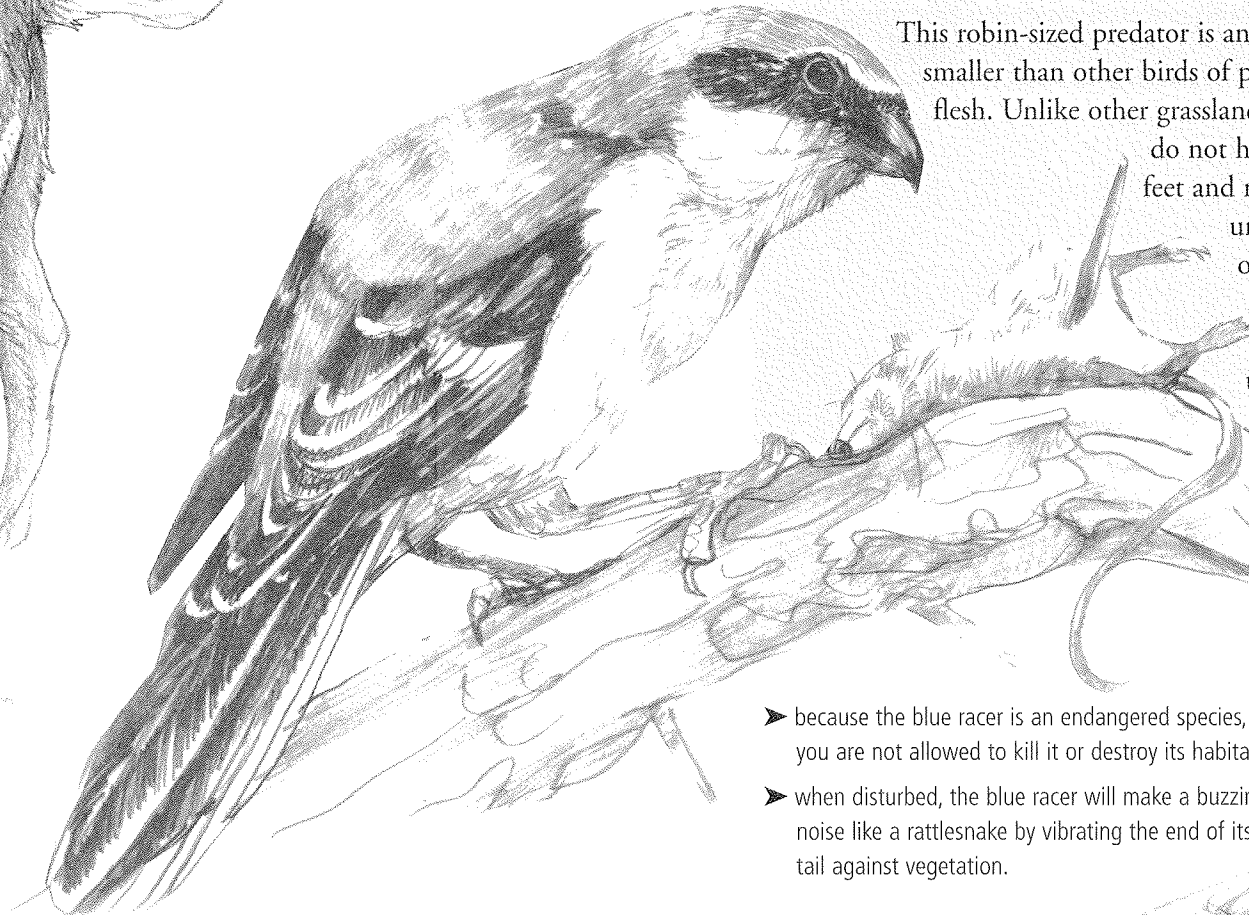
- a coyote can leap more than 3.5 metres — the length of a station wagon— to pounce on its prey.
- a coyote can hear a mouse scampering beneath 30 centimeters of snow!



Loggerhead Shrike

No grassland is complete without birds of prey circling high above or diving towards unsuspecting prey. Visit these grassy ecosystems and you may see short-eared owls, northern harriers, red-tailed hawks, American kestrels, or loggerhead shrikes. Loggerhead shrikes perch on fence posts, telephone poles or wires beside open pasture and grasslands. They use their keen eyesight to search for a tasty meal below.

This robin-sized predator is an odd ball in the bird community. It's much smaller than other birds of prey and has a sharp, pointed beak for tearing flesh. Unlike other grassland predators such as hawks and owls, loggerheads do not have long sharp talons. Instead, they have small feet and nails like songbirds. Because of this, they are unable to tightly hold their prey and have developed a unique hunting technique for catching insects, small birds and rodents. They impale their prey on a thorn or twig, hence their nickname "butcher-bird".



- because the blue racer is an endangered species, you are not allowed to kill it or destroy its habitat.
- when disturbed, the blue racer will make a buzzing noise like a rattlesnake by vibrating the end of its tail against vegetation.

Blue Racer

The blue racer's habitat is confined to a small portion of Pelee Island in Lake Erie. This bluish-green snake hunts for frogs, lizards, insects and rodents such as mice and voles. It slithers along the grass with its head held up looking for prey. Able to climb short bushes and into low branches of trees, the blue racer can even pluck small birds right out of a nest! Like all snakes, the blue racer swallows its prey whole. Can you imagine eating a whole pizza in one gulp?

