

Fact Sheet

Make it an Australian Easter!



Make it an Australian Easter!

Easter Conventions Why Bunnies?

Many children believe that a magical rabbit, or Easter Bunny, brings them Easter Eggs on Easter Sunday. The origins of this tradition, common in much of the western world, may be related to a German legend, which tells of a poor woman who, during a famine, dyed eggs and hid them in a nest as Easter gifts for her children. As the children discovered the eggs, they saw a rabbit hopping away and assumed that it had left the eggs for them.

The relationship between the rabbit and Easter is probably derived from the ancient world where rabbits, or hares, symbolized fertility and new life and were associated with (northern hemisphere) spring festivals.

Why Bilbies?

Many customs connected with the Easter season come from European pre-Christian festivals of spring. Others stem from the Passover celebration. We now accept Australian symbols for other celebrations such as Christmas, where reindeers have been replaced by kangaroos, Santa wears an Australian hat, and snow storms are replaced by desert scenes. The imported symbols such as snow, traditional food such plum puddings and other social practices may now seem incongruous in this different hemisphere, different climate and multicultural society.

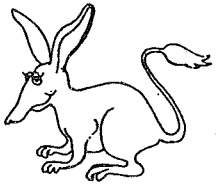
The rabbit is one of the animals introduced after European arrival which has caused monumental damage to the Australian environment and whose introduction is now deeply regretted.

"The Bilby, or rabbit eared bandicoot, is an endangered marsupial which once lived across much of Australia but is now only found in a few scattered arid areas in Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory. Much of its habitat has been degraded due to clearing and changed fire patterns. It is also threatened by competition with rabbits, in addition to predation by foxes and feral cats." (*Bilbies not Bunnies*, p 5).

Make it an Australian Easter can be linked to learning about endangered species, conservation measures, ways in which different cultures acknowledge Easter, different religious and cultural festivals and observances, and overall what makes us modern Australians with all our diversity. The new Draft HSIE K-6 Syllabus includes the recommended units *How and why do Australians celebrate special occasions?* (Level 2) *Who and what influences our identity?* (Level 3)

This package of resource materials promotes the awareness of the value of Australian native species and habitats and encourages you to give Easter an Australian touch by adopting the Bilby as a symbol of Easter in Australia rather than the rabbit.

Some of the resources are based on a teaching kit *Bilbies not Bunnies* available from Department for Education and Children's Services (SA) which contained the inspirational *The Easter Bilby* by All Garnett and Kaye Kessing. The craft ideas have been created by Field of Mars FSC staff.

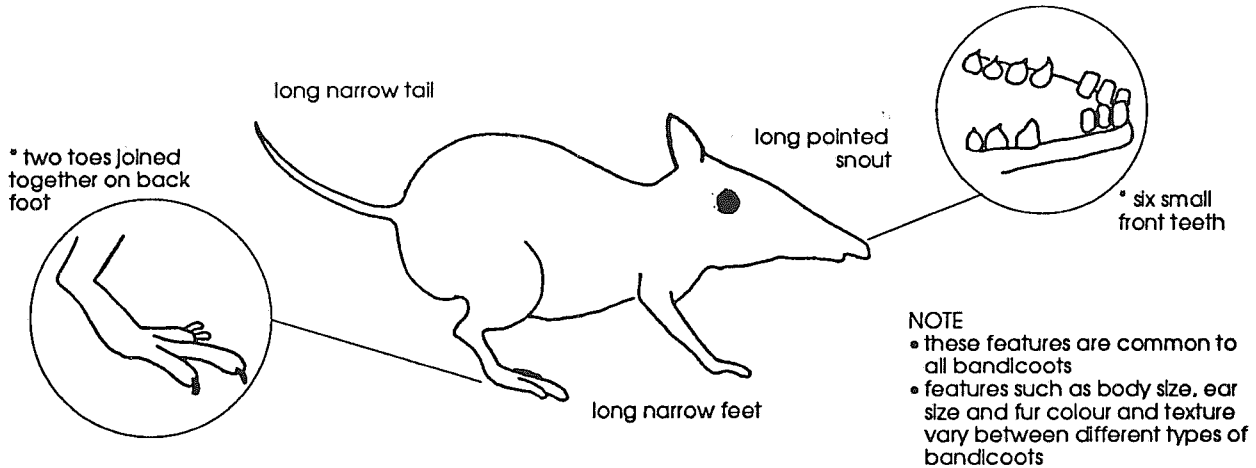


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Types of bandicoots



Long nosed bandicoot (*Perameles species*)

The long nosed bandicoots are of a light build, have an exceptionally long snout and moderately long ears. They live in areas that tend to be open and grassy. The long nosed bandicoots include:

- long nosed bandicoot
- eastern barred bandicoot
- western barred bandicoot
- **desert bandicoot (extinct)

Short nosed bandicoot (*Isododon species*)

The short nosed bandicoots are of a heavy build and have short round ears. They are often referred to as 'rat like'. They live in areas that tend to be bushy. The short nosed bandicoots include:

- southern brown bandicoot
- northern brown bandicoot
- golden bandicoot (endangered)

Bilby or long eared bandicoot (*Macrotis species*)

The Bilbies are of a light build, have exceptionally long ears and a long tail which ends in a tuft of fur. They once lived in a variety of habitats, covering approximately seventy percent of the continent. Due to the pressures of feral animals they are now restricted to arid shrub and grassland and some woodland areas where there is ground cover. The bilbies include:

- bilby (endangered)
- **lesser bilby (extinct- last seen 1931)

Spiny bandicoot (*Echymipera species*)

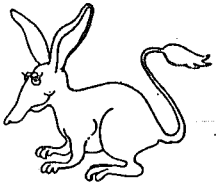
The spiny bandicoot has a blunt snout, short black tail and stiff hairs over its body. They live in the Cape York area and are more closely related to the rainforest bandicoots in New Guinea.

- rufous spiny bandicoot

Pig footed bandicoot (*Chaeropus species*)

The pig footed bandicoot was given its name because it would walk on it's two front toes and on only one back toe, giving a 'trotter like' appearance.

- **pig footed bandicoot (extinct - last seen 1926)



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Breeding and Socialising

How often do Bandicoots Breed?

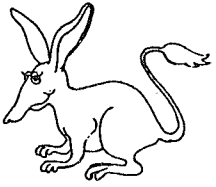
Most bandicoots can breed from about three months of age. Their breeding life continues for approximately two to three years. Some bandicoots give birth only at specific times of the year, for example, the western barred bandicoot breed in autumn and winter, while the southern brown bandicoot and northern brown bandicoot (in cooler climates) do not breed in autumn. Bilbies breed all year round from approximately seven months of age.

Bandicoots have the shortest known pregnancy of any mammal, generally twelve and a half days (bilbies thirteen to sixteen days). There may be up to four young, which are only one centimetre long at birth. They have powerful front legs and a strong sense of smell so they can climb unassisted into the mothers backward opening pouch and find one of her eight teats. Unlike other marsupials, bandicoots are attached by an umbilical cord which acts as a safety line as they climb to the pouch. As soon as a pup attaches, the teat swells and it is difficult for the pup to be removed. The young develop and grow in the mothers pouch. When they are seven weeks old, they have short golden fur, and leave the pouch for the first time. They feed on milk until they are approximately nine weeks of age, when they have greyish brown fur, and become independant. The next litter is due to be born at this stage.

Are Bandicoots very sociable?

Bandicoots are territorial. They mark their territory with faeces and also by rubbing the ground with a scent from a special gland which is located behind the ear. Females generally have a smaller territory of approximately two hectares, while males occupy three to five hectares. The bandicoots tend to live mainly in one part of their territory and roam over the rest.

When two male bandicoots meet, they curl their lip to bare their teeth. One male may chase the other, jump over him and claw at his rump. He may even scratch or pull out fur. Bilbies are unlike other bandicoots. Although they avoid contact with each other, when they meet they usually do not fight. Males may even shelter together in the same burrow in times of danger.



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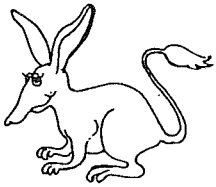


Describing a Bandicoot

- shy
- nocturnal
- squeaky grunts
- warm blooded
- covered in fur
- marsupial
- six front teeth, at the front of the lower jaw for eating insects
- two small joined toes on the back feet
- pointed snout
- small narrow feet
- a long narrow tail
- small mammals measuring between 15 to 56cm, from tip of nose to base of tail (size of small rabbit)
- bound along with front legs together, then back legs together looks like a rabbit
- find insects by smelling them out and listening
- narrow snout fits easily into a hole to capture a grub
- dig conical shaped holes

The following are specific to bilbies:

- long sensitive ears
- a long narrow tail with a tuft of fur on the end



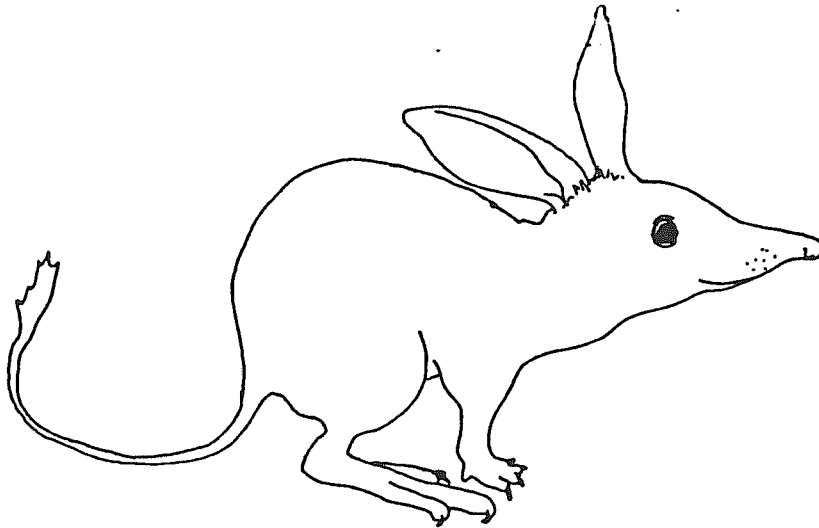
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Bilby or long eared bandicoot (*Macrotis species*)

There were two types of bilbies, the Greater Bilby and the Lesser Bilby. The Lesser Bilby was last sighted in 1931, and is now considered extinct. The Greater Bilby is considered endangered. When the Bilby is referred to, it is generally the Greater Bilby.



Bilbies have a light build, exceptionally long ears and a long tail which ends in a tuft of fur.

Bilbies once lived in a variety of habitats, covering approximately seventy percent of the Australian continent. Due to competition and other pressures from feral animals they are now restricted to arid shrub, grassland and some woodland areas where there is ground cover.

Bilbies need burrows to help them survive in the arid centre of Australia. The burrows are deep and spiral down to a depth of two metres. Each burrow usually has one open entrance, with a 'blind end' close to the surface for an emergency quick dig escape. They shelter in the midday heat and come out only after dark.

Water needs to be conserved, so unlike other animals, bilbies do not pant or lick themselves to cool down. Their large, thin ears contain many large veins close to the surface of the skin. As blood flows through these veins, heat is lost to the outside environment and the bilby can effectively maintain a constant temperature.

Bilbies feast mainly on termites and ants. They also eat other small insects and larvae, seeds, bulbs, fruit and fungi. They scratch the soil and break into the termites underground passages rather than destroying the actual termites mound. The termites feed on the roots of spinifex grass. Reduced quantities of spinifex occur in areas where there is cattle grazing, which in turn reduces the number of termites which can ultimately reduce the number of bilbies.

Bilbies are vulnerable to predation by cats, foxes and wild dogs.

Blackline Master: Happy Easter Card

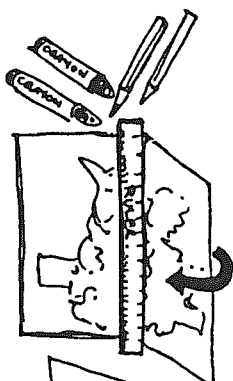
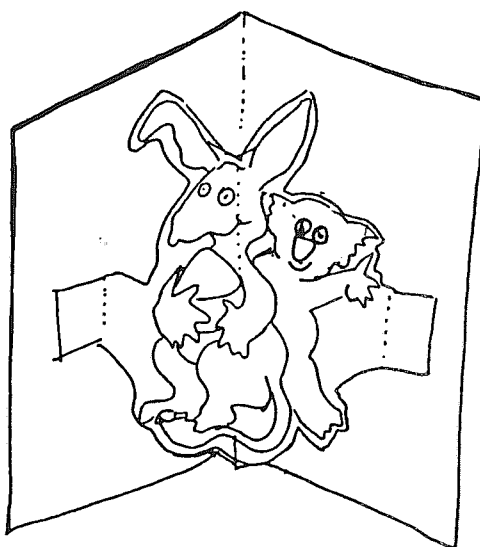
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Pop Out Card

You will need:

- 1 x pop out card insert
- 1 x pop out card base
- scissors
- colouring pencils, crayons or paint
- paste



Colour the bilby and baby koala.

Place a ruler in line with the fold line.

Gently crease the cut-out using the edge of the ruler as a guide.

Turn the page over and fold along the crease you have just made. This will give a fold with the bilby and koala on the outside.



Carefully cut around the easter friends on the dotted line. DO NOT CUT OFF THE TABS.



Fold the tabs.

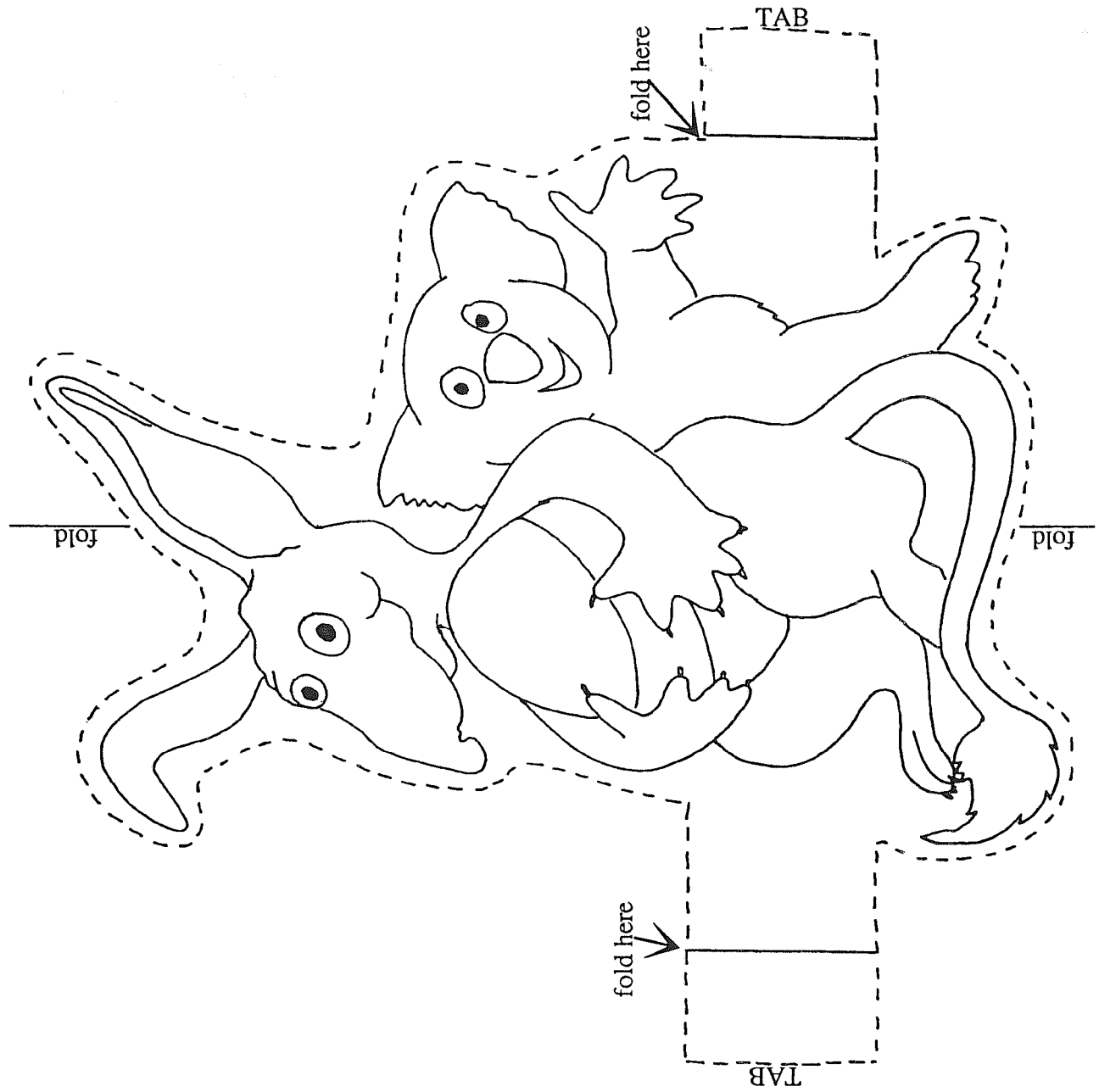
Place a dab of glue on the back of the tabs only.



Paste the pop out insert tabs onto the marked spaces on the base card.

Blackline Master: Pop Out Card Insert

Make it an Australian Easter!



Paste
TAB
here

Paste
TAB
here

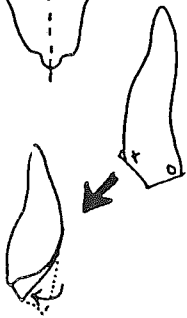
Bilby Mask 1

You will need:

- bilby face
- left and right bilby ears
- strip of heavy paper for head band
- stapler
- colour pens, paint or crayons



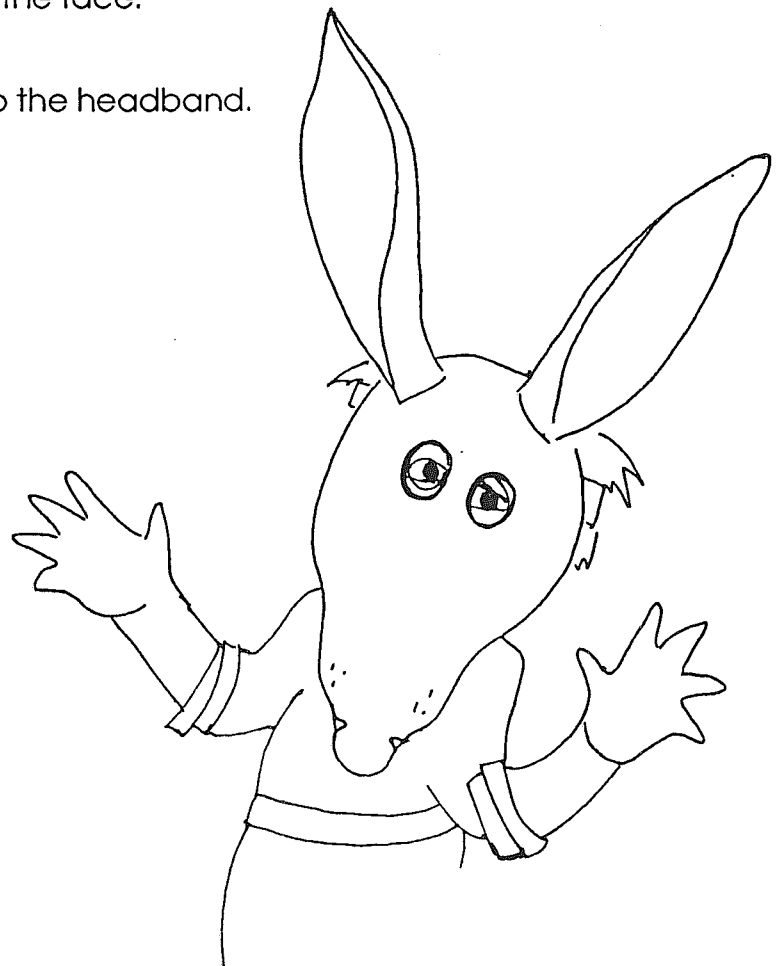
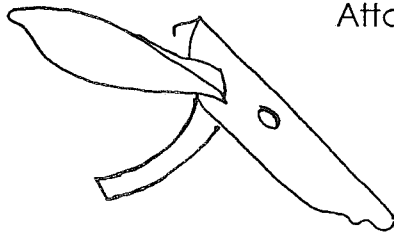
Carefully cut around the face and ears. Be extra careful when cutting out the eyes. Fold the mask in half.

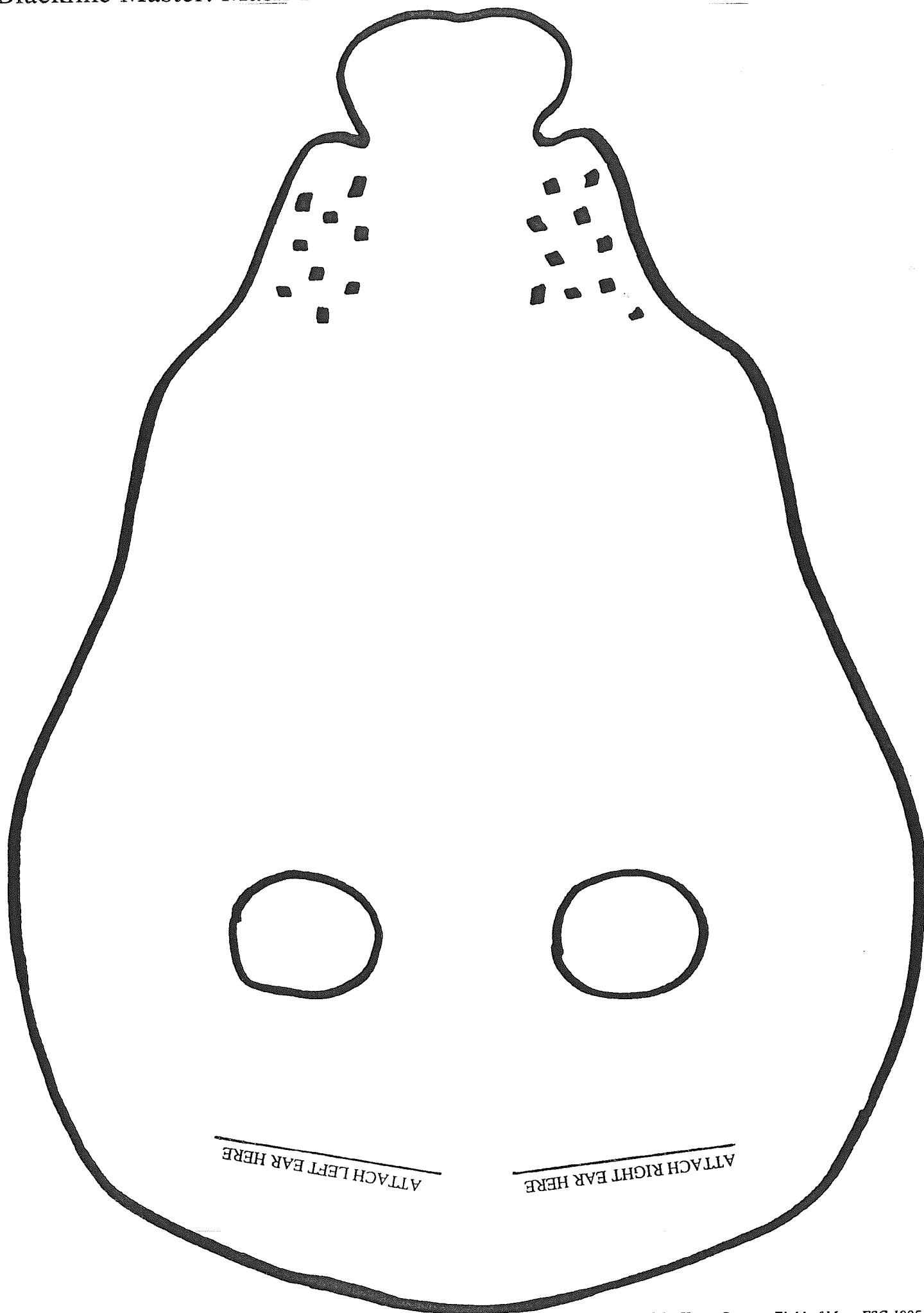


Do not mix up the left and right ears. On the base of each ear is a 'x' and 'o'. Roll the side with the 'o' so that it sits on top of the 'x'. Carefully staple in place.

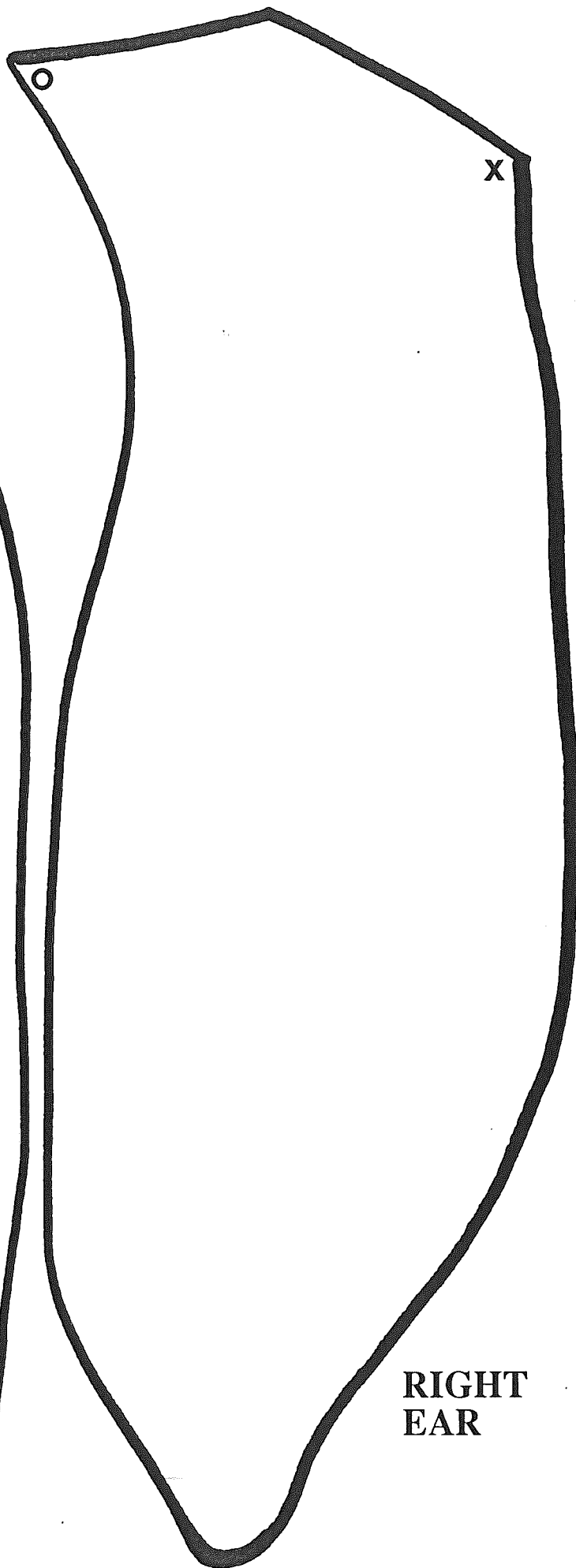
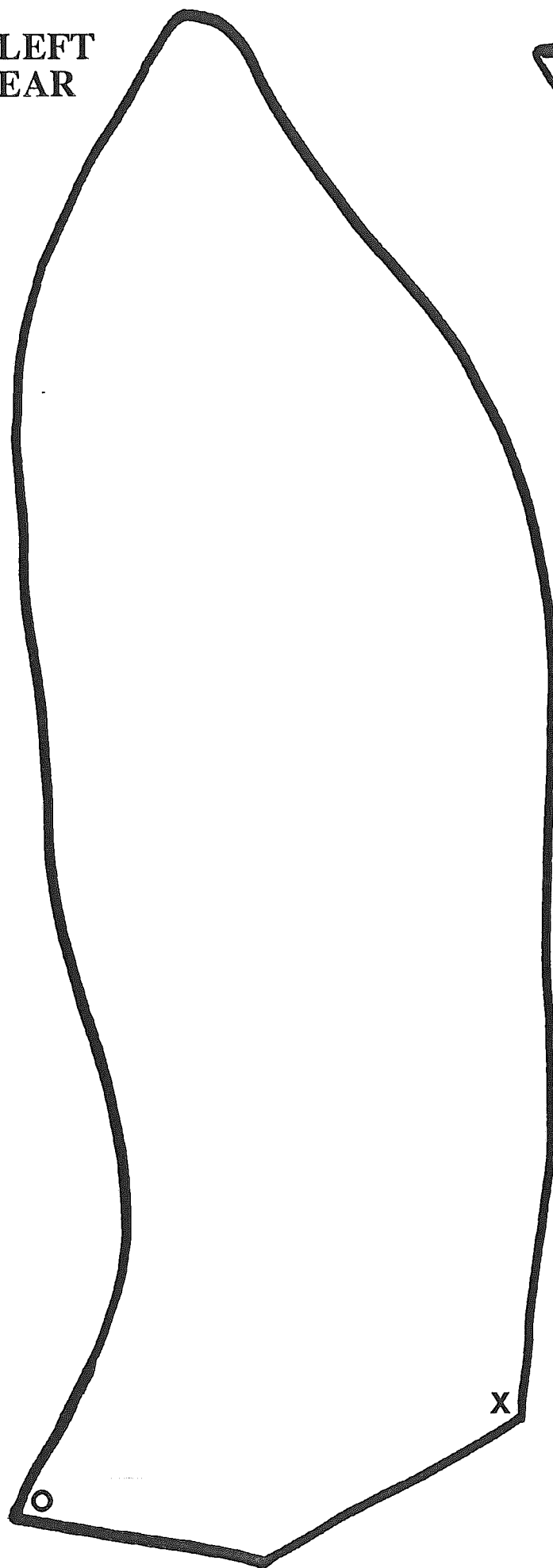
Attach the ears to the face.

Attach the mask to the headband.





**LEFT
EAR**



**RIGHT
EAR**

Bilby Mask 2

You will need:

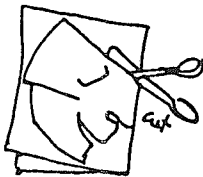
- bilby template photocopied or traced onto A3 size paper or card
- left and right bilby ears
- sticky tape or stapler
- elastic
- colour pens, paint or crayons



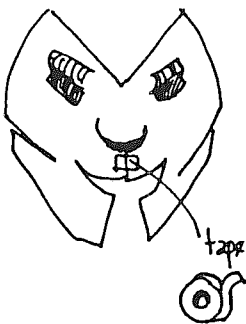
Research the colours of a bilby and colour your mask.

Fold the A3 page, make sure that the nose is on the fold.

Cut around the outline of the mask and along the cheek line. Do not cut the folded part of the nose.



Insert the scissors to cut the slit that forms the eye. You may choose to fringe this to form eyelashes. The eyelashes will curl by gently pushing the fringe with your fingertips.

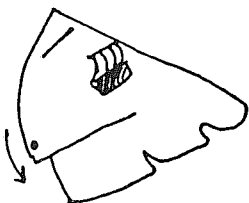


Open the mask out. Overlap both edges of the UPPER LIP and tape or staple together (Cover the writing).

Overlap both edges of the FOREHEAD and tape or staple together (Cover the writing).

Overlap both edges of the CHIN and tape or staple together (Cover the writing).

Overlap both edges of the CHEEK and tape or staple together (Cover the writing).

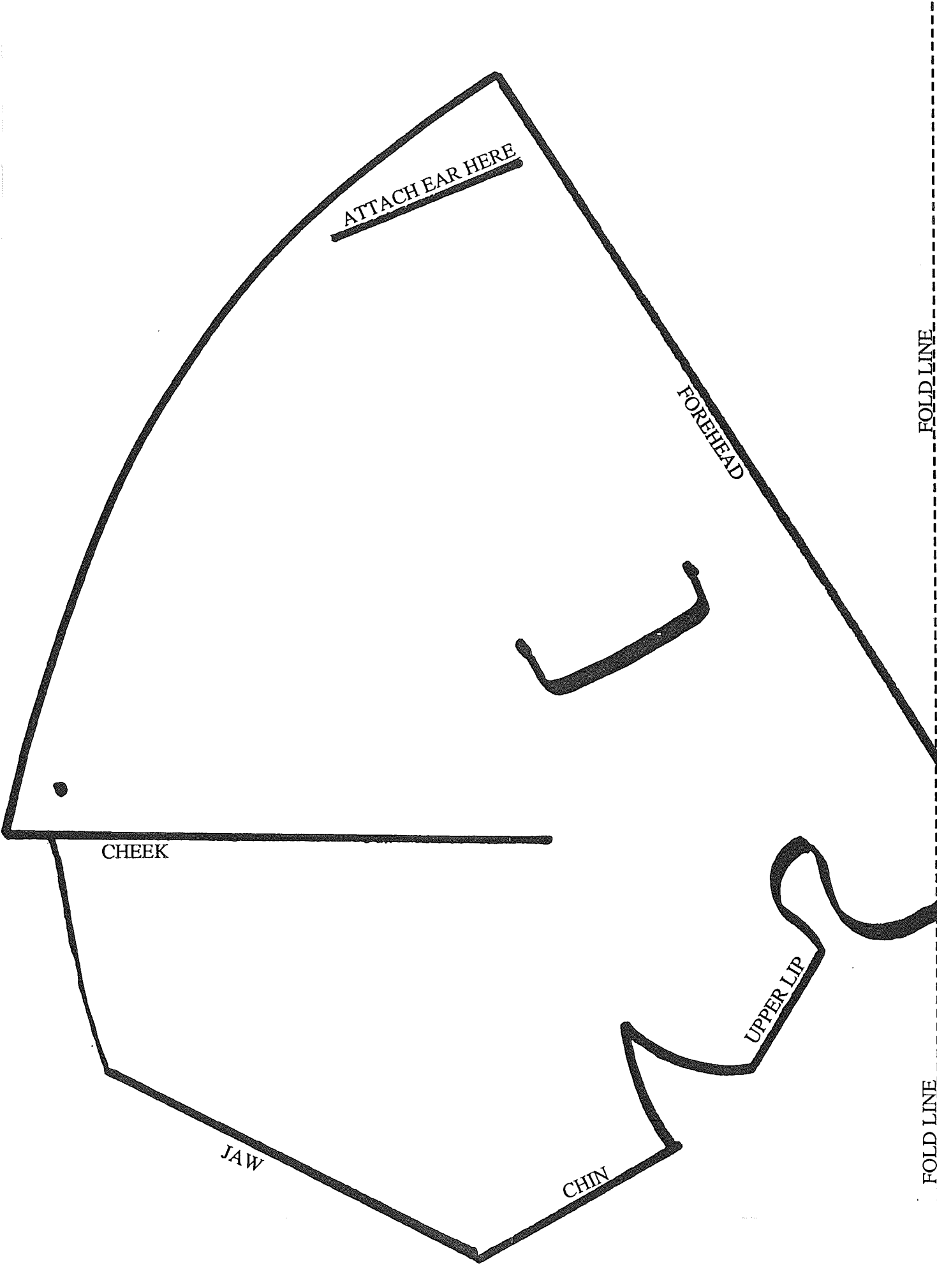


Do not mix up the left and right ears. On the base of each ear is a 'x' and 'o'. Roll the side with the 'o' so that it sits on top of the 'x'.



Attach the ears to the mask.

Measure the amount of elastic required to go around the back of your head. Tie a knot in both ends and staple to the mask just above the cheek.



Easter Basket 1

You will need:

- 1 x clean dry one litre milk carton
- scissors
- four pictures
- colouring pencils, crayons or paint
- paste



Select a clean dry one litre milk carton



Measure 15cm from the base on all four sides. Using a ruler draw a line around the carton.



Carefully cut, using the line as a guide. You now have the base of your basket.



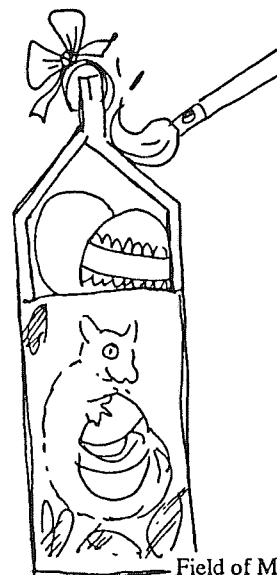
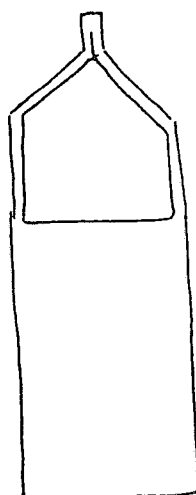
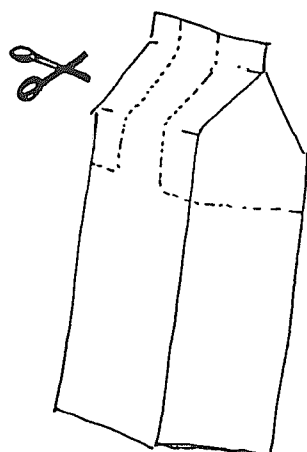
Select four 'easter friends' to be pasted onto your easter basket and colour them.



Cut or fold along the fold line, paste each picture onto the basket.

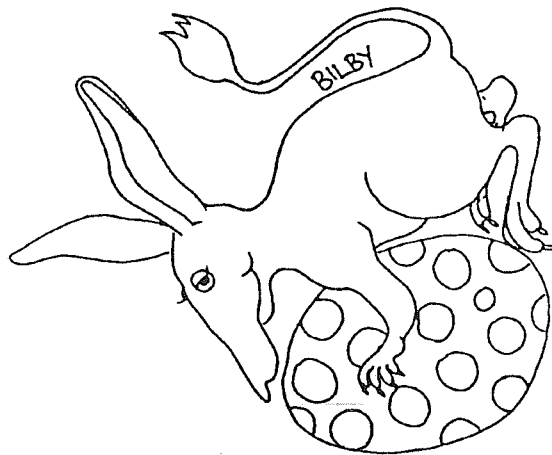
Use ribbon, strips of coloured paper, strips of bark or braided wool attached as a handle.

Note: You may choose to cut your carton with the handle incorporated. This is a little more challenging, and requires sharp scissors to cut through the folded layers at the top of the milk carton.



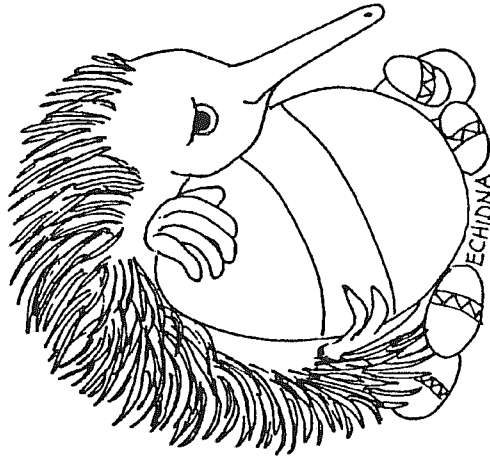
Blackline Master: Easter Basket 1 - Decorations 1

Make it an Australian Easter!



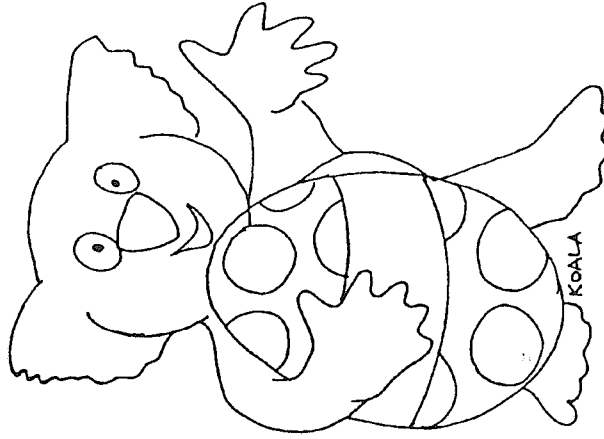
fold line

Artwork by Kerry Cooper, Field of Mars FSC 1995



fold line

Artwork by Kerry Cooper, Field of Mars FSC 1995

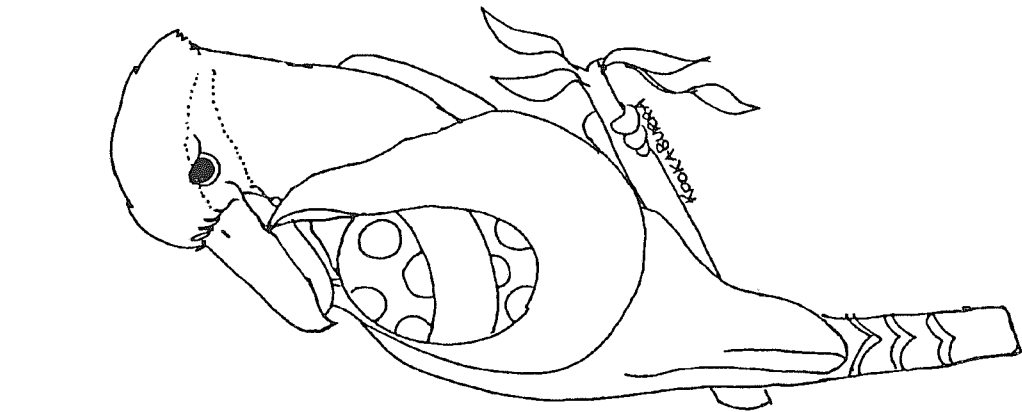


fold line

Artwork by Kerry Cooper, Field of Mars FSC 1995

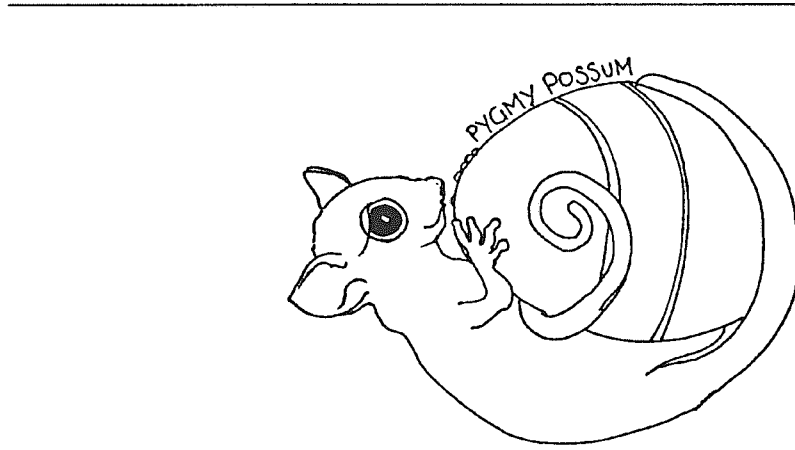
Blackline Master: Easter Basket 1 - Decorations 2

Make it an Australian Easter!



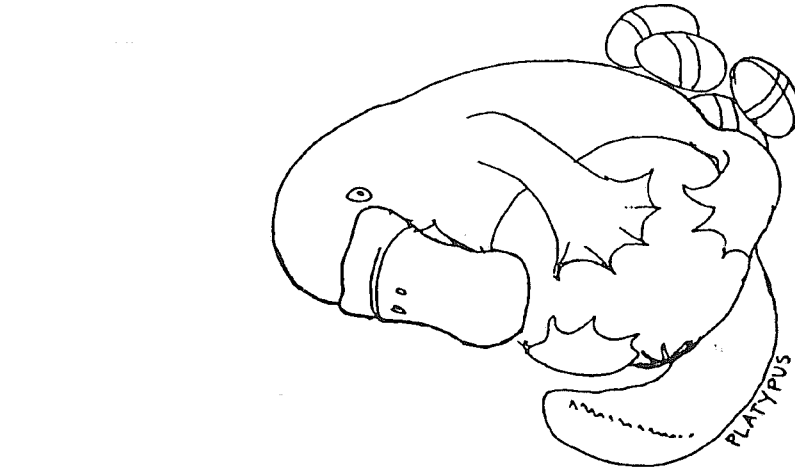
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Artwork by Kerry Cooper, Field of Mars FSC 1995



fold line

Artwork by Kerry Cooper, Field of Mars FSC 1995

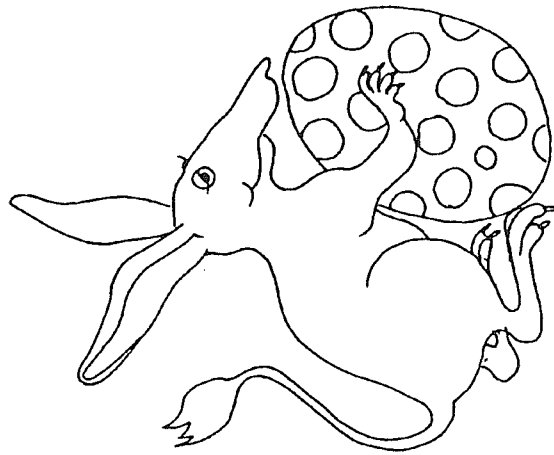


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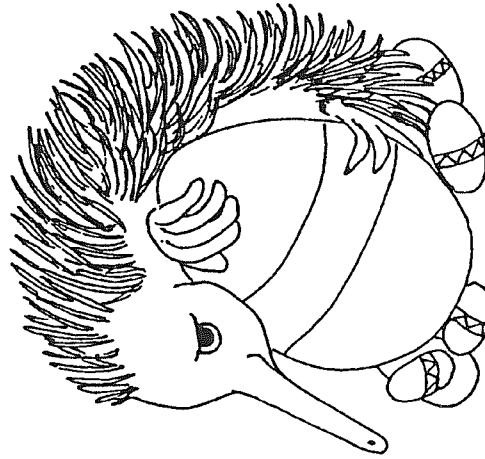
Blackline Master: Easter Basket 1 - Decorations 3

Make it an Australian Easter!



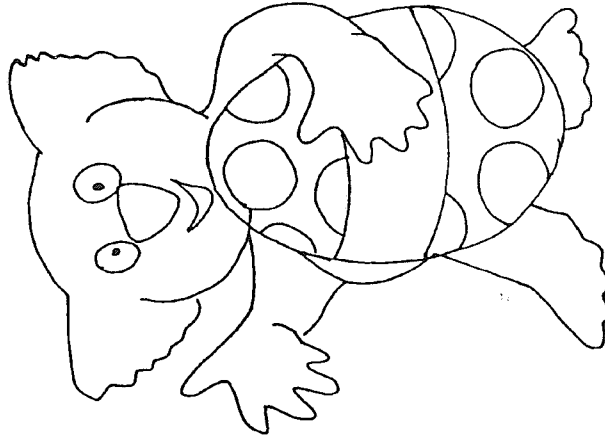
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Artwork by Kerry Cooper, Field of Mars FSC 1995



fold line

Artwork by Kerry Cooper, Field of Mars FSC 1995

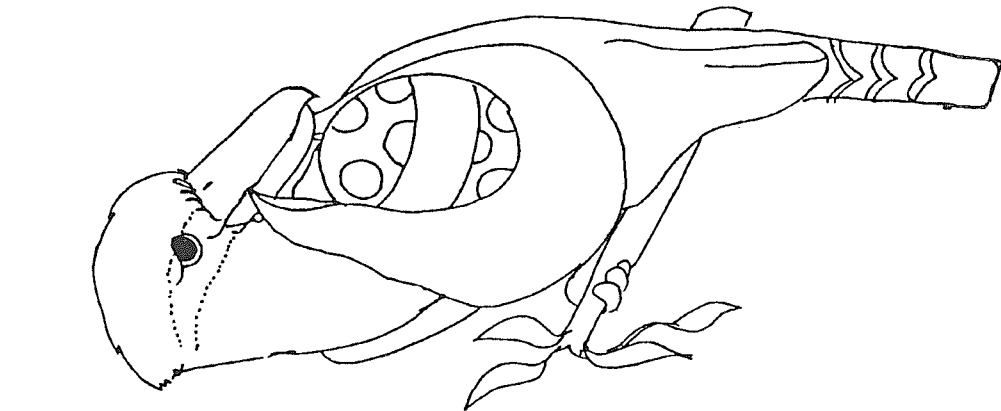


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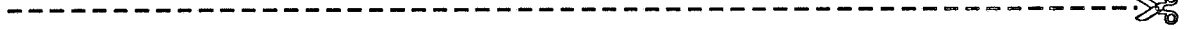
Artwork by Kerry Cooper, Field of Mars FSC 1995

Blackline Master: Easter Basket 1 - Decorations 4

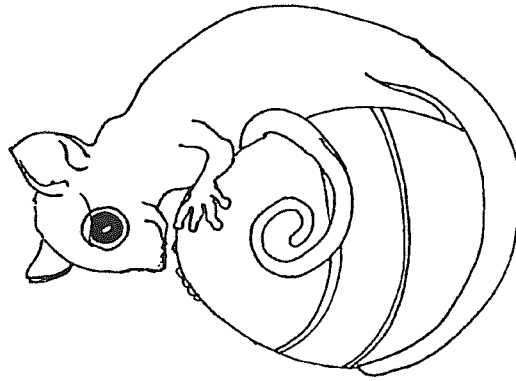
Make it an Australian Easter!



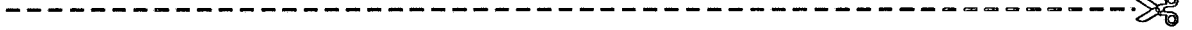
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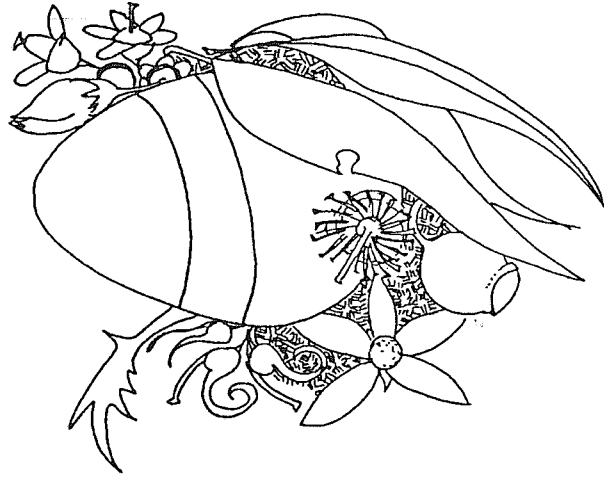
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fold line



fold line



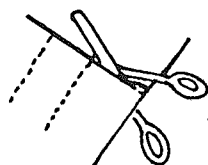
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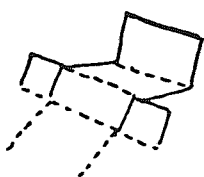
Easter Basket 2

You will need:

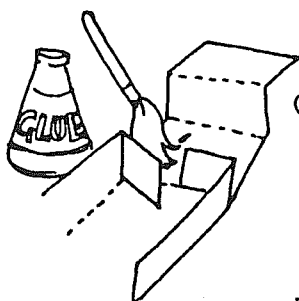
- basket template photocopied or traced onto A4 size paper/card or enlarged and photocopied or traced onto A3 size paper/card
- scissors
- glue or sticky tape
- colouring pencils, crayons or paint



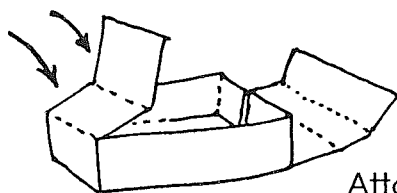
Cut along all solid lines.



Fold along all dotted lines, then open the basket out flat.

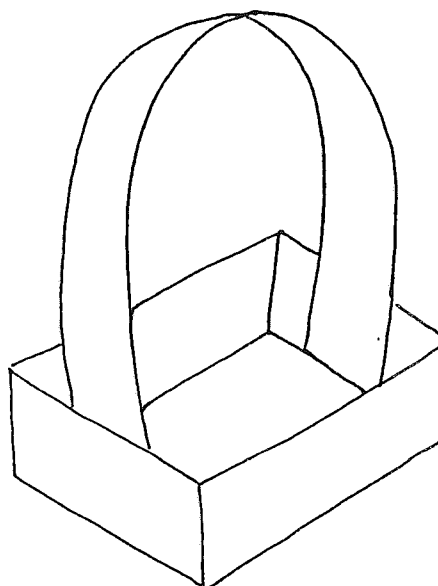


Glue flaps in place.



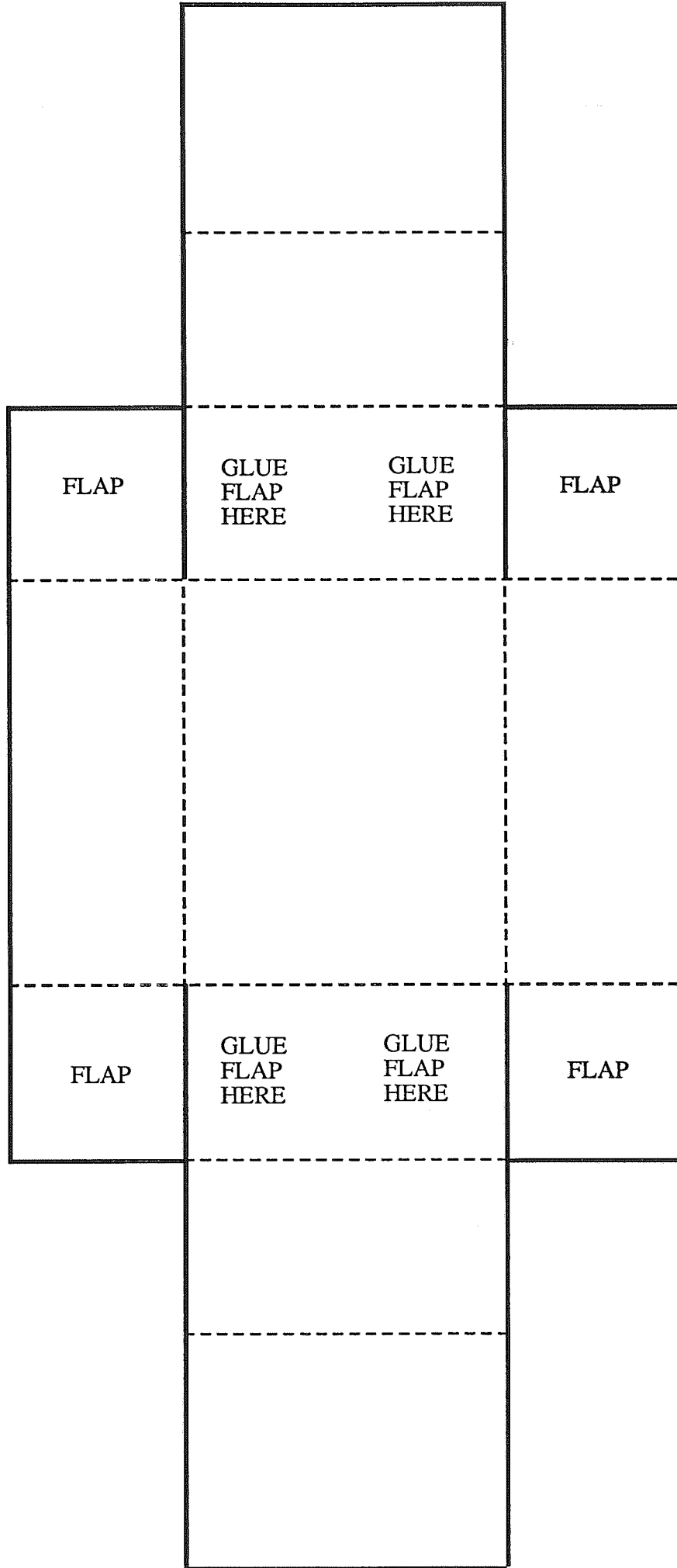
Fold the ends over to form the inner wall and base of the basket.

Attach the handle.



Blackline Master: Easter Basket 2

Make it an Australian Easter!



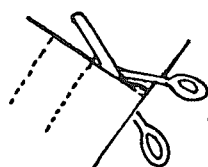
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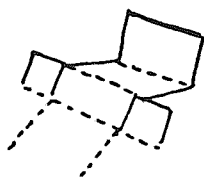
Easter Basket 3

You will need:

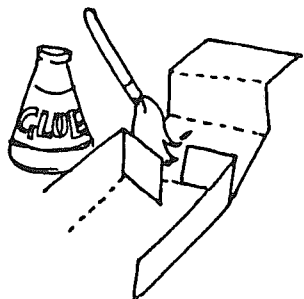
- basket template photocopied or traced onto A4 size paper/card or enlarged and photocopied or traced onto A3 size paper/card
- scissors
- glue or sticky tape
- colouring pencils, crayons or paint



Cut along all solid lines.

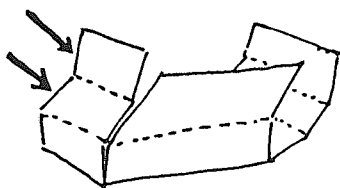


Fold along all dotted lines, then open the basket out flat.

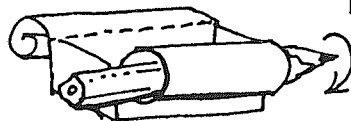


Glue flaps in place.

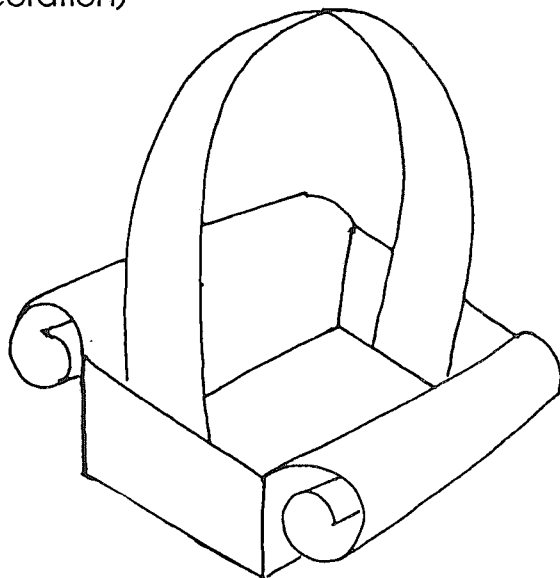
Fold the ends over to form the inner wall and base of the basket.



Using a pencil, curl the side wings of the basket (you may choose to fringe these wings for decoration)

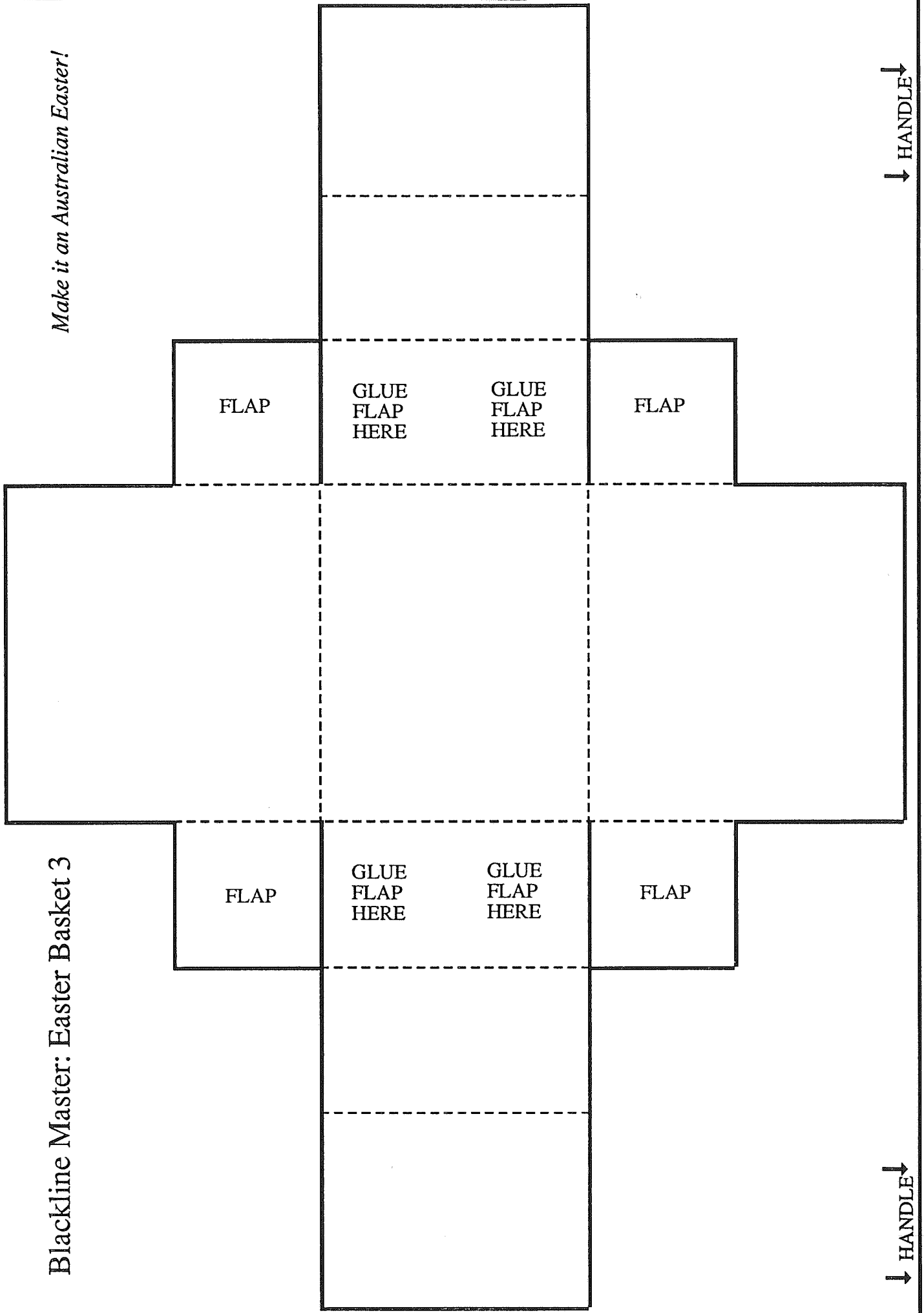


Attach the handle.



Blackline Master: Easter Basket 3

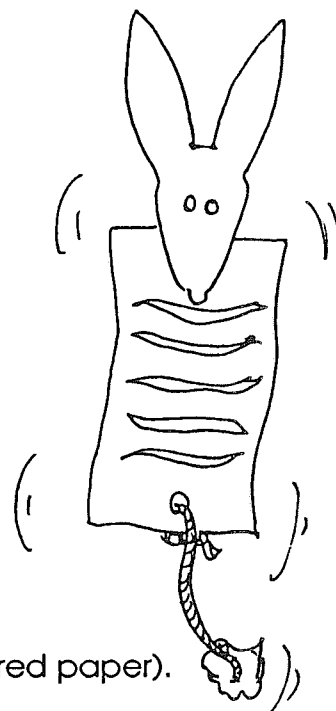
Make it an Australian Easter!



Expand a Bilby

You will need:

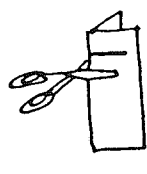
- 1 x sheet of paper approximately 10cm x 15 cm (or one quarter of an A4 page)
- 1 x bilby head
- scissors
- colouring pencils, crayons or paint
- paste
- 10 cm of wool
- cotton wool ball
- hole punch



Colour the bilby head and paper, (or use coloured paper).



Fold the paper in half lengthways.



Measure three centimetres from the top of the paper, and cut approximately three centimetres from the fold toward the the edge of the paper.



Make four more cuts, two centimetres apart.

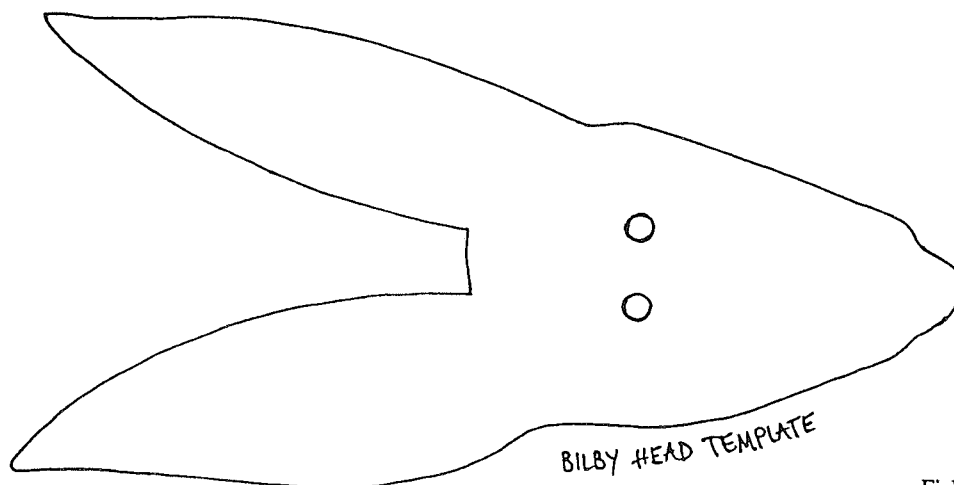
Glue the head to the top of the expandable body.

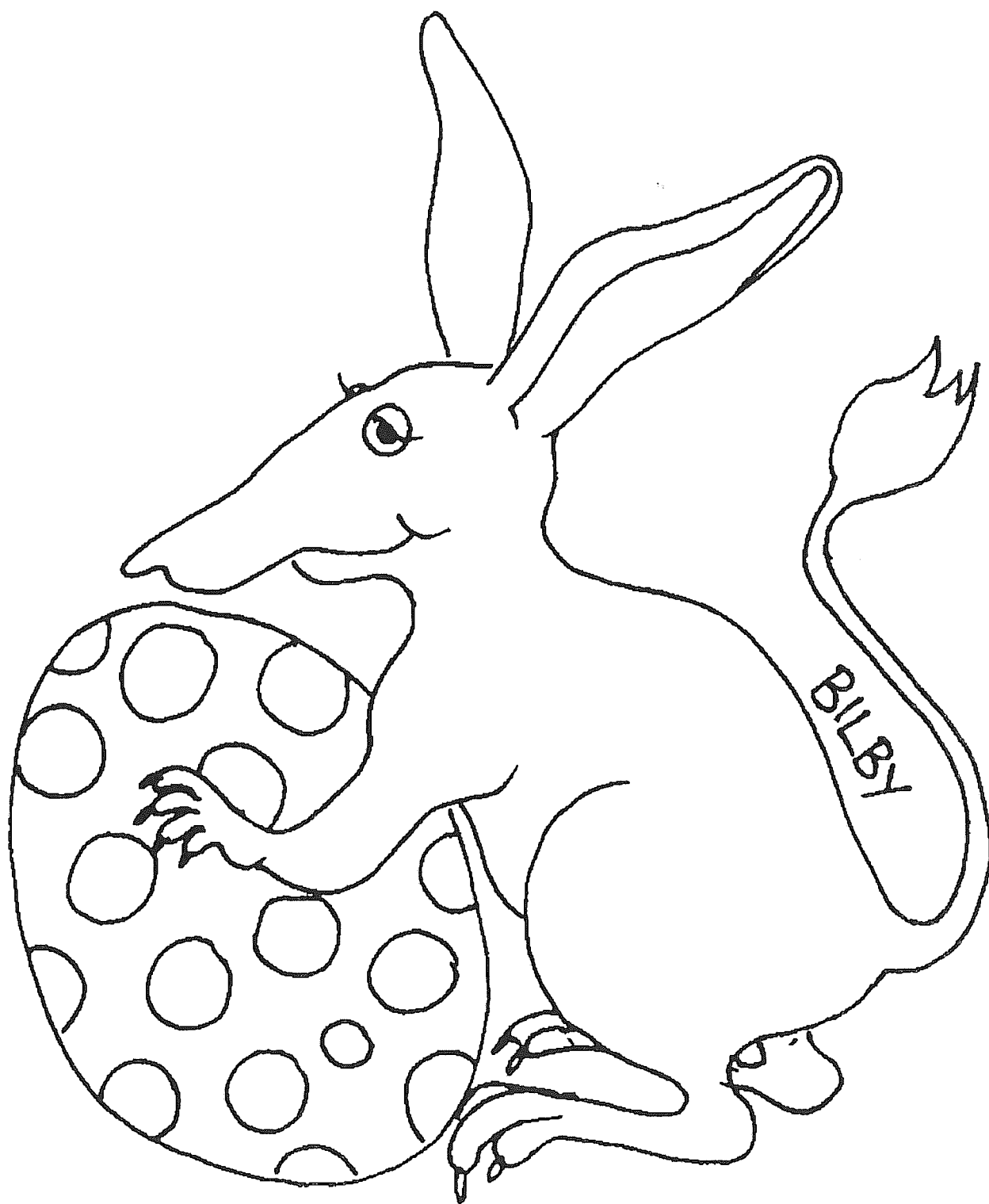


Punch a hole into the base of the body and tie the woollen tail.



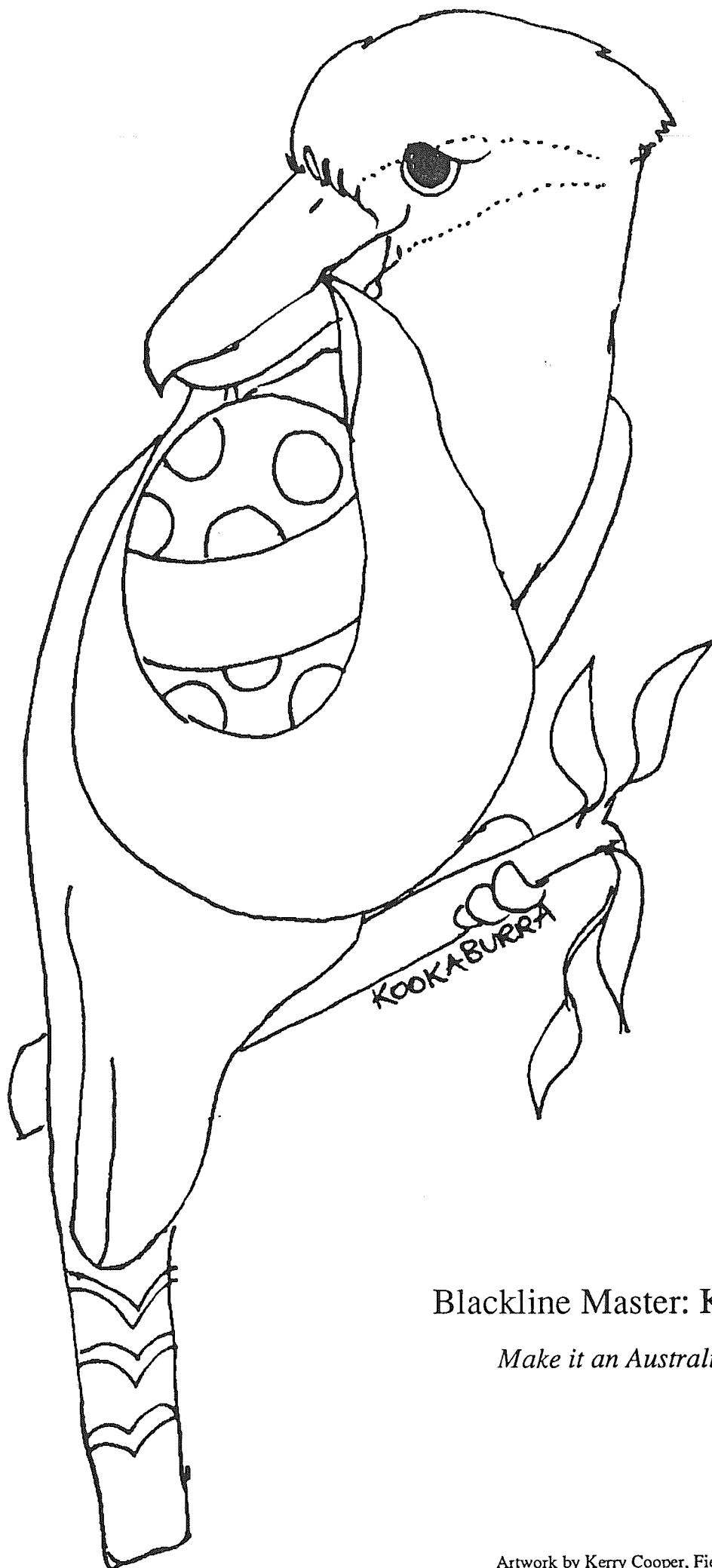
Tie the fluffy tuft onto the end of the woollen tail.









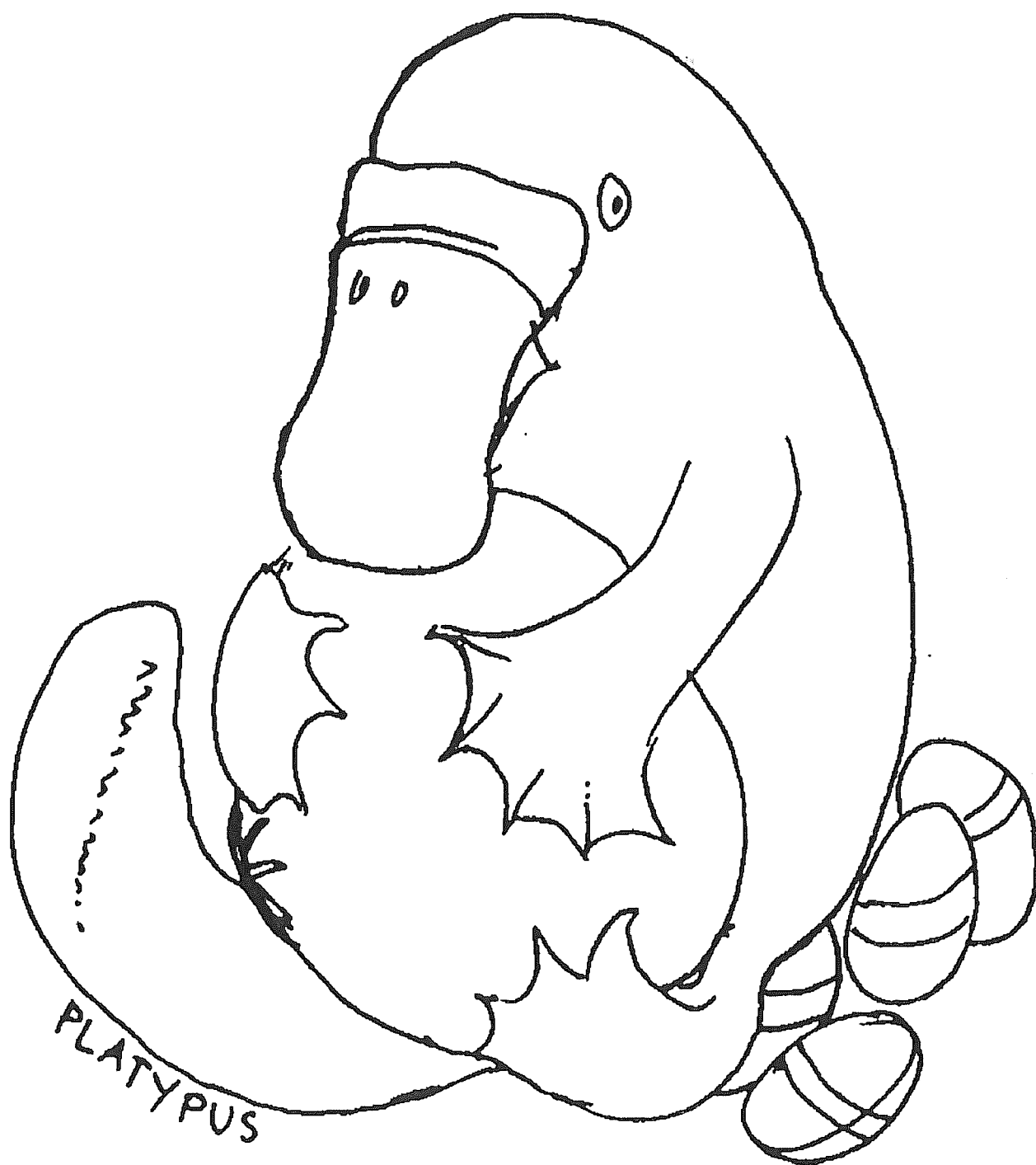


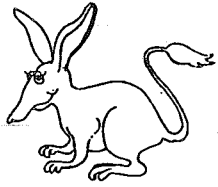
Blackline Master: Kookaburra

Make it an Australian Easter!



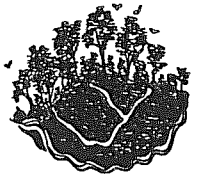






Fact Sheet

Make it an Australian Easter!



Useful References

Department for Education and Children's Services, (1994) 'Bilbies not Bunnies' State Print, SA

This booklet was produced with the help of the Anti-Rabbit Research Foundation of Australia, (ARRFA), to encourage students to develop positive attitudes towards threatened native species, and includes many activity suggestions of how environmental education and landcare can be implemented across the curriculum.

GARNETT, Ali and KESSING, Kaye, (1994) 'Easter Bilby', Anti-Rabbit Research Foundation of Australia, SA

The Easter Bunny gives Bilby his old job in this vibrantly coloured story book, because he realises that Bilby is better suited to Australia than he is.

HOWES, Jim and SMYTH, Chris, (1994) 'The Edge of Extinction Australia's Threatened Wildlife', Gould League, Victoria

In this second edition of the publication, the facts about the exploitation of the Lesser Bilby as well as the other reasons for it's rarity are presented. More information is presented about the Greater Bilby including a description of it's lifestyle and the captive breeding program. There is also an index.

KESSING, Kaye, (1993) 'On the Brink' Brent Howard Games Pty Ltd, Castlereagh St Sydney

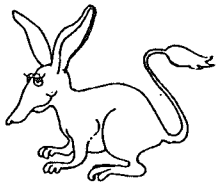
This game is about many of the endangered animals of Australia. It is about the threats that are putting them in danger and solutions to those threats.

Play the game and read the book to have fun while learning about unique but threatened Australian species. The bilby is a central character in the game. For 2-8 players, aged 8 years to adult.

SIBLEY, Irena, (1994) 'The Bilbies First Easter' Aird Books Victoria

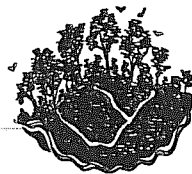
A delightful picture book about an Australian farm suffering from a drought and the magic help a young boy gets from the Bilbies which help him give his family an Easter surprise.

STODART, Eleanor, (1993) 'Bandicoots and Bilbies of Australia' Bimberi Books, ACT
Excellent photographs by Eleanor Stodart accompany a clear text with some sketches. This book has an index.



Fact Sheet

Make it an Australian Easter!



Other Contacts

Anti-Rabbit Research Foundation of Australia (ARRFA)

c/- Adelaide Zoological Gardens
Frome Road
Adelaide 5000
(08) 410 3577

Australian Nature Conservation Agency

GPO Box 636
ACT 2601
(06) 2500200

Pamphlets:

- * *Green Kids Guide to Endangered Species*
- * *Aust. Endangered Species - profile sheet on the Greater Bilby*

Bilby Action Group

c/o Conservation Centre
120 Wakefield Street
Adelaide SA 5000
(08) 2235155

CSIRO Division of Wildlife & Ecology

(06) 2461615

SA Animal & Plant Control Commission

Brian Cook
(08) 2264888

Information on rabbit ecology

Threatened Species Network SA

c/o Conservation Centre
120 Wakefield Street
Adelaide SA 5000
(08) 2235155

Warrawong Sanctuary SA

Dr John Wamsley
(08) 3885380
Captive breeding program

Australian National History Magazine (ANH)

Australian Museum Trust
6-8 College Street
Sydney 2000

Various volumes contain articles about bilbies

New Creative Products

441 Churchill Road
Kilburn SA 5084

Moulds: 5cm plastic moulds of bilbies for chocolate making