EASTERN HELLBENDER
**NAME:** Cryptobranchus alleganiensis

**CONSERVATION STATUS:**
- EX: extinct
- EW: extinct in wild
- CR: critically endangered
- EN: endangered
- VU: vulnerable
- NT: near threatened
- LC: least concern

**SIZE:** 2 feet

**WEIGHT:** 4 pounds

**GROUP TERM:** none (solitary)

**NUMBER OF YOUNG:** 140–450

**HABITAT:** swift–flowing streams

**LIFESPAN:** 25–30 years

**DISTRIBUTION:**
- year-round

**DESCRIPTION**
A fully aquatic salamander, the Eastern hellbender is distinctly recognizable by its flat head, slimy body, and spotted coloration. Although able to swim, hellbenders prefer walking along stream bottoms, hiding under flat rocks in shallow water. This salamander is a habitat specialist, able to survive only in very specific conditions, making it easily found and captured by collectors and resulting in its decline. Generally nocturnal, the Eastern hellbender can be found along the Susquehanna River in southern New York and Pennsylvania.

**DIET**
Crayfish are a staple of the Eastern hellbender’s diet, although small fish, insects, worms, and even other small hellbenders may be consumed.

**THREATS**
While larvae and juveniles may fall prey to snapping turtles, water snakes, and predatory fish, adult hellbenders are most susceptible to habitat loss and human capture.

**DID YOU KNOW?**
- Eastern hellbenders are also known as “mud dogs,” “grampus,” and “Allegheny alligators.”
- Like all salamanders, the Eastern hellbender has a four-stage life cycle, growing from egg to larva, juvenile to adult.
- Eastern hellbenders use their skin to absorb oxygen from the water, rather than breathing air through their lungs.

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