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## Strike Up the Bandsaw

### In this plan you will be getting:

- Step by Step construction instruction.
- A complete bill of materials.
- Exploded view and elevation drawings.
- How-to photos with instructive captions.
- Tips to help you complete the project and become a better woodworker.



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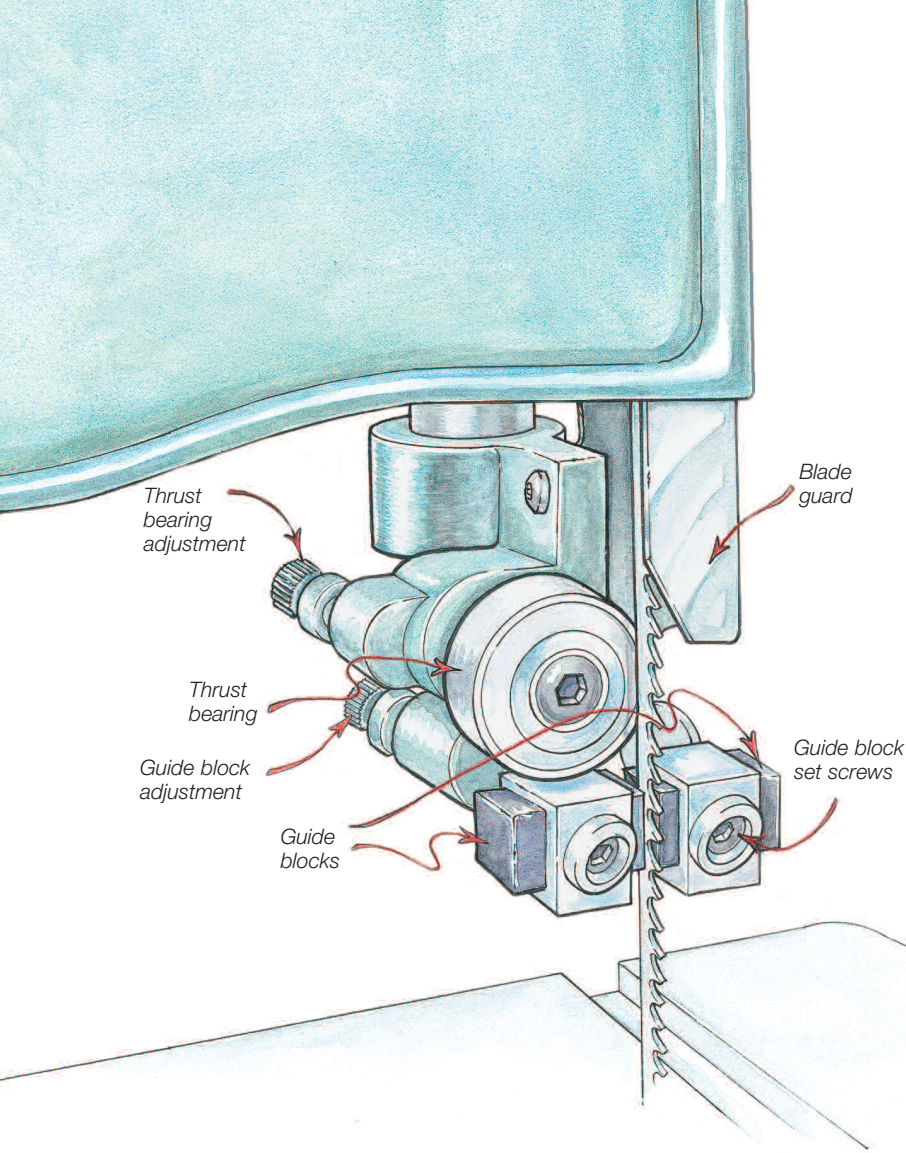
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# Strike Up the Bandsaw

**B**andsaws are wonderfully quiet to operate and don't pose the same kickback threat as table-saws. They're ideal for making straight or curved cuts, and the saw kerf creates much less airborne dust. But if your bandsaw isn't tuned properly, you'll be the one singing the blues. Here's how to get your saw adjusted and back on track.

A bandsaw is a tremendously versatile and useful tool—but only if it's running well. Properly set up, it allows you to create poetry out of wood. Out of adjustment it can cause vocabulary usage that would impress the most seasoned boatswain's mate.

Tuning up your bandsaw is not a huge undertaking. A couple of quick steps to better align and control your blade will have you cutting smoothly in just a few minutes.

Most modern bandsaws have a system of thrust bearings (those little metal wheels that the blade's back edge bumps into) and guide blocks that hold the blade in proper alignment. Start by unplugging the saw, then loosen the set screws that hold the guide blocks; back them out so they no longer touch the blade. Next, turn your attention to the thrust bearings, backing them off the saw blade a 1/4" or so. Center your saw blade on the drive and idle wheels by rotating the top wheel by hand. While you turn the wheel, use the tracking control to shift the blade to the crown (top of the arch) of whichever wheel adjusts the tracking. Then adjust the thrust bearings forward so they just barely touch the back edge of the blade. Ideally, when the saw is running, your blade will just tick the thrust bearings until you start to cut; the pressure of that action will drive the blade back to press against the bearings fully.

## Blocking Is the Key

While adjusted thrust bearings keep the blade from moving front to back, guide blocks control blade twisting and limit side-to-side movement. If your guide blocks are showing wear, replace them. Worn blocks ruin good saw blades. The best replacements are Cool Blocks™, which are phenolic resin guides imbedded with graphite. They are superior to metal or wooden guide blocks in preventing wear and overheating. The most important thing to remember in adjusting the guide blocks is that their position changes with the size of the saw blade you are using. The blocks must be set so they capture the



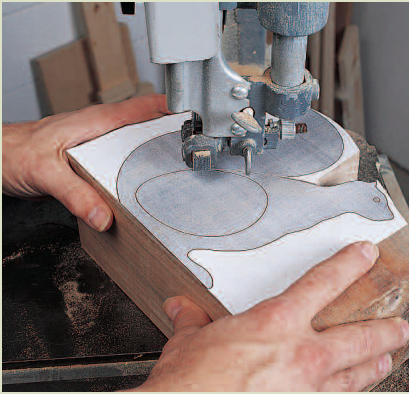
# MAKE A BANDSAW BOX CRITTER

sides of the saw blade, but they should not engage the saw teeth even when the blade is under cutting pressure. You also need a sharp blade of correct width to match the job at hand. For resawing or long straight cutting operations, a wider blade is exactly what you need. Tight curves call for narrow 1/8" or 1/4" blades. Blade tension is also important; start by adjusting the tension to the blade manufacturer's specifications. Increase tension further if the blade deflects excessively.

Just these few steps will make a huge difference in how well your bandsaw cuts. Attention to detail will provide for easier cutting and a milder vocabulary.

## Go Wild with Boxes!

Try out your newly tuned up bandsaw on these three bandsaw boxes. They are great gifts and fun to make. Set up your bandsaw with an 1/8" blade and use the full-size patterns on the *Pinup Shop Drawings*. Follow the steps shown in the photos at right and enjoy your new smooth-cutting bandsaw.



**Figure 1:** *Glue the pattern (see the Pinup Shop Drawings) onto stock that is thick enough to create a box section in the animal. Plan your cuts first so you don't "cut yourself into a corner". After cutting the outline of the piece, cut out the center box section.*



**Figure 2:** *Reset the saw for the depth of the next cut. Carefully slice 1/4"-thick pieces off of each side of the center box section. Hold these cuts as straight and true as possible as these pieces will become the sides of the sliding box.*



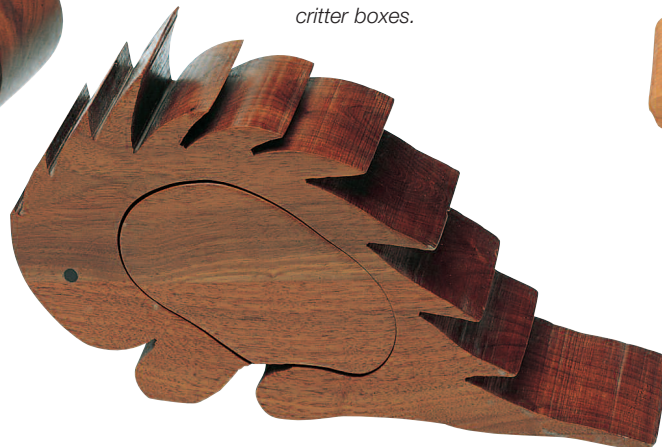
**Figure 3:** *Put the side pieces away for now and again reset the saw to the next depth of cut. Draw lines to guide your cut as you remove the waste from the box. Make the opening as large as possible to allow for the greatest access to the box after you glue the sides back on .*



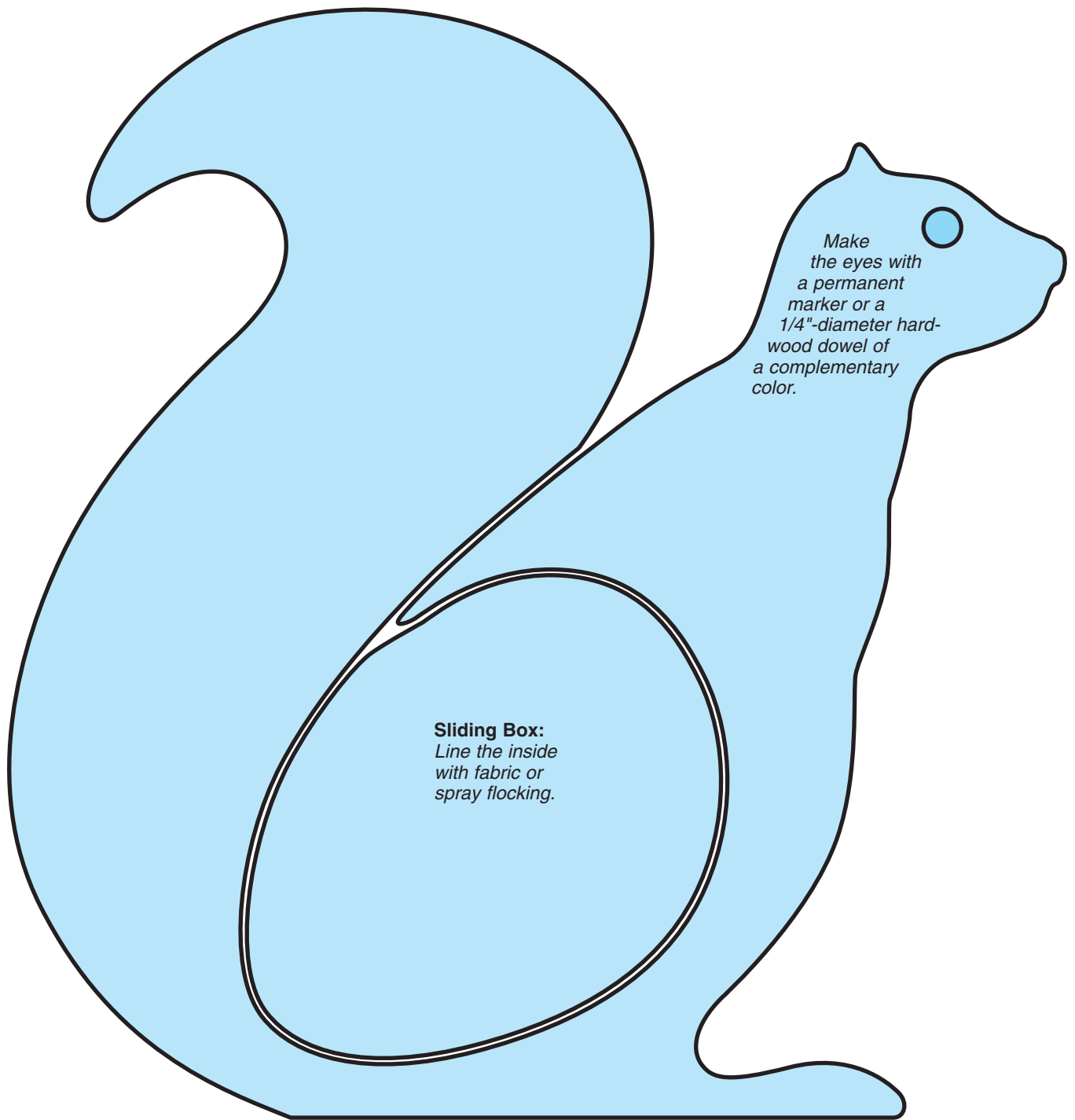
**Figure 4:** *Glue the sides back onto the center section. Sand the project smooth and use a marker or 1/8" dowel of contrasting color to make the eyes. Apply an oil or clear finish. Flock the inside of the box section for a finishing touch.*



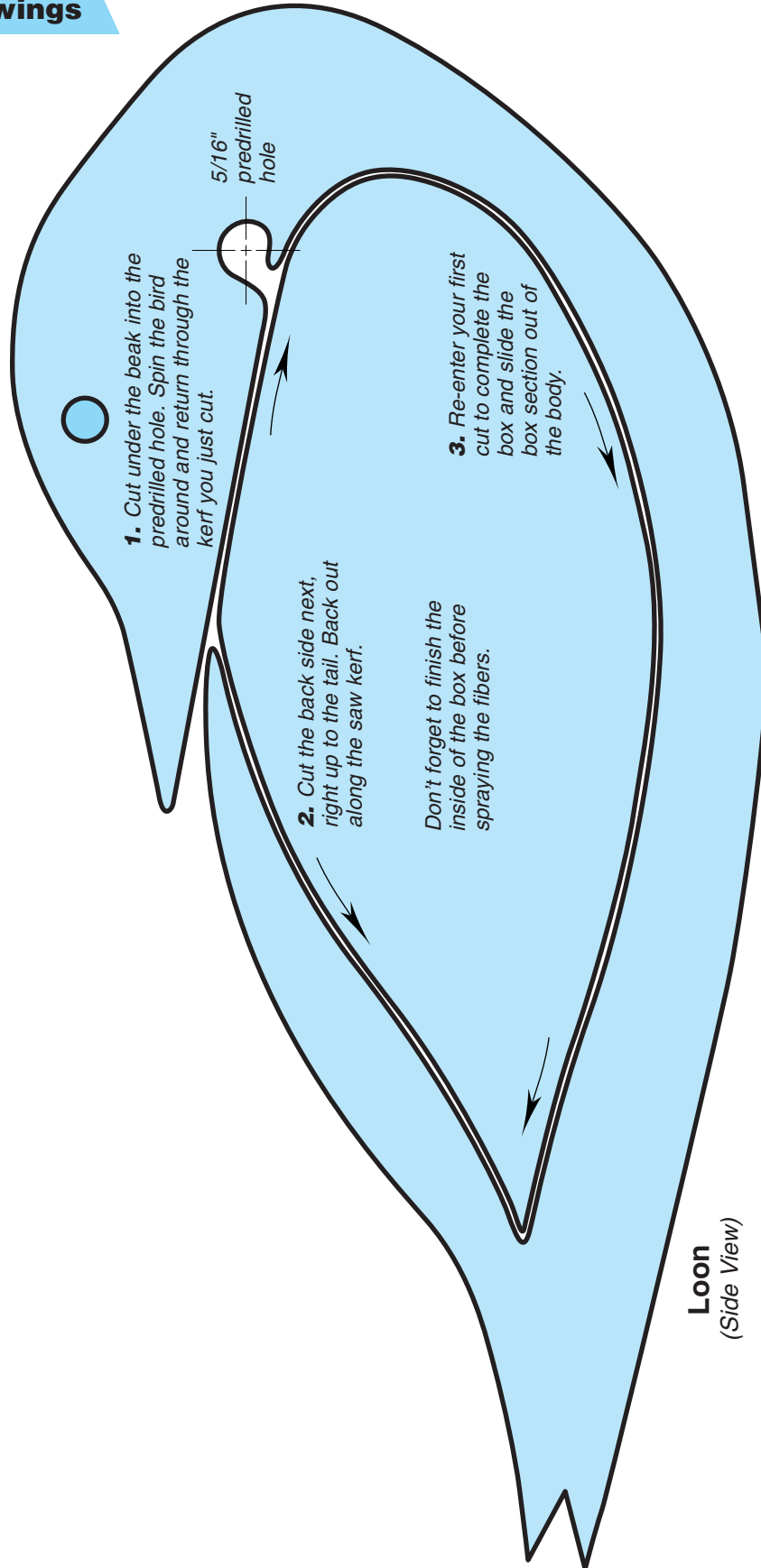
*Tune up your bandsaw and then test drive it on these northwoods critter boxes.*



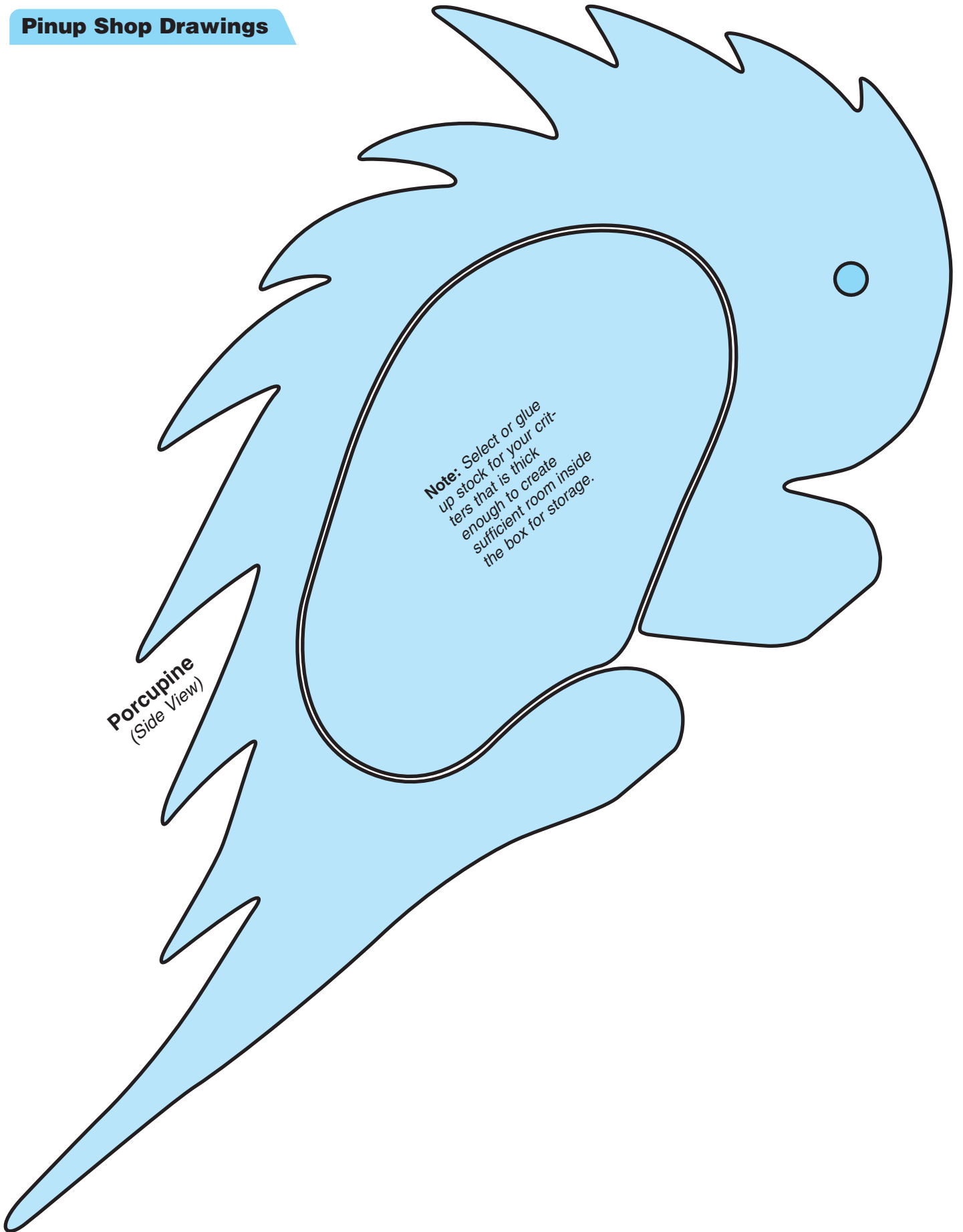
**Pinup Shop Drawings**



**Squirrel**  
(Side View)



**Pinup Shop Drawings**



**Porcupine**  
(Side View)

**Note:** Select or glue up stock for your critters that is thick enough to create sufficient room inside the box for storage.