

Wildlife Cutting Boards

Inlay your favorite animal into these functional hardwood cutting boards

By Dayle and Jeff Taylor

We have always shared a passion for wildlife; more recently we discovered woodworking. A few years ago, we combined the two to make a variety of wooden wildlife projects, including cutting boards. The idea took off and has become one of our best-selling products. We like to inlay our favorite animals on one side of the cutting boards and back them with a side solid for cutting. We also make custom cutting boards featuring motifs ranging from classic cars to a mouse and cheese.

Experimenting with shapes, sizes, varieties of wood, handles, and inlay designs is fun. Remember, however, that these boards are decorative and functional—you will be placing food on the project. Before you buy wood or start cutting, research the toxicity of any exotic varieties that you may be considering (see www.wood-database.com) and avoid those that may cause problems.

To care for a handmade cutting board, simply hand-sand it with 220-grit sandpaper to remove any cutting marks and re-apply a food-safe finish, like natural mineral oil. Re-apply the mineral oil regularly, especially after washing the cutting board.

TIP

DRILLING ANGLED HOLES

To drill an angled blade-entry hole, you could tilt a regular drill press table or use a tilting drill press designed for a rotary tool. Or, cut a piece of scrap with the scroll saw table angled. Use this angled piece of scrap as a guide as you drill the blade-entry holes with a hand-held drill.



Photo courtesy of Carole Rothman

CUTTING BOARD: CUTTING THE INLAY



1

Prepare the blanks. When we're making cutting boards, we buy a thicker board and resaw and plane it to make the two blanks. However, most people simply buy boards that are ¼" (6mm) and ½" (13mm) thick. The inlay piece should be slightly thicker than the top board; ours is usually ⅜" (7mm) thick. In addition to the project blanks, you will need scraps for test pieces (see Step 2). Place the main boards with their unfinished faces together and draw a triangle on one edge. Mark the top of the top piece.



2

Make the test cuts. Use double-sided tape to stack the test blanks, or use spray adhesive to stick the plastic sides of two pieces of contact paper together. Allow the adhesive to set, and then peel off the paper backings and use the homemade double-sided paper to attach the test pieces together. Tilt the left side of a scroll saw table down 2½° to 3° and drill a blade-entry hole at the same angle. Cut a test shape, working in a clockwise direction. (If your table tilts to the right, cut counterclockwise.) The walnut inlay should drop into the maple board. Adjust the table angle until the walnut sits slightly below the surface of the maple.

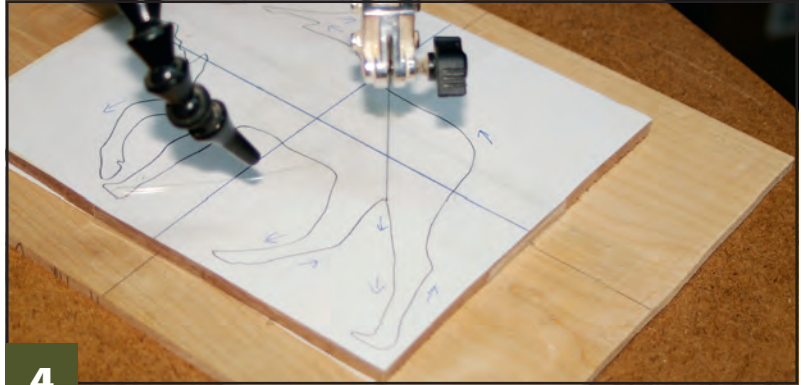
Experiment with shapes, sizes, and varieties of wood for your cutting boards.





3

Attach the pattern to the blank. Attach the inlay pattern to the walnut blank. Draw crosshairs on the pattern and on the thinner maple blank. Use double-sided tape or the double-sided contact paper method explained in Step 2 to attach the walnut to the maple using the crosshairs as a guide.



4

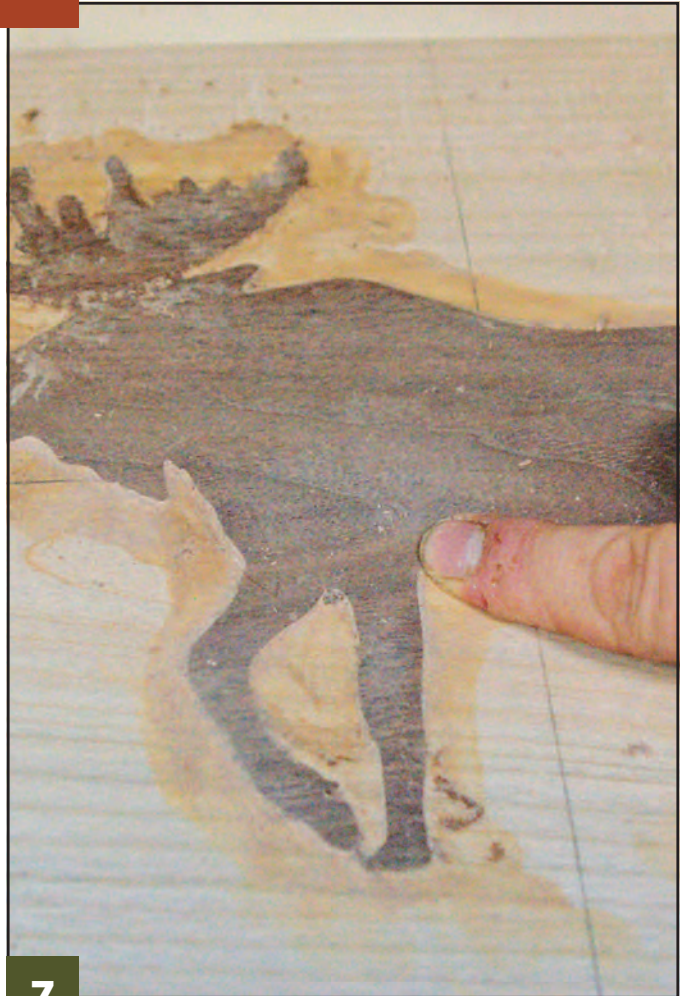
Cut the inlay. Refer to the Tip on page 24 and drill a blade-entry hole at an angle to match the setting of the saw table determined in Step 2. Place it in an inconspicuous spot, such as the intersection of the legs. With the saw table set at the determined angle, cut around the outline of the inlay. We draw arrows around the pattern to remind us which way to cut. Cut slowly to keep from bending the blade, especially in the tight corners.

CUTTING BOARD: ASSEMBLING THE INLAY



5

Apply the glue to the edges of the maple. Separate the stack and remove the patterns and contact paper. Place waxed paper on the workbench. Apply a thin layer of food-safe wood glue along the cut edges of the maple. Most wood glue is food safe when cured, but if you have concerns, check the manufacturer's website.



7

Fill any gaps. Once the inlay is in place, hold the piece up to the light to check for gaps. Because this is a cutting board, it is important to avoid gaps in the inlay where food might get stuck. While the glue is still wet, sand the top of the assembly and rub the dust into any visible gaps to fill them. Allow the glue to dry overnight. Then, sand the bottom of the assembled piece flat. We use 80-grit sandpaper in a drum sander.



6

Add the inlay. Place the inlay in position. Place a piece of scrap wood on top of the inlay and carefully tap the scrap to push the inlay into position. Do not hammer hard or you may crack the inlay or maple. Don't worry if the inlay is recessed too far or sits proud; we will be sanding the piece later.

CUTTING BOARD: ASSEMBLING THE BOARD



8 Assemble the board. Check the alignment of the top and base by matching the V-mark made in Step 1. Separate them and use a glue spreading tool, such as a rubber notched trowel, to spread an even coat of glue across the base piece. Place the top in position and clamp it using a book press, bowl press, or four bar clamps per side. Allow the glue to dry for 24 hours.



9 Trim the cutting board to size. Use a table saw or band saw. Mix maple sanding dust with glue and use the mixture to fill any gaps. Allow the glue to dry, and sand off the excess. Then, sand the top and bottom smooth. We use 220-grit sandpaper in a drum sander. Use a band saw, scroll saw, or disc sander to round the corners.



10 Finish the cutting board. Attach the handle pattern to a piece of thin wood and cut a handle template. Trace the template onto the cutting board, drill a blade-entry hole, and cut the handle. Use a router with a round-over bit to round the top and bottom edges and the edges of the handle. Hand-sand the board with 400-grit sandpaper. Wipe off the dust and clean the surfaces with denatured alcohol. Apply two coats of finish, such as butcher-block mineral oil, allowing the finish to dry between coats. Then, apply two coats of butcher-block conditioner (a mixture of mineral oil and wax). The conditioner can take up to a week to dry fully.

Materials & Tools

Materials for moose board:

- Hard maple, ¼" (6mm) thick: 9½" x 16" (241mm x 406mm)
- Hard maple, ½" (13mm) thick: 9½" x 16" (241mm x 406mm)
- Black walnut, ⅜" (7mm) thick: 7½" x 9" (191mm x 229mm)
- Contact paper
- Spray adhesive
- Wood glue: FDA-approved food safe, such as Titebond
- Finish: FDA-approved food safe, such as mineral oil and butcher-block wood conditioner
- Denatured alcohol
- Sandpaper: 400 grit

Tools:

- Saws: table saw, scroll saw, band saw (optional)
- Blades: #5 reverse-tooth
- Planer (optional)
- Sanders: drum sander with 80- and 220-grit sleeves; disc or belt sander
- Drill with ⅜" (1.5mm) bit
- Wood mallet
- Rubber notched trowel
- Book press, bowl press, or 16 bar clamps
- Router with ⅜" (10mm)-radius round-over bit
- Waxed paper

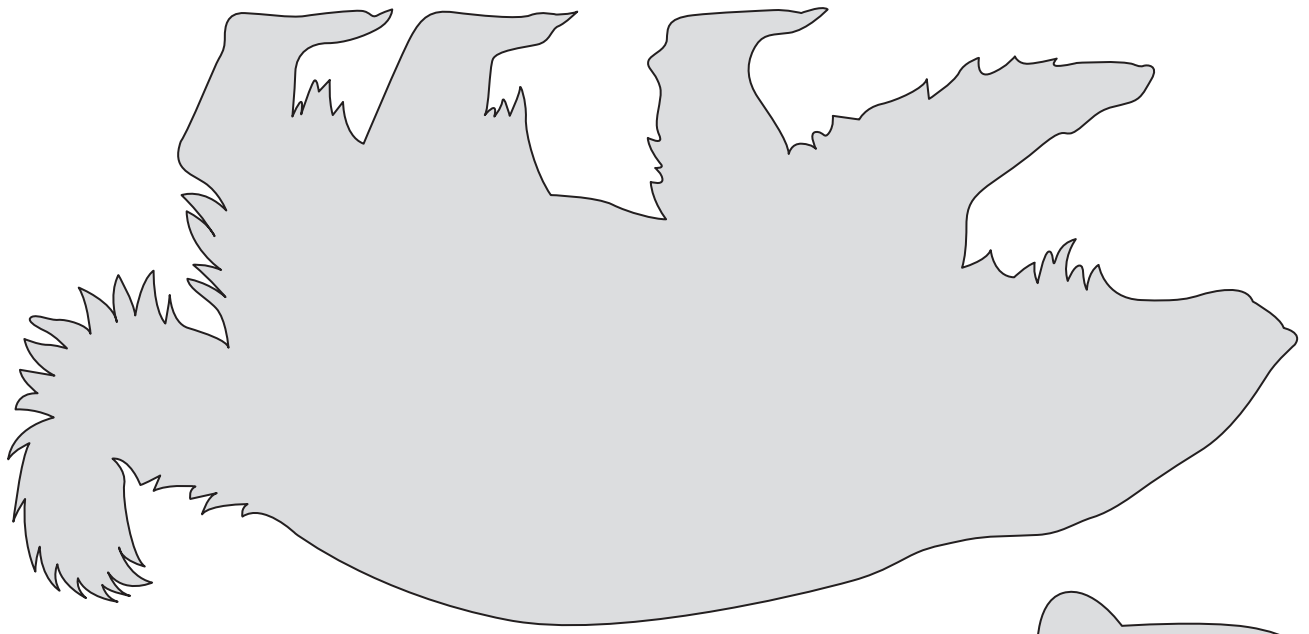
The author used these products for the project. Substitute your choice of brands, tools, and materials as desired.

Suggested Finished Sizes

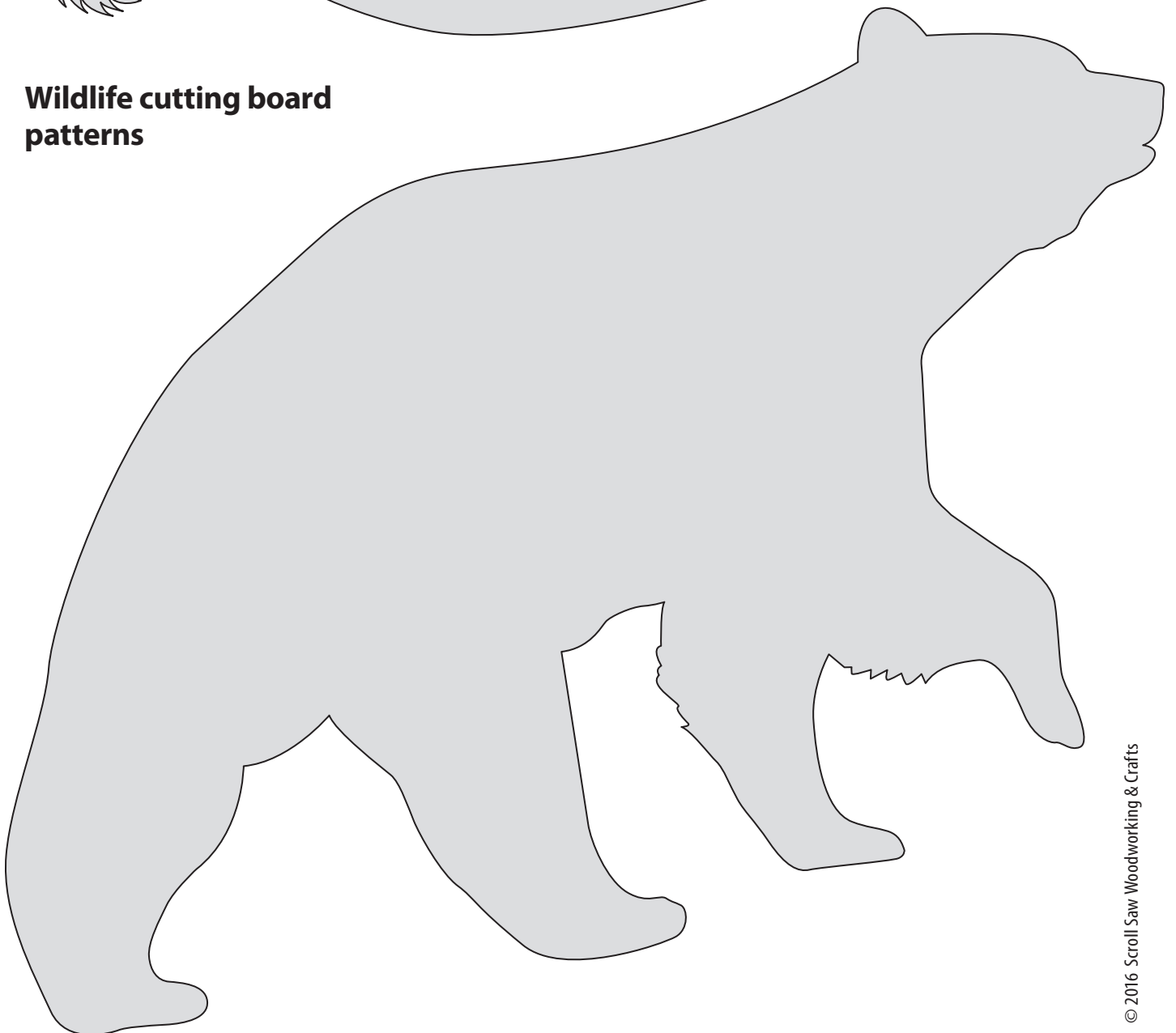
- **Bear bread board** - maple with black walnut inlay: 15½" x 8" x ⅞"
- **Cougar cheese board** - cherry top with black walnut inlay and maple base: 9" x 9" x 1¼"
- **Wolverine cheese board** - maple with black walnut inlay: 7½" x 7½" x ⅞"
- **Wolf cheese board** - maple with black walnut inlay: 7½" x 9" x ⅞"
- **Bear cheese board** - cherry with black walnut inlay: 8½" diameter

Jeff and Dayle Taylor live in Tewksbury, Mass. Jeff works as master captain on offshore projects for Boston Harbor Cruises, and Dayle is a senior keeper at Zoo New England. They enjoy camping and spotting wildlife to inspire new designs and projects. Visit their website at www.jobemacstudios.com; search for them on Etsy (Jo-Be-Mac Studios and BabyRooz); and follow them on Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest.

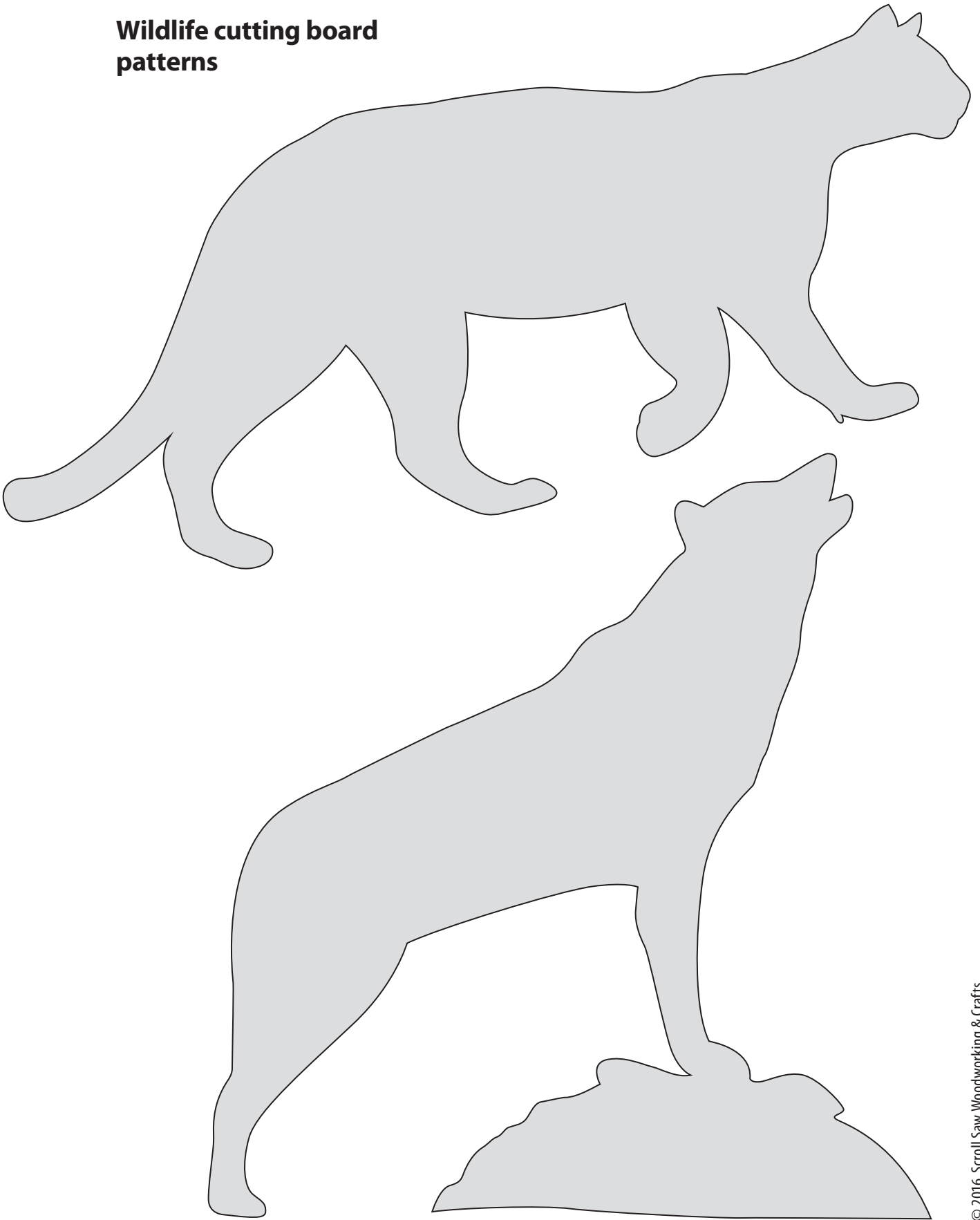




**Wildlife cutting board
patterns**



Wildlife cutting board patterns



Wildlife cutting board patterns

