

The incredible mantis

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Description:

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| Common name | Praying Mantis |
| Scientific name | <i>Mantis religiosa</i> |
| Diet | Other live carnivores (i.e. insects, small toads, fishes and lizards) |
| Life span | Approximately 1 year |
| Size | 0.5-6 inches |



Very few insect species are there which comes under the beneficial insects and praying mantis are one of them. This important insect belongs to **Mantodea** order having 430 genera's. Term "Mantis" was firstly coined by **Hermann Burmeister** (German Entomologist) in 1838. They are close relative of termites and cockroaches. The mantis is generally the point of attraction due to their beautiful long forelegs, which resembles as they are praying. By the ancient civilization, it was believed that the mantis have some supernatural powers. Some people prefer to keep the mantises as their "pets". The forelegs of mantises are longer as compared to the mid-legs and hind-legs. They perform a special function to catch and kill their prey. Mantis female are generally larger than the male mantis. They lay eggs in a pouch called Ootheca. They lay eggs during autumn and they hatch during spring season. Tiny nymphs resembles to their parents when the hatched from ootheca.

Facts about mantis

1. **Head rotation capabilities:** The mantis are the only insects which rotate their head at 180 degree to keep watch on their enemies and surroundings. Mantis have long, spiny forelegs which are used by them to grip and kill their prey.
2. **Dangerous offspring producing mechanism:** Females lay their eggs in a pouch called ootheca and they eat their mate during copulation or after copulation. It is believed that to increase the quantity of sperms they do so with their mates.
3. **Vision and audible parts:** Praying mantises have only one ear under their belly near to the hind legs. The ones which haven't even one ear are unable to fly.
4. **Survival rate:** They are so good at keeping themselves safe by attempting the camouflage (that's why we can call them "MASTER OF DISGUISE"). For instance, some of mantis species are good at mimic as flower. But some of the species prefer capturing their targets according to the speed of their prey i.e. *Sphodromantis lineola* prefer the slow moving preys.
5. **Field inspections:** Adding mantis eggs to the fields will help the farmers to keep a sharp eye on the field pests because they are regular eater and are good field inspectors.

How they are helpful in agriculture

1. **Reduce pest:** They are good hunter and keep gardens and farms free from moths, aphids, flies and mosquitoes. Some praying mantis have greater size that they can feed on small toads, lizards, fishes and their own species member. But they are picky eaters, as they love eating the live carnivores. That's why, they are so helpful in reducing the pest population in fields and gardens.
2. **Decline pesticide use:** As they are predators, they helps the farmers to reduce the use of pesticides in their farms because mantises capture the smaller insects in the field and reduce the chances of higher pest scales.
3. **Organic production:** By the use of natural enemies like mantis in the fields, the chances of organic products become high. Thus, they are helpful in organic foods and also improve the quality and quantity of food products.
4. **Field care:** When farmers introduce the mantis eggs to their field then they do not need to visit their field on short intervals because the mantis is regular eaters and they feed on the farm pest voraciously.