

praying mantis

representative specimen

Kingdom:	Animalia
Division/Phylum:	Arthropoda
Class:	Insecta
Order:	Orthoptera
Family:	Mantidae

ILLINOIS STATUS
common, native



ILLINOIS RANGE



FEATURES

The mantids are large insects that have the first section of the thorax very long. The front legs are adapted for grasping prey. The antennae are very short. The triangular head is able to be turned enough so that this insect can actually look behind it. The Carolina mantis, a native Illinois mantid, is usually gray, brown or green and seldom over two inches in length. The Chinese mantid, an introduced species, is green or brown and may be four inches long.

BEHAVIORS

Mantids may be found throughout Illinois. The adults are most often noted in September and October. They can occasionally be seen flying and are sometimes mistaken for hummingbirds. The eggs are deposited in a papery case attached to leaves or twigs, and they overwinter in this form. Nymphs emerge from the egg case in late spring or early summer. These predators wait for their insect prey to come near them. They hunt in a posture with their front legs raised, which is how they earned the common name of “praying” mantis. Mantids are mainly tropical in distribution. The Carolina mantis is the only native Illinois mantis. It is found in the southern two-thirds of the state. The most common mantid in Illinois is the Chinese mantid. It was introduced near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in the early 1900s and has spread through the United States by the transportation of egg masses. Many people like to raise mantids. They are also placed in gardens to help reduce insect pests.



representative specimen



representative
specimen

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests; marshes; peatlands; swamps; wet prairies and fens

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests; coniferous forests; southern Illinois lowlands;
upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

black soil prairie; dolomite prairie; edge; gravel prairie; hill prairie; sand
prairie; shrub prairie