



Praying Mantis

The praying mantis is in the insect order Mantodea. In Nebraska, we have two species, the smaller *Carolina mantis*, and the larger (up to 4 inches!) *Chinese mantis*.

These insects are predators, eating a variety of insects such as moths, grasshoppers, beetles, or whatever they can get ahold of! They lie in wait until prey gets near them, then they strike, holding their prey with their spiked “praying” front legs and eating the insect alive!

These insects almost look like little aliens, with a triangular head and large eyes! The females will lay a giant egg mass called an “ootheca” in the late summer or early fall, but of the 100 or so baby mantids that hatch, only a few will survive until adulthood!