PRAYING MANTIDS

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What is a mantis?

- Mantids(singular: mantis) are carnivorous insects belonging to the order mantodea.
- This is the technical definition. However, it doesn't really make sense unless you are already an entomologist.

My Definition

- I say that mantids are small carnivorous insects which have highly modified front legs they use for catching and holding prey while eating them.
- This, I find, actually sort of brings a picture to your mind, doesn't it?

A Typical Mantis

Classification of a mantis

Hierarchy	Classification
Kingdom	Animalia
Phylum	Arthropoda
Class	Insecta
Order	Mantodea

Some Details

Distribution	Mainly tropical and sub-tropical regions
Diversity	Over 2400 species and about 430 genera
Habitat	Terrestrial

- Mantids look very similar to grasshoppers in appearance, but are more closely related to cockroaches.
- Mantids come in all shapes, sizes, and colors, mimicking leaves, sticks, flowers, bark, grass, and even ants! But the most commonly found ones mimic fresh leaves.

What makes mantids so interesting?

- Mantids are extremely intelligent creatures. After a short period of time in captivity, they associate your presence with the appearance of food, and so stop trying to run away every time you open the box.
- Mantids can rotate their heads almost 180°, which, you have to admit, is pretty amazing.
- They have amazing regenerative capabilities.
- They have a single ear.
- They also have amazing camouflage, like in the example I'm about to show you.

Do you see the mantis?

Well, NOW do you see it?

This is the mantis *Schizocephala Bicornis*

Some different kinds of mantids

How to recognize a mantis

- In the insect world, It is never a good idea to try and identify something based only on color, or the general body shape.
- But, there are three characteristics through which mantids can be recognized. They are:

1. Two Raptorial front legs
2. A triangular head which rotates 180°
3. Four finger-like projections around the mouth

The characteristic features of a mantis

The 733 grasshopper

Some creatures which look like a mantis (but aren't)

Grasshoppers

Katydids

Assassin Bugs

Life cycle of a mantis

- A mantis starts off in an ootheca(plural oothecae), or egg case, each containing about 70-150 mantids depending on the species
- They undergo several molts while growing to their adult forms
- Each female lays 6-7 oothecae, and the cycle continues

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Mantids just after hatching

Mating Mantids

Mantids as pets

- Mantids can be kept either in transparent plastic boxes, or, for the larger ones, on plants inside the house.
- For food, any arthropod smaller than the mantis, including flies, mosquitoes, beetles, bees(for the bigger ones), ants etc will do.

The wandering Violin mantis (*Gongylus gongylodes)*

My study of mantids

- I actually wanted to study much more about these amazing creatures.
- However, I couldn't find a good book for beginners.
- So, after keeping them at home and studying them, I have written a short book regarding mantids aimed at beginners and insect enthusiasts.
- This book has been published by Gubbi Labs, and released at IISc by Prof. Raghavendra Gadhakkar.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Prof. L. S Shashidhara and Prof. Hema Somanathan from IISER Pune and Trivendrum respectively for helping with some technical facts regarding mantids, and my parents for providing support and encouragement
I would also like to thank Gubbi Labs for publishing my book

Thank
You!!!