

PRAYING FOR THEIR PREY

Praying mantis, is the common name for insects of the order Mantodea. Mantodea is derived from the ancient Greek word *mantis* meaning "prophet". They are also called "diviner" and "soothsayer" as they look very pious.



FDC with praying mantis cancellation from Vietnam (2009)
Stamps depicting 2 species of praying mantises



First stamp on a praying mantis issued by Chile (1948)



Praying mantis on stamp and in cancellation on FDC Madagascar (1996)

Why are they called Praying Mantis?

They stand on four stick-like legs with two enlarged front legs held up together in front of them. Their upright posture, with front legs folded make them look very devotional, like they are praying, similar to human beings praying with folded hands, and forms the inspiration behind their name, "Praying Mantis".



Malta (2005)



Mantis cancellation
Malaysia (1998)



Bhutan (1997)



India (2017)
Rama and Mother Teresa with hands held in prayer



India (1999)

Capturing their prey

Praying mantises have a pair of enlarged front legs (raptorial legs) armed with spines and tubercles which assist them to get a firm grasp on their prey. They stalk their prey and once within reach, they strike rapidly to grasp the prey with their spiny front legs. Some of them closely mimic flowers to attract and catch their prey



Raptorial front legs armed with spines



Flower mimicking mantis



Stalking its prey



Flower mantid



Prey caught with spiny front legs

In most cultures, the pious-looking praying mantis means good fortune, blessings and divine protection