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MANTIS RELIGIOSA (MANTODEA: MANTIDAE)  
IN DOOR COUNTY, WISCONSIN

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ABSTRACT

The European mantid (*Mantis religiosa*) has been observed at several sites spanning a distance of approximately 50 km in northern Door County, Wisconsin. A reliable sighting of an unidentified praying mantid on Chambers Island in Green Bay suggests the possibility that the species occurs there as well. Lake-induced moderation of the Door County climate may have resulted in conditions especially conducive for the establishment of European mantids.

The European mantid (*Mantis religiosa* L.) is native to southern Europe, northern Africa, and portions of Asia. After it was introduced to North America in the vicinity of Rochester, New York, around the turn of the last century, it spread into other portions of the Great Lakes region (Gurney 1950, Dunn 1996, and references therein). The purpose of this note is to review evidence for the establishment of *M. religiosa* in Door County, Wisconsin. The sightings listed below occurred at locations where local property owners had not purchased mantids through the mail from garden supply companies for the purpose of pest control.

On 10 October 1997, the senior author collected an adult European mantid in a residential area of Sturgeon Bay, Door County, Wisconsin. Residents at the address where the mantid was captured reported seeing a mantid at least one time previously during the summer. The specimen has been placed in the Insect Research Collection at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where it is the first example of *M. religiosa* from Wisconsin (S. J. Krauth, pers. comm., June 2000).

Lukes (1997, 2000) reported in his newspaper column that *M. religiosa* had been observed at several locations in Door County, including properties near Egg Harbor (repeated sightings over several years) and Sister Bay (as early as 1988). He has also been informed of the occurrence of mantids at a residence north of Ellison Bay, although he has not examined specimens from that site (R. Lukes, pers. comm., February 1998).

In September, 1999, a large, adult praying mantid was observed but not collected by two biology instructors staying at their forested, unimproved property along the shore of Chambers Island (R. Feirer, pers. comm., September 1999). Chambers Island is a large (approximately 5 km wide by 6 km

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long) island in Green Bay approximately 7 km northwest of the Door County shoreline. It is mostly forested but has some old field and a variety of other habitats (Long et al. 1978). Hurd (1999) stressed the probable importance of vehicular dispersal in the distribution of mantids in North America; in this case, it seems likely that mantids have been carried to Chambers Island on boats transporting building materials or other supplies from the mainland.

The sightings described herein span a linear distance of approximately 50 km along the Green Bay side of the Door County peninsula. Given the moderating effect of Green Bay and Lake Michigan proper on the local climate (e.g., Scott and Huff 1996) and the greater ease with which *M. religiosa* has colonized areas with relatively mild winters (Gurney 1950), it is not surprising that *M. religiosa* has apparently established itself in Door County.

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