

**The occurrence of the praying mantis (*Mantis religiosa*) (Mantodea: Mantidae)
in central Bohemia and its distribution in the Czech Republic**

**Výskyt kudlanky nábožné (*Mantis religiosa*) (Mantodea: Mantidae)
ve středních Čechách a její rozšíření v České republice**

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Abstract. The occurrence of *Mantis religiosa* Linnaeus, 1758, and its breeding population in Bohemia (Czech Republic) is recorded. All records of the praying mantis in the Czech Republic are summarized and an updated map of its distribution is given. Possible ways of its spreading from Moravia to Bohemia are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

The praying mantis (*Mantis religiosa* Linnaeus, 1758) is distributed in southern and central Europe, Asia (up to Japan) and Africa. It was introduced to America (Bolivia, Jamaica, USA and Canada) and Australia. The northern border of its distribution in Europe goes across France (up to 50° N), Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, northern Italy (southern Tyrol), Austria, Czech Republic, Slovakia, southern Poland, Ukraine, and Russia (up to 54° N) (Vidlička 2001).

Bazyluk (1960) discussed seven subspecies of *M. religiosa*. He reported two subspecies from Europe: *Mantis r. religiosa* Linnaeus, 1758, from northern Africa, southern and central Europe (as far as Slovakia) and from Near East (as far as western Iran) and *M. r. polonica* Bazyluk, 1960, in Poland, Austria and European Russia. However, Vidlička (2001) and Kočárek (2005) recognized the taxonomic separation of the two subspecies as unnecessary and unwarranted. Kočárek (2005) mentioned that ‘... Kaltenbach (pers. comm.) has found that the diagnostic characters vary within individual size and are not clearly distinguished in the latter two subspecies, and thus does not consider them as separate subspecies’.

In the Czech Republic, *M. religiosa* was previously considered as a rare xerothermic species, distributed only in the warmest parts of southern Moravia (Čaputa 1992). However, it was spreading gradually northwards during the 1990s. Chládek (1998) mentioned that *M. religiosa* has already occurred in the entire Panonicum up to the town of Prostějov in the north.

Hanák & Hudeček (2001) published a more detailed list of localities of *M. religiosa* in