

THIS WEEK ON THE LLANO ESTACADO

October 19-23, 2009



Preying mantids are depositing eggcases right now. Do you see the mantid below the white egg case in this photo? The white egg case will turn brown within a few hours. Normally the eggs will not hatch until next spring, usually about May 1st, when 200 or so little babies will emerge. Some species have the ability to produce a silk line to help lower themselves to the ground, while others just clamber down.

West Texas has several species of preying mantids, including an introduced Asian species that has spread across the continent. We also have ground mantids that are never more than an inch and a half long. With luck, a student might be able to find their eggcase, too, and it would be fascinating to compare two species of mantids!

Teacher and student challenge;

If you find a brown eggcase without any obvious holes on it, bring it inside and place it in an observation chamber. Will the babies emerge at their usual emergence time next spring? Or will the warmth of the classroom speed up the process. Report your discoveries to us at bwilliams@sibleynaturecenter.org. If you have a classroom camera, take photos of the babies emerging, and send those to us, too!

Warning; If the babies are left in the container too long they will begin to eat each other, and you may end up with only one baby left!