

Tour Report

Slovenia Macro Photography

5 – 12 July 2025

Marbled white



Downy emerald dragonfly



Buff-tip moth



Crab spider



Compiled by Alex Hyde and Terry Goble

This was an inaugural trip to Slovenia for macro photography with the aim of sampling some of Slovenia's stunningly scenic and diverse habitats. This trip had its challenges as an exceptionally dry spring and early summer had led to meadows being mown early and the grassy uncut meadows being rank and dry. The weather also necessitated the itinerary becoming flexible as we had to deal with spells of sunshine, storms and heavy rain. Despite these challenges, the trip proved to be successful and fun. The group was knowledgeable about their art and wildlife and contributed enormously to an enjoyable week.

We had some exceptional invertebrates from day one, as we discovered at least four alpine longhorns on log piles, and on the last day we had a roosting apollo. In between, we enjoyed an array of wildlife that, with expert direction from Alex, produced some fantastic opportunities. We made the most of the stormy weather by setting up ad hoc surgeries for trouble-shooting photography difficulties and expanding knowledge on capturing that desired shot. We also spent time identifying the myriad of creatures we discovered and recorded.

Saturday 5 July 2025

Day 1:

London Heathrow to Farm Strle

Most of the group met in the Heathrow Terminal Three departure lounge for the flight to Ljubljana. Some of the group needed no introduction as they were familiar faces from Alex's previous tours, but others were new. We chatted until it was time to board, which was a curiously low-key affair as we just wandered on! The flight was just about one hour and forty minutes and we arrived a little earlier than scheduled. Once out of the baggage claim and into arrivals, we finally completed the group as Christine joined us after flying out a few days prior to the tour. Whilst Alex and Terry set off to secure the vehicles the rest of the group relaxed in the airport café.

After a little while, the vehicles were all ready and we picked up the group outside the parking lot. We loaded bags and people into the two vehicles and set off through some quaint villages and lovely scenery on route to Tourist Farm Strle. We had a brief stop to take on some water and the guests bought some sandwiches for a lunch on the go.

As the route became increasingly rural, we began to see different butterflies, including Cleopatra and great-banded grayling. A stork's nest with an adult and three fledglings was a lovely addition to our sightings. We finally arrived at Farm Strle around 1 pm, but unfortunately, our rooms were not ready. The hosts very kindly provided us with schnapps and herbal tea. A little while later, there was rustic bread, cheeses and salami for the peckish.

We whiled away the time peering into the small vegetable garden which produced a surprising diversity of insects, including a scarce swallowtail and a hummingbird hawkmoth. Some ventured out onto a small uncut meadow nearby, which produced a flurry of marbled whites, sloe hairstreak, weaver's fritillary and other browns and skippers. We finally met up with Orban, who organised the rooms and gave us some information about the local area. Alex and Terry decided to check out the sites Orban recommended for a pre-dinner walk after everyone had settled in.

The recce proved promising, and we arranged to drive everyone down to the meadows, with Alex following in his car with two other clients. It was turning into a gloriously sunny evening, and the meadows were full of marbled whites and meadow browns. Whilst we were walking towards the meadow, a couple of white admirals flitted overhead. One came down low enough to get some record shots. The meadows became more exciting as we walked on, discovering some great subjects to photograph. Black and yellow longhorn beetles, weaver's fritillaries, great banded grayling and macabre ghost crab spiders with their unfortunate victims in their grasps.

However, we were to save the best till last as an inspection of a log pile turned up an alpine longhorn. Alex simultaneously found a lichen mimic longhorn, both fantastic species. The alpine longhorn was one of the

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top tour targets and was by no means a given so to find it on day one was exceptional. There was a whirl of clicks as a paparazzi scrum formed around this enigmatic and beautiful insect. Sated with our sightings and photographic subjects, a weary group drove the short journey back to the farm and rested/showered and got ready for our first dinner together.

The evening meal was exceptional and plentiful with several courses on offer. The courses consisted of home-made dishes, including a delicious mushroom soup, salads, vegetable and meat platter, finished off with apple strudel – all enjoyed in a relaxed and chatty atmosphere as we watched a hazy fiery orange sunset. After dinner we arranged the details for the next morning and departed to get some much-needed sleep.

Sunday 6 July 2025

Day 2:

Zerovnica, Rakov, Silentabor

We had a 'lazy' morning to recover from a long initial day. We met for breakfast at 8 am, which turned into quite the banquet despite requesting less food. Alex's request for sweet pastries just about finished a few of us off! It was quite a slow, relaxed morning, and we were a little later leaving than planned, setting off around 9:15 am.

We wound down the hills and headed for Zerovnica for a walk down a stream. On arrival, we noticed several hummingbird hawk-moths hovering around lavender bushes. This took up quite a bit of time for people to get their photos, whilst Alex made a slow-motion video. Terry went on to check out the meadows and found that most had been mown. We decided to focus on the stream and photographed diverse wildlife such as great diving beetles and marsh frogs. The morning was now quite sunny and warm, but there were some clouds gathering in the distance.

We then moved on to Rakov for a walk down the river. We parked up and checked out the meadow only to find it, too, had been mown. There was a strip of vegetation around the river, which contained a lot of white-legged and azure damselflies, and a few white-tailed skimmers were zooming around. We felt that there was not enough interest to warrant spending time at the river. Alex rescued the situation by discovering a few sink pools that contained a thin island of meadow sweet. The flowers attracted a few butterflies, including three pristine silver washed fritillaries as well as an assortment of other invertebrates. The pools meanwhile, hosted a few exciting dragonflies, including common clubtail and lesser emperor. There were also both banded and beautiful demoiselle. We decided to have lunch there and relax in the shade of the woodland enjoying a nice variety of wildlife.

After a brief stop for loos and diesel we continued to our final site of the day at Silentabor. This upland karst meadow has been known to be very productive and despite being dry and a little rank, it turned up some exciting invertebrates and a lovely European green lizard. The butterflies were less diverse than previously but there were still some excellent species including blue-spot hairstreak, European swallowtail and brown argus. The supporting cast included a mantis, some lovely moths and wasps and the blue-winged grasshoppers and crickets. The weather had now turned from a sunny to a cloudy and thundery afternoon and a spectacular lightning fork flashed down from the darkening clouds. It was, however, still



Blue-spotted hairstreaks (Tris Enticknap)

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quite warm and there was an occasional burst of sunshine. The session eventually came to an end (following gooseberry gate!), and we headed back to Farm Strle.

After parking up, most opted for a tea or coffee and spent time downloading and sorting their photos. Alex went with Tony to collect some butterfly specimens that had perished under some polythene over a log pile. The idea was to perhaps use these to photograph as subjects. If we needed to find alternative activities because of the impending stormy weather.

We met up again for dinner, which thankfully was not quite as plentiful as our last one, but still too much. It was another home-made delicious feast, thoroughly enjoyed by all.

After a pleasant evening chatting, most retired to their bedrooms. Alex and Terry went out to find the nearby marsh. Based on the weather forecast, they thought it best to have a local site to visit. There was some excellent wildlife in the marshes and they decided to take the group there the following day.

Monday 7 July 2025

Day 3:

Area around Farm Strle

We had an early start this morning to photograph roosting marble whites in a nearby meadow that had escaped being mown. The skies were leaden grey and forked lightning flashed earthwards, setting quite a dramatic scene. Low clouds hugged the pine forests as we made our way to the meadow.

We reconvened for breakfast just after 8 am. This was another delicious home-made spread. Afterwards, we discussed our options as the rain came down heavily. The forecast looked poor until around 4 pm. Alex decided to use the butterfly wings for a photo workshop in the dining area. We also decided to have lunch at the farm... definitely not picnic weather!

We all met up for a home-made soup lunch with rustic bread and coffees/teas. As the weather had improved, we decided to go to the local woodland marsh site that Alex and Terry had seen the previous evening. We got ourselves ready after lunch and met at the minibus to set off up to the village of Zara. Just before we got to the village, we turned down a forest track that wound down to a stream and several pools.



Chequered skipper (Tris Enticknap)

We explored the pools and found several yellow-bellied frogs and white-clawed crayfish as well as a few nymphs of the spectacular fire salamander. Adjacent to the pools and stream was a boggy woodland meadow where we enjoyed a host of invertebrate subjects to admire and photograph. Highlights included another of our target species and top cover model, the large, chequered skipper. Also seen and enjoyed were a lynx spider, burnet moths (yet to be identified) and a few other sought-after butterfly species such as large heath and woodland brown (one of Europe's scarcest butterflies). The weather continued to be unsettled and a few showers were followed by bursts of sunshine. Around 5:45 pm, we decided to give another nearby track a go as it had a promising path next to the waterfall.

It was a short drive around and down to an area where we could park. We walked the forest track and almost immediately found some interesting wildlife. A female golden-ringed dragonfly laying eggs was an exciting find and most at least got to see Europe's longest and possibly most spectacular dragonfly. Other

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sightings included a crab spider with a woodland ringlet secured in its chelicerae, a false heath and some lovely orchids and helleborines. As the time rolled around to 6:30 pm we decided it was time to head back and get ready for dinner. We loaded the minibus and drove back to the farm to enjoy a short break before dinner.

Tuesday 8 July 2025

Day 4:

Around Farm Strle

We woke to a deceptively bright morning, but the distant rumble of thunder became loud booms and grumbings as the skies darkened. Soon, the rain followed to add a bit more drama to the skies. Most of the group was busy prepping their photographs for the big reveal today, as Alex had arranged a critique of people's photographs to appreciate and explore the techniques of their shots. The moth trap had produced a few nice moths, including a brimstone and a lobster moth.

We then gathered for breakfast at 8:30 am to the usual spread of home cooking, cereals and spreads. After breakfast, we had a relaxing morning and early afternoon looking at different techniques, including slow motion videos, stacking options and looking at stills with a critical view – ending in a game of fiddlesticks! We also got to work on identifying some of the bugs and crawlers we had been photographing over the past few days. It was soon time for lunch, and the weather was starting to look a little more promising, so hopes were high that we could get out for a walk in the afternoon.

During lunch, the rain finally abated and after we had enjoyed another fine meal, we got ready to venture out. We drove back down to the forest track we had sampled the evening before. We parked up and set out exploring. At first, it was still a little cool and wildlife spotting was a little slow. Gradually, both warmed up and we enjoyed a lovely afternoon of glorious sunshine. Two clients seemed to be spotting all the butterflies as they enjoyed southern white admiral and a few ringlets, as well as the usual suspects. One of the stars of the afternoon was a yellow crab spider neatly camouflaged on a yellow flower. This was one of the photographers who took a shine to. We eventually made our way back around 6:30 pm to enjoy our last evening at what had been a lovely welcoming stay at Farm Strle. We met up again around 7:30 pm and enjoyed our usual banquet of food. We chatted happily until it was time to retire to our rooms to get ready to move on in the morning. A quick check on the moth trap wasn't promising; it was a chilly and windy night.

Wednesday 9 July 2025

Day 5:

Transfer day to Turisticna Kmetija Kranjc via Kolovrat open-air museum

We wanted to get away reasonably early to be able to spend a bit of time at Kolovrat. Some of the group were up early to check on the overnight moth haul. Although there were not many, there were a couple of very nice moths, and the buff tip is always a delight. There was also a brimstone that flew off before most could see it. We met at 7:30 am for breakfast and then got ready for departure. Before we left, we said our thanks to Orban and his mother, who had looked after us so wonderfully well. We left a token of our gratitude for their warmth, patience and kindness. We then got underway, winding down through the hills and eventually onto the motorway for a little while. Then we turned onto the H4, where we stopped for a comfort break and for Alex to get some fuel.

We carried on along the Soca Valley, occasionally getting views of the 'most beautiful river in Europe'. We crossed the river and began our steep ascent to the museum. We rounded a few hairpin bends and survived a kamikaze cyclist hurtling towards us. We finally arrived in one piece and settled on an early lunch.

We sat at a table in the shade, although it was a cool afternoon, and a biting wind made it feel colder. After lunch, we made our way up a short, steepish incline to the top and followed the ridge, which goes all the way to Italy! The rich meadows and hedgerows harboured a wealth of invertebrates, including some

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impressive apple-green-eyed horse flies, jumping spiders and clouds of marbled whites. Everyone seemed to be engaged with their subjects, and Howard focused on the stunning views across to the Julian Alps.

We spent a few hours on the ridge before descending to try a new location – what was supposed to be a flower-rich meadow turned up to be a few bales of hay! However, a gravel track running up into some meadows and hedges looked like a decent option, so we strolled up there. It turned out to be a productive walk as we encountered wasp mimic flies, ringlets and, possibly best of all, apollo butterflies, which have become scarce in Slovenia. Some then spent time photographing some mating nine-spot moths prior to most of us gathering in the minibus and heading towards our hotel, Kmetija Kranjc. It was a short thirty-minute drive, but again up a winding road until we drove into a more open section with a glorious church set against a backdrop of the dramatic, jagged Alps. We took a minute to take it all in and then continued the short distance to our hotel. We all got settled in and agreed to meet at 7:30 pm for dinner.

Dinner was outdoors and was a platter of meat (lamb) and vegetables with parsley mashed potatoes, which was all rather nice. Alex and Terry had to skip dessert as they wanted to check out a nearby site for its suitability. It all seemed good as it was a nice walk with woodland and scree, and enough wildflowers to be of interest.

Returning to the hotel, they checked the moth trap and had a few specimens. The evening was cool and the moon bright, so the haul was relatively good.

Thursday 10 July 2025

Day 6:

Vrsic Pass

Overnight, a few more moths flew in, and we had waved umber, small elephant and an emerald to pot and photograph. We then met at 8 am for a buffet breakfast that met everyone's needs. Afterwards, we gathered at the reception to drive to Vrsic Pass and look for higher-altitude species.

The drive was along the valley floor before a steep climb (26 hairpin bends!) up to the summit. There was little parking, so we descended a short way over the other side to a restaurant with parking. We got out here and explored the meadow with a stream running through it. One of the key species here is the Asian fritillary, but in this unusual year, it was not to be seen. However, there were a few other species of interest, including ringlets, alpine heath, black-veined white and large wall. Howard also found the beautiful caterpillar of the spurge hawkmoth, which everyone seemed to appreciate.

We then went for a coffee and a loo stop before stopping at the head of a trail to explore the scree area. There seemed to be little around and few flowers. It appeared to have been heavily grazed. We found a few creatures and flowers of interest, but with not so much to work with, we decided to head back and photograph the moths at the hotel.

Alex brought the moths over and left those who had gathered to set up their own 'sets' on which to photograph the moths. There was also a carabid beetle with a 'horn' which proved popular. After the photo shoot was finished, we took some time out to get ready for dinner.

The dinner was again a platter of meats or alternatives, with beans, salad and marrow, washed down with a few beers and wines. We arranged to get up early for a roost session on our final full day, so most drifted off early to get some sleep ahead of an early start.

Friday 11 July 2025

Day 7:

Kolovrat and Log Cezoski

Most of the group met at the car for 5:30 am after a brief moth photographing session (a reasonable haul). We then set off to collect Alex and Howard, and drove on to the museum at Kolovrat. It was light as we set

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off and after a 30-minute drive, we could see the sun appearing above the distant mountains.

We set off up to the ridge with mostly marbled white and skippers roosting in the grasses. Gradually, we began to find subjects. One client found some striking caterpillars, which were enjoyed, and a gorgeous Jersey tiger posed nicely. The highlight undoubtedly was Alex's find of two European scorpions, which everyone wanted to photograph. It was soon coming up to 8:30 am and time to head back for breakfast, although Alex had already provided a pre-breakfast breakfast!

We arrived back at the hotel at 9:05 am and went straight to the eating area. The breakfast was much the same as the day before with a buffet of cooked foods, salad, breads and spreads. After we had eaten our fill, we arranged to get our camera gear ready for our next adventure. The forecast was still poor but had improved, with the rain now more likely at 2 pm with an accompanying storm.

It was a 30-minute drive to Log Cezsowski and then a few minutes down an unmade road, passing the most static of caravans, built into a wall! The skies were cloudy, and there was some intermittent sun. The walk along the banks of the Soca River proved very productive and became even better when we found a trackside meadow stretching down to the water.

At this spot, we found a roosting apollo in fine condition, several sooty satyrs and sooty coppers also floated around, gathering on the umbellifers of scabious. There were lots of support invertebrates, including beetles and large crickets (great green and saw-tailed crickets). A very large jumping spider was also very much admired. All this within the setting of the clear rushing waters of the Soca, a delightful location.



Jumping spider (Tony Enticknap)

The rain was intermittent, but on cue, at the forecasted time of 2 pm, the heavens opened and we beat a hasty retreat to the minibus. At this point, we concluded the rumbling thunder was a signal to call it a day and head back to the hotel. We decided to do a bit of catch-up with species ID and an ad hoc photography surgery. We arranged this for 4 pm to give people time to download and get themselves ready for the journey home tomorrow.

Terry, Alex and Howard met at 4 pm, and the others slowly joined the session. We spent the afternoon reviewing species, and Alex answered technical queries on camera techniques until it was time to get ready for dinner, which we ate inside the restaurant.

Saturday 12 July 2025

Day 8:

Travel to the airport and flight to Heathrow

We gathered at the minibus in the early hours to ensure we arrived at Joze Pucnik Airport in good time for our 11 am flight. We agreed to meet with Alex and Howard at the airport, and both vehicles set off around 5:30 am. The route took us through some beautiful river valleys and lush forests. For those still awake, it was a very scenic drive. We stopped briefly to eat our packed breakfasts and put some diesel in the tank, and then set off to rendezvous with the others.

After dropping people off and returning the vehicles, we all met up again in the departure lounge. Going through security was a little bit of an ordeal as the security team seemed a little zealous. Eventually, we all got to the departure gate and the flight left on time, and in fact, we arrived 20 minutes early after an

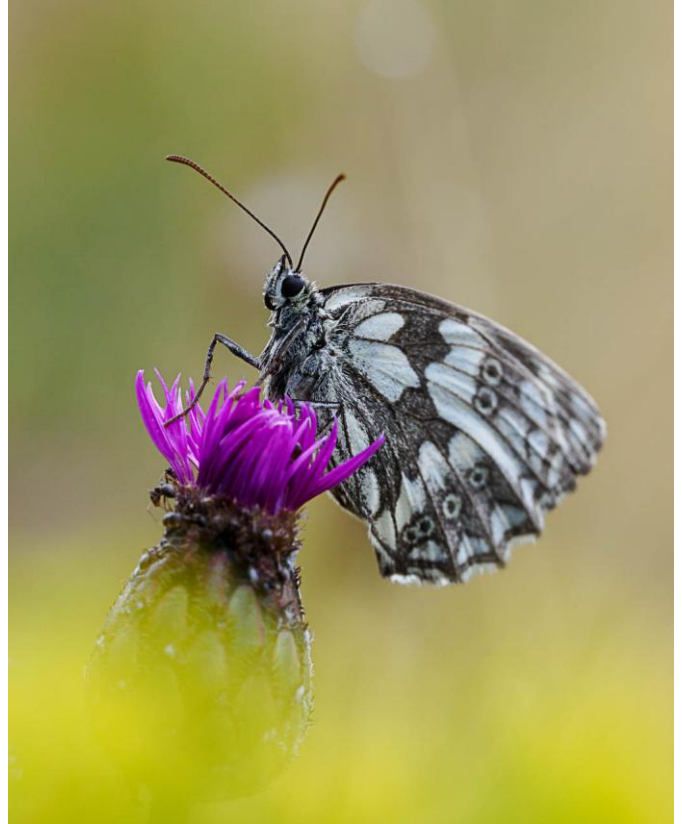
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uneventful flight. After gathering at the luggage carousel, we retrieved our luggage and said goodbye to each other as the tour came to a close.



Jumping spider (Claire Waring)

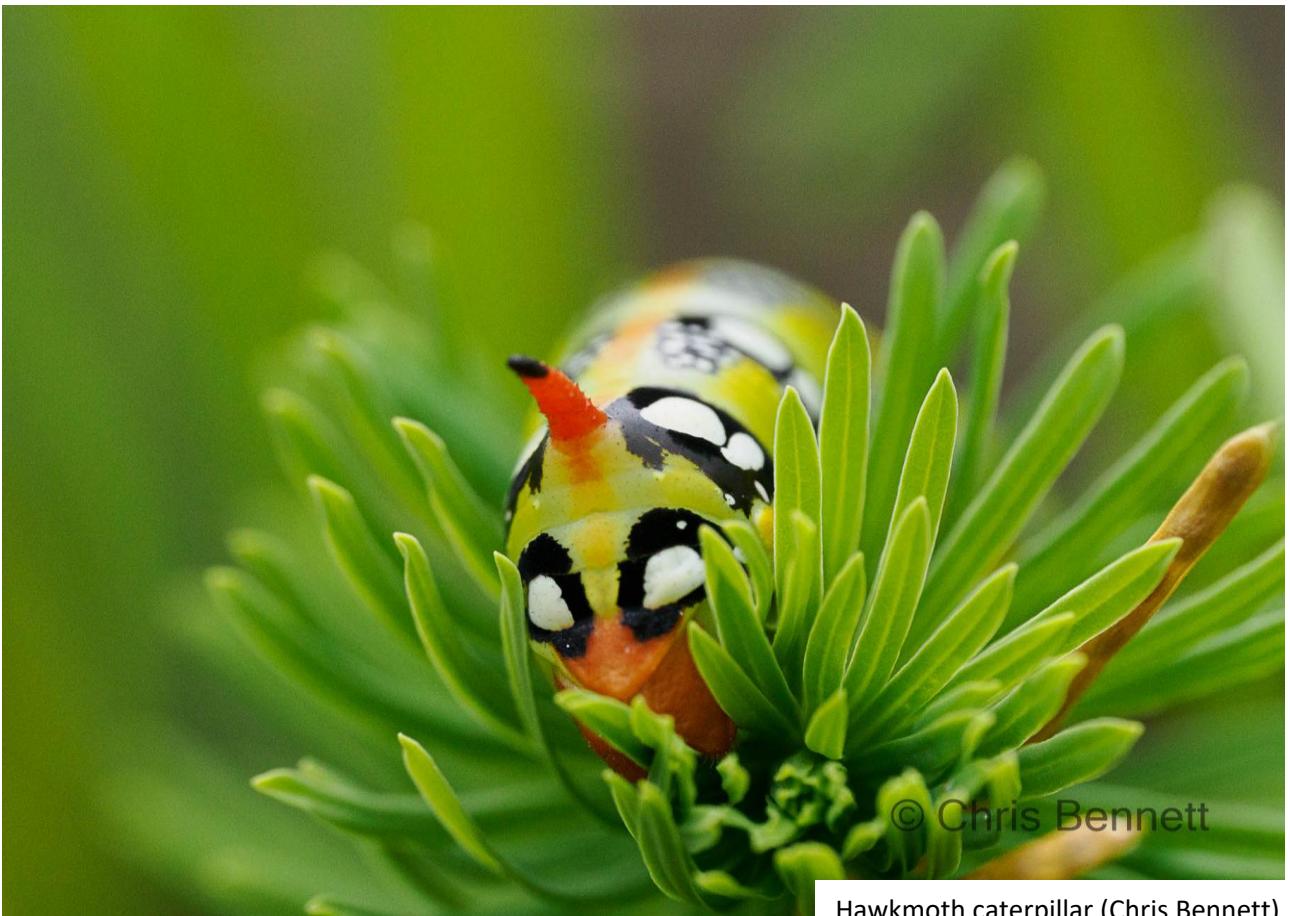


Marbled white butterfly (Chris Bennett)





Praying Mantis (Claire Waring)



Hawkmoth caterpillar (Chris Bennett)



Dockbug instars (Geraldine Stephenson)



Gall flies (Tris Enticknap)



Napoleon spider (Tony Enticknap)

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Cover Images By: Geraldine Stephenson (Downy emerald dragonfly), Tris Enticknap (marbled white) and Tony Enticknap (buff-tip moth & crab spider)

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Checklist for Slovenia Macro Photography



	Species List
	BUTTERFLIES
1	Apollo
2	Scarce swallowtail
3	European swallowtail
4	Black-veined white
5	Large white
6	Small white
7	Southern small white
8	Mountain small white
9	Mountain green-veined white
10	Green-veined white
11	Clouded yellow
12	Brimstone
13	Cleopatra
14	Wood white
15	Sloe hairstreak
16	Blue-spot hairstreak
17	Small copper
18	Sooty copper
19	Chequered blue
20	Northern (mountain) brown argus
21	Mazarine blue
22	Common blue
23	White admiral
24	Southern white admiral
25	Red admiral

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26	Queen of Spain fritillary
27	Silver-washed fritillary
28	High brown fritillary
29	Dark green fritillary
30	Marbled fritillary
31	Weaver's' fritillary
32	False heath fritillary
33	Heath fritillary
34	Marbled white
35	Great sooty satyr
36	Great banded grayling
37	Large ringlet
38	Scotch argus
39	Woodland ringlet
40	Bright-eyed ringlet
41	Meadow brown
42	Ringlet
43	Pearly heath
44	Alpine heath
45	Speckled wood
46	Large wall brown
47	Woodland brown
48	Large chequered skipper
49	Large skipper
50	Small skipper
51	Essex skipper
	MOTHS
1	Hummingbird hawkmoth
2	Lattice heath
3	Golden yellow wave
4	Mint moth sp
5	Silver 'Y'
6	The sycamore

7	Scarce footman
8	Four-spotted footman
9	Pine hawkmoth
10	Spurge hawkmoth (cat)
11	Small elephant hawkmoth
12	Purple thorn
13	August thorn
14	Treble lines
15	Buff ermine
16	Brimstone
17	Lobster moth
18	Nine-spotted moth
19	Six-spot burnet
20	Five-spot burnet
21	Transalpine burnet
22	Burnet companion
23	Beautiful hook-tip
24	Spotted sulphur
25	Nut tree tussock
26	Purple bar
27	No common name
28	Scorched carpet
29	Light emerald
30	Riband wave
31	Willow beauty
32	Great oak beauty
33	Engrailed
34	Buff-tip moth
35	Cream-spot tiger
36	Jersey tiger
37	White ermine
	MICRO MOTHS
1	Cherry ermine

2	Crambid moth sp
3	Pearl grass moth
4	Brassy longhorn
	BEETLES
1	Alpine longhorn
2	Black and yellow longhorn
3	Twin-spot longhorn
4	Lichen mimic longhorn
5	No common name
6	Red and black bee murderer
7	Woodland dor beetle
8	No common name
9	Butterbur weevil
10	22-spot ladybird
11	Great diving beetle
12	Rose chaffer
	DRAGONFLIES
1	Common darter
2	Common clubtail
3	White-tailed skimmer
4	Downy emerald
5	Golden-ringed dragonfly
6	Emperor hawk
7	Lesser emperor
8	Azure damselfly
9	White-legged damselfly
10	Beautiful demoiselle
11	Banded demoiselle
	OTHER TAXA
1	Shield bug
2	Dock bug

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3	Firebug
4	Mantid sp
5	(Eastern) Stone grasshopper
6	Blue-winged grasshopper
7	Meadow grasshopper
8	Common straw grasshopper
9	Great green bush cricket
10	Alpine dark bush cricket
11	Common wart biter
12	Saw-tailed bush cricket
13	Scoliid wasp
14	Splayed deer fly
15	Large rose sawfly
16	No common name
17	Hornet-mimic hoverfly
18	Bumble bee robber fly
19	Red-bellied jumping spider
20	Flower crab spider
21	European yellow-tailed scorpion
22	Violet carpenter bee
23	Brown-lipped snail
	BIRDS
1	Mallard
2	Yellow-legged gull
3	White stork
4	Grey heron
5	Common kestrel
6	Common buzzard
7	Red-backed shrike
8	Eurasian jay
9	Hooded crow
10	Raven
11	Green woodpecker

12	Great spotted woodpecker
13	Barn swallow
14	House martin
15	White wagtail
16	Chiffchaff
17	Blackcap
18	Great tit
19	Blue tit
20	Crested tit (H)
21	Marsh tit
22	Black redstart
23	Spotted flycatcher
24	Tree pipit
25	Song thrush
26	Mistle thrush
27	Eurasian blackbird
28	Eurasian starling
29	House sparrow
30	Goldfinch
31	Chaffinch
32	Bullfinch
33	Cirl bunting
	MAMMALS
1	Field mouse
2	Red squirrel
3	European brown hare
4	Red deer
5	Roe deer
6	Fallow deer
7	Eurasian Badger L/O
8	Red fox L/O
	REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

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1	Grass snake
2	European green lizard
3	Common wall lizard
4	Common toad
5	Yellow-bellied toad
6	Marsh frog
7	Fire salamander (nymph)