Moths of Slovenia's Karst Mountains
12th - 16th October 2025

Led by Lajos Nemeth

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Our 2025 Slovenia moth tour was based upon a trial of something new in the area, also upon dozens of previous lamping tours in the last three decades, giving a base for a highly anticipated tour. We used a single accommodation in the lovely Slovenian countryside, run by a family we have known for ages. Veronica, our host, made gorgeous breakfasts, and their quiet farmland house surrounded by domestic animals and beautiful beech forest gave a good chance for lamping around the house as well. While we enjoyed gorgeous sunshine and beautiful autumn colours on the tour, we also faced some serious issues. Hard to say if the failure of our trusty Yamaha generator or the incredibly cold weather was worse. We had incredibly cold nights, which almost ran into minuses, despite the expected warm autumn evenings, and the generator broke down on the first night, which became irreplaceable. We couldn't find any replacement locally, good Hondas were available on backorder only, and finally we decided to rely on the several actinics and on a LepiLed, luckily brought over by Martine and Neil. No doubt we could have better results with proper bulbs and with the big traps Lajos, the guide had brought with him. However, the cold nights and the year-long droughts also significantly played down the results, of course. Luckily, we still had success with the most wanted *Perisomena caecigena* on Mt. Nanos and near Podgorje, just like we saw *Staurophora celsia, Trogonophora flammea*, and other beauties. Other highlights of the tour were definitely a Wallcreeper, flying off from the cliffs of Sneznik Castle, and a short look at a roadside Chamois at Mt. Nanos. Weather nuisances, several cultural/tourist options were designed into the tour, all of them for common delight.

Day 1

On our first day, after meeting at Trieste airport, we drove directly to our homestay at Lipsenj, where our hostess, Veronica, welcomed the group, and we all checked into our rooms. A dinner was followed by setting up the lamps around the homestay, which is outside of the village near beautiful beech forests, normally full of Edible Dormice, Red Deer, and even occasional Brown Bears visiting the garbage cans. The night, just like all the following, was incredibly cold, and wasn't providing too much, but we noted White-point, Common Marbled Carpet, Spruce Carpet, Oak Nycteoline, Green-brindled Crescent, *Alucita huebneri*, and a few other moth species.

Day 2

The next morning, as on every morning, Neil and the party went for a bit of birding, which resulted in some goodies, including Middle-spotted, Grey-headed, Green, Black and Great Spotted Woodpeckers, as well as some pine forest birds like Coal and Crested Tits, Hawfinch, and a few more common species. They also found droppings of some Brown Bears.

Lake Cerknica © Neil S

After a gorgeous breakfast, we drove up to the top of Mt. Slivnica nearby, towering above the intermittent Lake Cerknica. Slovenia's Karst area is formed by thousands of rock formations, dolinas, sinkholes, and this lake is basically

sitting on top of a huge limestone sponge in a large basin, where all waters running into the centre are sometimes able to fill up the lake basin with water in a very short time. This year was very dry, consequently with patches of waterbodies only and very few birds, of which probably Whinchats and Wigeon were the best. After enjoying the splendid view and spotting some Common Darter dragonflies (*Sympetrum striolatum*), Ravens, Wall Brown and Clouded Yellow, we drove to Skocjan cave, probably the most impressive cave of the country, and even Europe. This huge cave has been on the UNESCO list since 1986, and the entrances and exits are at the bottom of two giant sinkholes, with a huge body of rock in between, where the actual cave is. Down in the cave, a giant river runs through in the so-called murmuring part. The artificial trail is cut above the river into the wall, with a bridge crossing over at 47 meters high. As breathtaking as it can be. After the two-hour guided tour we drove around the aforementioned sinkholes, observing some Firecrests, Common Wall Lizard, Brimstone, Clouded Yellow, Red Admiral and Grayling. We drove to the nearby Divaca as well, to complete our sinkhole experiences. Overall, much of Slovenia (43%, in fact) sits on a bed of karst, porous limestone, which means that underground Slovenia is full of caves—around 14,000 of them and counting.

Podgorje © Lajos Nemeth

After dinner at nearby Kozina, we finally arrived in Podgorje, one of the most well-known *caecigena* spots in the country, a unique mesophilous oak-forest location on the Karst with usually proper rain supply. There has been moth research going on in the area since the 1920's, and Lajos started his lampings here back in 1991 with some fantastic results. This is one of the richest locations in all of Slovenia, with some very special species. Anticipation was high, the weather was very cold, and immediately at the start our generator broke down. We tried whatever we could, with no success… so finally we put out the actinics and LepiLed, waiting for our best luck. Which wasn't coming at all! Wind, a few common moths, and finally some excitement as Martine reported a *caecigena* (Autumnal Emperor) coming in, unfortunately swept away by the wind and impossible to relocate. Anyway, the target species is here, and let's hope for a better next night. We had seen several Chestnut, Brindled and Southern Brindled Greens, Flame Brocade, September Thorn, Figure of Eight, to mention the more attractive ones, also some beautiful Eastern Eggar, *Eriogaster catax*. We also heard Nightjars here, and a distant howling of Golden Jackals. Back to the accommodation, our sheets were also "empty", and everybody was frozen. On the way, we saw a Badger briefly, crossing the road… but it was time to go to bed!

Day 3

The next morning we started with a small drive through Rakov Skocjan forest, which is also famous for some smaller sinkholes and natural bridges above it; consequently, we arrived at our next destination, Postojna cave, by far the most famous and visited in Slovenia. A totally different experience to Skocjan, here a train takes people down into the heart of the mountain, where groups are guided through the thousands of amazing formations of stalactites and stalagmites. One of the top tourist destinations of the country, created by the Pivka

Postojna Cave © Martine G

river, runs for 24 kms underground, and has been visited by people since the 17th century. The cave system is also home to the strange amphibian called the Olm, the largest troglodyte in the World. Our small group descended for their 1.5-hour-long guided tour, including a stop at the Olm aquariums. During this time, Lajos tried to find a replacement generator without any reasonable success. Hummingbird Hawkmoth, Silver Y and Red Admiral were observed here at the entrance and parking areas, also we enjoyed some Nuthatch and a prolonged view of a beautiful Kingfisher.

From Postojna we drove to nearby Predjama castle, a seriously unique setting for a fortress (sitting and hanging in an entrance of a cave) where we enjoyed lunch at the entrance, and Lajos told the history of it, including the story of the siege, where a local hero ended up in a very bad way (hit by a cannonball whilst on a toilet)!

An hour's beautiful forest drive took us across the plateau of Mt. Nanos, where, after some stops at a viewpoint overlooking the Adriatic Sea and inner Slovenia, we descended to the southern slope to get to our next lamping spot. En route, a major excitement was a roadside Chamois, seen by a few from the minibus. During our drive, we also saw some beautiful Ring Ouzels, Mistle Thrush, Hare and Roe Deer. In the blowing wind it was not easy to pick up the proper lamping place, but with some exploration we decided on a windproof corner. The weather was very cold again, but luckily for us, we finally enjoyed a proper view of two *caecigena* (Autumn Emperor), and one *celsia* (The Malachite). We were happy, photographing our beloved moth for hours. This beautiful creature was described in 1820 from nearby Rijeka (Croatia), and its discoverer, P.J. Kupido was so overwhelmed with its beauty that he dedicated a complete small book for its description. We also saw here *Eriogaster rimicola*, Double-spot Brocade (a good one!), Grey Shoulder-knot, August and September Thorns, about 25 species in total. We also heard a Tawny Owl.

Autumn Emperor © Lajos Nemeth

Day 4

The next morning was beautiful, and we took the short drive to Sneznik Castle, a former Austrian hunting lodge, another well-known but little-visited and secluded attraction of Slovenia. We were hoping to visit the lovely Dormouse-museum, but unfortunately, the phones were not ringing, and we learned that its lovely keeper Janez was sick. This would be a place to see some proper taxidermy about the very diverse, but scarce wildlife of the country, and the relation of the Edible Dormouse and people in Slovenia. Lots of tales and myths surround this common forest rodent, which was a very important source of protein for people in this area. People have been trapping and eating dormice here for centuries, which is considered proper game with a hunting season, and requires a special permit to trap, with unique traps and methods. The meat is incredibly tasty, the fur is gorgeous and used for coats and hats, and people even make brandy from its fat, saying it's an excellent cure for ulcers. Here at Sneznik Castle, people also run a Dormouse-festival every year, attracting the locals and many foreigners to celebrate the dormouse.

Sneznik Castle © Lajos Nemeth

After enjoying some perfect coffee and cakes under the beautiful autumn sunshine, we also picked up some birds here, like Chaffinch, Hawfinch, some Nuthatch and tits. Then we drove to the

Slovenian-Italian border to Socerb castle, from where we had a commanding view of the sea and Trieste. Amazingly, a beautiful Wallcreeper detached from the castle's wall and flew into the endless sky, giving us some good binocular view. It was unexpected and beautiful, easily the bird of the trip. Clouded Yellow, Small Heath and Wall Brown were presented here as well. After we had a delicious lunch on a nice terrace overlooking the sea, and we also enjoyed a good view of some singing Cirl Buntings right near our tables.

Flame Brocade © Lajos Nemeth

After this late lunch, we drove to Secovlje salina, a huge saltpan, one of the premier birding spots in the country. Unfortunately, we just had a short time at two different spots, but still got a distant view of some flamingos and other waterbirds, herons and waders. Then we drove back to our previous Podgorje area from a different direction, driving through some difficult terrains through the Karst cliffs, for another lamping session. We set up our gear about two kilometres away from the previous spot. The same weather brought us another 2-3 *caecigena*, and a few others, including Pale Eggar and some more pretty Flame Brocade. Neil and Denise also spotted two Woodcocks at dusk, and we saw a Red Fox on our way back to the hotel.

Day 5

Our last day of this short moth vacation saw us saying goodbye to our lovely host, Veronica, before we drove to Lipiza stud-farm**,** the famous original horse-farm, where our group wandered around for a short time to learn about the place, and pick up some birds, like Greater Spotted Woodpecker, Long-tailed Tit and Nuthatch. After, we descended to the huge walls of Osp, where we stopped briefly to see some Crag Martins. Only a few butterflies moved around, such as Red Admirals and Clouded Yellows. We also saw some Common Wall Lizards and Marsh Frogs. Finally, we crossed to Italy, getting to the airport for our farewell.

Overall, despite technical and weather turmoil, we definitely enjoyed a nice holiday with a wonderful group of people, and a big thank you to Martine and Neil for meticulously compiling several species lists, a dream combination for every tour leader.

Species Lists compiled by Martine G and Neil S

Moths		
	Family *Alucitae*	
1	A Many-plumed Moth	*Alucita huebneri*
	Family *Crambidae*	
2	Rusty Dot Pearl	*Udea ferrugalis*
	Family *Drepanidae*	

Moths		
3	Oak Lutestring	*Cymatophorina diluta*
	Family *Geometridae*	
4	Yellow Shell	*Camptogramma bilineata*
5	Red-green Carpet	*Chloroclysta siterata*
6	Smoky Scalloped Oak	*Crocallis tusciaria*
7	Common Marbled Carpet	*Dysstroma truncata*
8	September Thorn	*Ennomos erosaria*
9	August Thorn	*Ennomos quercinaria*
10		*Epirrita sp.*
11		*Eupithecia ericeata*
12	Pine Carpet	*Pennithera firmata*
13	Willow Beauty	*Peribatodes rhomboidaria*
14	Spruce Carpet	*Thera britannica o. Variata*
	Family *Lasiocampidae*	
15	Eastern Eggar	*Eriogaster catax*
16	An Eggar	*Eriogaster rimicola*
17	Pale Eggar	*Trichiura crataegi*
	Family *Noctuidae*	
18	Flounced Chestnut	*Agrochola helvola*
19		*Agrochola humilis*
20		*Agrochola laevis*
21		*Agrochola nitida*
22	Green-brindled Crescent	*Allophyes oxyacanthae*
23		*Ammoconia caecimacula*
24	Deep Brown Dart	*Aporophyla lutulenta*
25	Silver Y	*Autographa gamma*
26	Red-headed Chestnut	*Conistra erythrocephala*
27	Dotted Chestnut	*Conistra rubiginea*

Moths		
18	The Chestnut	*Conistra vaccini*
19	Figure of Eight	*Diloba caeruleocephala*
20	Brindled Green	*Dryobotodes eremita*
21	Southern Brindled Green	*Dryobotodes roboris*
22	Yellow-line Quaker	*Leptologia macilenta*
23	Grey Shoulder-knot	*Lithophane ornitopus*
24	Double-spot Brocade	*Meganephria bimaculosa*
25	White-point	*Mythimna albipuncta*
26	L-album Wainscot	*Mythimna l-album*
27	Lesser Yellow Underwing	*Noctua comes*
28	The Malachite	*Staurophora celsia*
29	The Brick	*Sunira circellaris*
30		*Tiliacea sulphurago*
31	Flame Brocade	*Trigonophora flammea*
	Family *Nolidae*	
32	Oak Nycteoline	*Nycteola revayana*
	Family *Pterophoridae*	
33	Beautiful Plume	*Amblyptilia acanthadactyla*
34	Common Plume	*Emmelina monodactyla*
	Family *Saturniidae*	
35	Autumn Emperor	*Saturnia o. Perisomena caecigena*
	Family *Sphingidae*	
36	Hummingbird Hawkmoth	*Macroglossum stellatarum*
	Family *Tortricidae*	
37	Rhomboid Tortrix	*Acleris rhombana*
38	Rufous Tortrix	*Clepsis consimilana*
	Family *Ypsolophidae*	
39	White-shouldered Ochre	*Ypsolopha parenthesella*

Butterflies

	Family *Pieridae*	
1	Brimstone	*Gonepteryx rhamni*
2	Clouded Yellow	*Colias croceus*
3	A White	*Pieris sp.*
	Family *Nymphalidae*	
4	Red Admiral	*Vanessa atalanta*
5	Small Heath	*Coenonympha pamphilus*
6	Wall	*Lasiommata megera*
7	Grayling	*Hipparchia semele*

Birds

Listed in English and German. Those marked with * identified with the help of the Merlin App.

1	Mute Swan (Höckerschwan)	*Cygnus olor*
2	Wigeon (Pfeifente)	*Mareca Penelope*
3	Mallard (Stockente)	*Anas platyrhynchos*
4	Greater Flamingo (Rosaflamingo)	*Phoenicopterus roseus*
5	Wood Pigeon (Ringeltaube)	*Columba palumbus*
6	Coot (Blässhuhn)	*Fulica atra*
7	Woodcock (Waldschnepfe)	*Scolopax rusticola*
8	Snipe (Bekassine)	*Gallinago gallinago*
9	Common Sandpiper (Flussuferläufer)	*Actitis hypoleucos*
10	Greenshank (Grünschenkel)	*Tringa nebularia*
11	Black-headed Gull (Lachmöwe)	*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*
12	Yellow-legged Gull (Mittelmeermöwe)	*Larus michahellis*
13	Pygmy Cormorant (Zwergscharbe)	*Microcarbo pygmaeus*
14	Great Cormorant (Großer Kormoran)	*Phalacrocorax carbo*
15	Little Egret (Seidenreiher)	*Egretta garzetta*

Birds

Listed in English and German. Those marked with * identified with the help of the Merlin App.

16	Great Egret (Silberreiher)	*Ardea alba*
17	Grey Heron (Graureiher)	*Ardea cinerea*
18	Nightjar (Ziegenmelker)	*Caprimulgus europaeus*
19	Tawny Owl (Waldkauz)	*Strix aluco*
20	Sparrowhawk (Sperber)	*Accipiter nisus*
21	Common Buzzard (Mäussebussard)	*Buteo buteo*
22	Kingfisher (Eisvogel)	*Alcedo atthis*
23	Grey-headed Woodpecker (Grauspecht)	*Picus canus*
24	Green Woodpecker (Grünspecht)	*Picus viridis*
25	Black Woodpecker (Schwarzspecht)	*Dryocopus martius*
26	Middle-spotted Woodpecker (Mittelspecht)	*Dendrocoptes medius*
27	Great Spotted Woodpecker (Buntspecht)	*Dendrocopos major*
28	Kestrel (Turmfalke)	*Falco tinnunculus*
29	Jay (Eichelhäher)	*Garrulus glandarius*
30	Magpie (Elster)	*Pica pica*
31	Raven (Kolkrabe)	*Corvus corax*
32	Hooded Crow (Nebelkrähe)	*Corvus corone cornix*
33	Blue Tit (Blaumeise)	*Cyanistes caeruleus*
34	Great Tit (Kohlmeise)	*Parus major*
35	Coal Tit (Tannenmeise)	*Periparus ater* *
36	Crested Tit (Haubenmeise)	*Lophophanes cristatus*
37	Marsh Tit (Sumpfmeise)	*Poecile palustris* *
38	Crag Martin (Felsenschwalbe)	*Ptyonoprogne rupestris*
39	Long-tailed Tit (Schwanzmeise)	*Aegithalos caudatus*
40	Chiffchaff (Zilpzalp)	*Phylloscopus collybita*
41	Firecrest (Feuerhähnchen)	*Regulus ignicapilla*
42	Goldcrest (Wintergoldhähnchen)	*Regulus regulus* *
43	Wallcreeper (Mauerläufer)	*Tichodroma muraria*

Birds

Listed in English and German. Those marked with * identified with the help of the Merlin App.

44	Nuthatch (Kleiber)	*Sitta europaea*
45	Wren (Zaunkönig)	*Troglodytes troglodytes*
46	Starling (Star)	*Sturnus vulgaris*
47	Mistle Thrush (Misteldrossel)	*Turdus viscivorus*
48	Blackbird (Amsel)	*Turdus merula*
49	Ring Ouzel (Ringdrossel)	*Turdus torquatus*
50	Robin (Rotkhelchen)	*Erithacus rubecula*
51	Black Redstart (Hausrotschwanz)	*Phoenicurus ochruros*
52	Whinchat (Braunkhelchen)	*Saxicola rubetra*
53	Stonechat (Schwartzkhelchen)	*Saxicola rubicola*
54	Grey Wagtail (Gebirgsstelze)	*Motacilla cinerea*
55	White Wagtail (Bachstelze)	*Motacilla alba*
56	Chaffinch (Buchfink)	*Fringilla coelebs*
57	Hawfinch (Kernbeißer)	*Coccothraustes coccothraustes*
58	Cirl Bunting (Zaunammer)	*Emberiza cirlus*

Other Taxa

	Mammals (In English and German)	
1	Golden Jackal (Goldschakal)	*Canis aureus* **heard howling
2	Roe Deer (Reh)	*Capreolus capreolus*
3	Brown Hare (Feldhase)	*Lepus europaeus*
4	Badger (Dachs)	*Meles meles*
5	Chamois (Gämse)	*Rupicapra rupicapra*
6	Mole (Maulwurf)	*Talpa europaea* **numerous “hills”
7	Brown Bear (Braunbär)	*Ursus arctos arctos* **old droppings
8	Red Fox (Rotfuchs)	*Vulpes vulpes* **heard barking

Other Taxa		
	Amphibians and Reptiles	
9	Common Wall Lizard	*Podarcis muralis*
10	Olm	*Proteus anguinus* ** in a tank in the cave
11	Marsh Frog	*Rana ridibunda*
	Other Invertebrates (In Engligh and German)	
12	Chabrier's Marbled Bush-Cricket (Grüne Strauchschrecke)	*Eupholidoptera chabrieri*
13	Common Darter (Große Heidelibelle)	*Sympetrum striolatum*

Photo Gallery

Nanos Peak © Neil S

© Lajos Nemeth

Predjama Castle © Michael B

Smoky Scalloped Oak © Neil S

Southern Brindled Green © Neil S

© Lajos Nemeth

© Lajos Nemeth

Eastern Eggar © Neil S

Autumn Emperor © Martine G

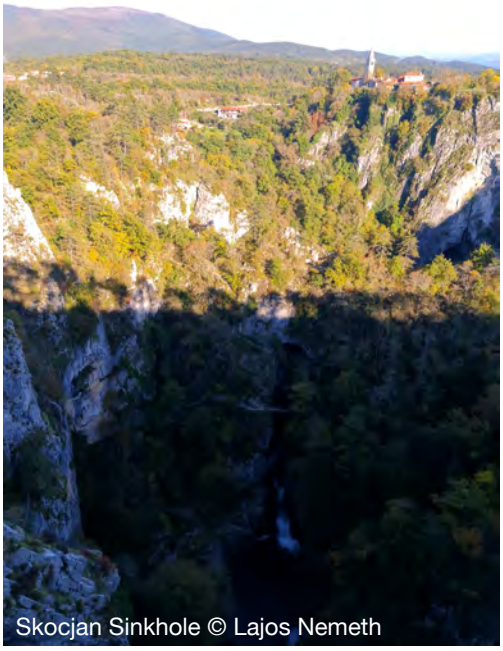
© Lajos Nemeth

The Malachite © Martine G

© Lajos Nemeth

Secovlje Saltpans © Lajos Nemeth

Double-spot Brocade © Neil S



Skocjan Sinkhole © Lajos Nemeth

Flame Brocade © Lajos Nemeth