



January 2011

British Wild Boar Organisation

www.britishwildboar.org.uk



‘Interesting happenings occurring with Britain’s free-living wild boar’

Dear All,

Welcome to January 2011’s newsletter, with further updates on what has been happening with Britain’s wild boar populations, and what may happen in the future.



Wild boar return home after a hard day’s graft in the fields
(photo courtesy of AF <http://www.severnwyellamatrekking.co.uk/>)



Wild boar dumped in Somerset?

More 'spotted' wild boar spotted in Britain

A French connection

Only in America

Hunters dying out

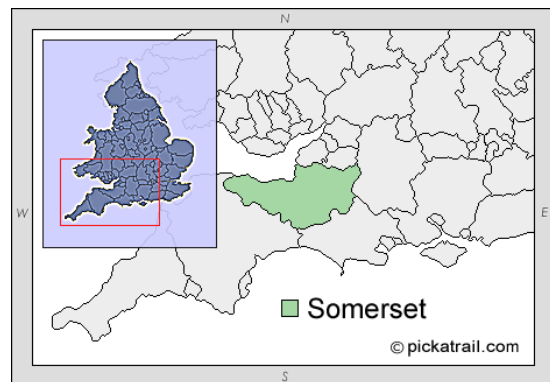
Get orff moy land!

Highland Boar

Wild boar dumped in Somerset?

Towards the end of last year, we received this email:

“We have just seen seven wild boar on our farm track in Somerset. We believe there to be six sows and one boar. There has been no known reportings of wild boar in the area before.”



And it was soon followed by a couple more from the same area, but different people. For example,

“Hi - I've just seen 13 wild boar (adults and young) trotting by in the field just outside my shed. Our neighbour reported seeing 6 wild boar on her track last weekend; we thought she'd just gone mad. We live about half a mile away from woodland surrounded by farms”.

Photos soon followed (reproduced here with permission of Greg Stevens):

“Just thought you might appreciate some photos taken of our new friends enjoying themselves in the snow behind our house. Today there was 13 of them in the group.”





So, where have these animals suddenly come from?

For so many animals to suddenly appear in an area where they have not been seen before is highly unusual, and you don't have to be Sherlock Holmes to deduce they must be a recent escape, or someone has deliberately put them there. Because the animals appear quite tame it suggests they have been reared in captivity and have only recently been released/escaped - wild boar are a favourite animal for the hunting fraternity to shoot at, and free-living wild boar soon learn that it is best to stay in cover during the day and to only come into the open to forage during the night.



As there are no wild boar farms in the area that locals are aware of, is it most likely that these animals were deliberately dumped, similar to the situation that occurred with the founding fathers of the Forest of Dean population? It is possible - individual wild boar, particularly males, can travel for many miles, but groups of wild boar do not. There are several thousand pounds worth of wild boar stock in the photographs, and the animals had been legitimately lost through an escape, you would expect enquiries to be made about getting them back!

The problem with (now illegal) deliberate releases is that the released animals may not be pure bred wild boar, but wild boar x domestic pig crosses. However, looking at the photos we have been sent, these animals do have the appearance of pure wild boar.

What will become of the animals is uncertain. In the past, wild boar that are so active in daylight fall easy prey to the hunting fraternity or irate farmers, so the chances of the group surviving intact are slim. However, some are likely to survive, further adding to the growing population in Britain. Striped piglets may well be seen around March.



Indubitably.



More 'spotted' wild boar spotted in Britain

In the previous newsletter (Nov 2010) we reported on the first spotted wild boar alleged to be free-living in Britain that we are aware of.

Since then, we were directed to a shooting forum where other spotted wild boar had been photographed, albeit after it had been shot.



Photo reproduced with permission of Terry Walker

Naturally, the chap who shot the animal was at the receiving end of some sharp wit (complete with emoticons) from fellow forum members:

- biggest darn Dalmatian I ever did see 🐾



- Gloucester old spot? 🇩🇪🇩🇪
- you'd better inform the farmer you shot one of his livestock
- should have gone to spec savers, you shot a bloody Friesian cow mate 😊🇩🇪🇩🇪
- if you give me a minute I could tan the skin as Cruella De Ville is bound to want it for her coat 🇩🇪🇩🇪

Gallows humour aside, the serious point to make concerns wild boar management practice, which is exemplified in this post on the same forum: “After quite a few years on the boar that was only the third black and white one I have ever seen.... and I make a point of shooting them on site to prevent them passing on their genes.”

When read in conjunction with another email we received concerning the pale (leucistic) wild boar that frequent East Sussex (reported on in the March 2010 newsletter):

“In the stealth camera images we have a sounder of 6 boar that come in and feed very regularly but we then started seeing a much lighter coloured boar sometimes on its own ,which we decided to take out of the gene pool.”



A leucistic boar removed from the gene pool
(photo courtesy of SB)

Interestingly, it appears that early attempts at wild boar management are concentrating on shooting animals that look different from what we perceive wild boar should look like.



Just to recap on the wild boar colour variations we are aware of occurring in Britain to-date:

Spotted wild boar: occur in Dorset

Leucistic wild boar: occur on the East Sussex/Kent border and in North Devon

(The North Devon leucistic wild boar actually originate from the East Sussex/Kent population – but that is a story for another day)

And just to show that leucistic colour variations do occur amongst others of our creatures great and small:



Canada goose



Fallow deer

(photos from: <http://www.wildlifeextra.com/index.html>)

A French connection

The BBC recently carried an interesting article about [wild boar in France](#). The relevance for Britain is that what happens in France involving their well established wild boar populations



may one day be mirrored in Britain, so it pays to keep an eye on what Monsieur Frenchman* is up to. The abbreviated article is shown below:

*Legal disclaimer: please note that the cartoon to the left is a caricature, and is reproduced solely for purposes of levity and to break up the text. It does not imply that all Frenchmen are badly dressed, wine-sodden, arrogant eejits, who hate the English. Other nationalities are available for humiliation - our own comedians make jokes about the British being terrible cooks and terrible romantics, and we in turn make jokes about the Italians being disorganised and over dramatic, and the Germans being over-organised. Additional legal opinion can be obtained from Jeremy Clarkson (Top Gear), Stephen Fry (QI), Sarah Kennedy (formerly Radio 2), and Robert Kilroy-Silk (formerly BBC 1), to name but a few.



French hunters urged to declare war on the boar

French farmers and forestry experts are at a loss to explain a dramatic rise in the numbers of wild boar, apparently linked to increased fertility among the female animals. Last winter, hunters across the country killed a record 560,000 boar - 10 times more than they were shooting 30 years ago.

But the population is easily replacing itself, and now stands at well over a million. The problem is not just that the animals cause severe damage to crops and meadowland. They are also beginning to encroach on areas inhabited by humans. Omnivorous, adaptable and highly mobile, wild boar have been increasingly spotted in town streets and gardens in recent years.

In 2009, they were responsible for nearly 21,000 road accidents across the country. Neighbouring countries including Germany and Italy reported similar problems. Now it is up to the hunters to keep the wild boar population under control.

To curb their numbers, the government recently enacted a **National Wild Boar Control Plan**. This authorises the hunting of boar all year round, in suburban zones as well as the countryside, and at night as well as in the daytime. Previously hunting for boar was seasonal, as for other game.

"The legislative tools are all there. Now it is up to the hunters to keep the wild boar population under control," said Philippe Jaeger, a country-sports journalist from Alsace in eastern France.

So the French, as do the British, can now blast away at the wild boar anytime, anyplace. The inevitable opposition has been voiced, by way of an online petition set up under the name of The Wild Boar Protection Group (WBPG), linked to a chap in..., no not France, but Minneapolis in America:



<http://www.thepetitionsite.com/2/stop-the-boar-killings/>

The blurb on the petition site reads:



“We at the WBPG have just been alerted to an alarming declaration made by the French government and the newly enacted National Wild Boar Control Plan. The plan calls for year-round hunting of these furry friends, without regard for the abandoned families and piglets as a result of this senseless hunting.

We urge your support in pressuring the French government to instead pursue avenues of reconciliation without resorting to increased killing. We are prepared to arrange a meeting between French leaders and the Head Boar, which we are sure will be fruitful in addressing both parties needs for coexistence.

Please think about your families and how much it means to have the freedom to live in your land without fear being hunted year round, and support this important cause!

Samuel A Monstone
Director, Wild Boar Protection Group

...a meeting between French leaders and the Head Boar – hah, hilarious!

Only in America

While on the subject of wild boar, controversy and crazy Americans, we came across this incredible article **Webcam Shotgun Hunting Setup Spotted in Georgia Woods**, confirming rumours that in America you could shoot wild boar from your arm chair whilst chomping on super-size fries and double cheese burgers to-go.

“This fall, while working on a Georgia Power Company right-of-way in South Georgia, a power company employee found a bank of shotguns that was aimed directly into a wild boar feeding area, and **fully connected to the Internet**. After taking a few pictures, the employee called the Georgia Wildlife Resources Division, who, in turn, called the Office of Homeland Security. In a November 19th bulletin, the Georgia Information Sharing & Analysis Center stated, "Three shotguns were set up on a platform and linked to a Web-accessible camera system that allows the guns to be fired via an Internet connection." Apparently, another cluster of shotguns (again, three of them) was found sitting on the other side of the food plot.

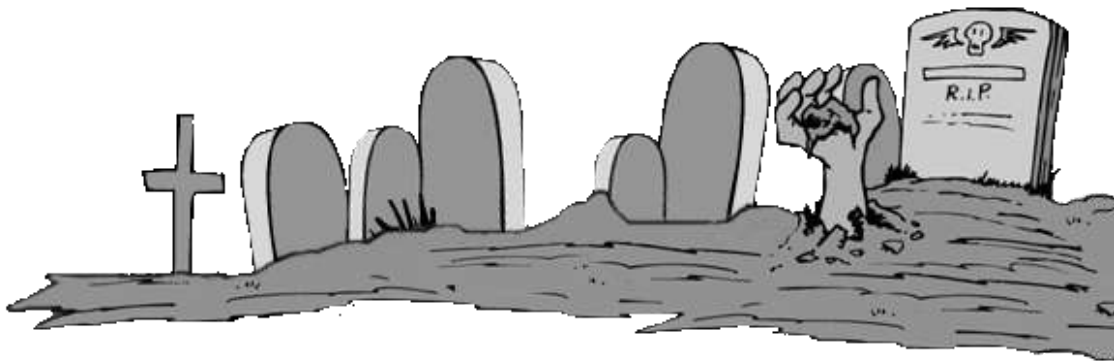




The shotguns, all manufactured by Benelli, were taken down before the Wildlife Resources Division could revisit the site. Cyber-hunting has been the object of speculation over the past several years, but, at present, is illegal in many states (Georgia being among them). And, seeing as cyber-hunting's disgustingness affords hunters and animal rights advocates the rare occasion to agree with one another, we don't see public opinion changing anytime soon."

How bizarre!

Hunters dying out



On the subject of bizarre types of hunting, it appears the times they are a changing. According to the recent article [Wild boar population soars in Europe](#), as wild boar numbers [in France] increase, the numbers of hunters shooting boar are declining. But the French have *le solution*, as the article reports:

One boar stumbled into the rifle sights of an elderly retiree named Christian Brand. Despite his age, Brand brought the 50-pounder down with one shot. Brand, a former cardiologist, is typical of French hunters today. He wouldn't give his age. But he was most certainly a senior citizen. He said French hunters are growing old like him, and few are coming to take their place.

"Younger men or women do not want to hunt because it takes a lot of time," Brand said. "It's an outdoor thing. It's also expensive to hunt. When you have less money you have less money to hunt."



It's actually the hunters who pay. Nearly a century ago, they made a deal with farmers. To get the farmers to stop competing with them as hunters, the hunters agreed to pay the damages the boar cause to crops.

But now France is desperate to find some way to train up a new generation of hunters.

The effort starts in Geudertheim, south of Strasbourg, at a one of a kind shooting range for hunters. Here, instead of aiming at your typical paper targets, would-be hunters fire live rounds at huge, projected cartoon animals.

For older kids, there are videos of real boar moving in the wild. In one, for example, three large shaggy males hurry through a snowy wood.

The man behind this shooting range, or Cyne t'ir, is Gerard Lang. He's also the president of the local hunting federation. Lang says French kids today can name all the animals on the African plain, but know nothing about animals at home.

He says this shooting hall has hosted a thousand kids in its first year. "When kids leave here," he says, "they are no longer against the hunt. We can't hope to make new hunters out of all of them, but at least they aren't anti-hunting."

It all boils down to money

There is [debate reportedly raging](#) in the US state of Michigan over their increasing wild boar population - are they too destructive to farming interests or an important sporting tourist draw that will boost rural economies?

The report notes that:

"In the wild, the huge, hairy beasts tear up farm fields and habitat and carry diseases that threaten the state's \$300 million commercial pork industry, thus environmentalists and pork producers are pushing to ban the animals from Michigan.

But 'sport swine' are gold for private game ranch owners who have built their businesses on boar hunts, and want to be allowed to continue to breed and hunt them on their own lands.

However, environmental groups and pork producers have seen the troubles feral swine have caused in other states, and hope to stop the problem here before it gets worse.



The debate over wild boars revolves around money: Does the contribution of sport swine to Michigan's economy outweigh the risks associated with their escape and spread in the wild?"

And the verdict: [Feral pigs are declared an invasive species by Michigan officials](#) "The advice of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment is to shoot the pigs on sight.....basically, our policy is shoot first and ask questions later." The environmentalists (and pork producers) argument was therefore preferred over the game ranches.

Get orff moy land!

On a par with Michigan, whether wild boar in a locality drain or generate money is an argument that may be debated more fully in Britain soon, in light of the government's announcement it was considering selling off the public's forests to the private sector, which tends to be driven more by the need to show a profit.



Latter-day Levellers?

To a potential purchaser of woodland, whether a charity organisation or maverick individual, monetary implications will be at the forefront of the decision, and the impact of having wild boar in the wood will be of relevance.



If the sell-off goes ahead I wonder if eco-tourism, in the form of wild boar watches, would be implemented somewhere by some forward thinking, risk-taking, trust or charity, as a way of generating money. I have my doubts. More likely the cry of exterminate! exterminate! as the boars' presence is perceived to be a threat to some cute-eyed, button-nosed small mammal, or delicate and aesthetically pleasing plant.



I can't help but think that if dormouse numbers in a woodland, for example, were being reduced by wild boar, then there were too many dormouse there in the first place. Similarly, if plants we call 'weeds' are returning to rooted areas of the broad-leaved woodland instead of, for example, orchids, then the weeds are the plants that should be there, and not the orchids. However, dormouse and orchids generate membership fees, wild boar and weeds do not.

Highland Boar

Finally, wild boar continue to increase across Scotland where, the *'amazing range of landscapes, from the gentle rolling hills of Dumfries and Galloway to the breathtaking peaks of the Cairngorms, and from the rugged coastlines of the north east to the sub-tropical gardens of Wester Ross* (according to the Scottish Tourist Board), are now shared with several populations of wild boar!

"Not a brilliant photo, but one snatched just as at least half a dozen wild boar turned tail and ran. We came across them whilst cycling on 25/8/10 on a forestry track in Inverness-shire. There were about three adults and lots of smaller ones - though they were all a very dark black in colour".



(photo courtesy of SS)

The end

As always, opinions and ideas most welcome. Please email comment@britishwildboar.org.uk
Do please circulate this newsletter to any other persons or parties who may also have an interest in wild boar.

Do also feel free to contribute to our [Facebook pages](#)  and for the very latest updates, follow us on [twitter](#) 

Kindest regards

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Primary objective of www.britishwildboar.org.uk: Raise public awareness, and stimulate interest and understanding about Britain's free-living wild boar populations.

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