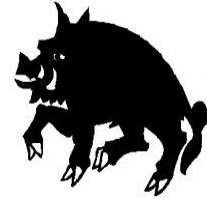




June 2011

British Wild Boar Organisation

www.britishwildboar.org.uk



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

Dear All,

Welcome to June 2011’s newsletter, with further updates on what has been happening with Britain’s wild boar populations and, from glancing at populations the world over, what may happen in the future.



A Forest of Dean sow

Ben Locke www.benlockephotography.co.uk



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Wild boar cause the closure of a bridleway in Somerset

Fascinating story to begin with as a group of free-living wild boar in Somerset cause such concern the authorities close a bridleway. Reported in This is Somerset, the headline reads [Residents take up arms to hunt 'dangerous' wild boar in Somerset](#). The article explains how:



“A one-mile stretch of Somerset countryside has been closed after walkers and horses were scared by a pack of wild animals.

It has prompted armed residents to go out into the countryside to shoot the fierce looking animals, with several of the beasts already being killed. Mystery



Somerset wild boar



surrounds how many of them are roaming nearby fields and woodland, but local residents have reported being confronted by groups as large as nine on pathways and even in front gardens.

This week Somerset County Council kept its urgent closure of a popular bridleway in force and continued investigating the animals, which are controlled by the Dangerous Animals Act, with licensing bosses from South Somerset District Council. A spokesman for the county council, which manages bridleways, said: ‘An emergency 21-day highway closure was issued due to wild boar. We will open the bridleway once it has been deemed safe to do so.’

The secretary of the Mendip Bridleways and Byways Association, Ginnie Jones, raised serious concerns for the welfare of horses and riders this week, and pledged that her group would do all it could to get the area reopened. She has been contacted by numerous shocked users of the area who have been confronted by wild boar.

One call she took was from a woman who had allegedly seen a lorry releasing large numbers of boar into a woodland.

Mrs Jones said: ‘We are very concerned that horses will panic badly if they are confronted by boar. The bridleway has been closed, and we are taking advice from Defra and Natural England in the hope of rectifying the problem and getting the bridleway reopened.’



..allegedly a lorry was seen releasing large numbers of boar into woodland

The article is a good example of how many different organisations are drawn into management issues surrounding wild boar. Somerset County Council , South Somerset District Council, Mendip Bridleways and Byways Association, Defra and Natural England all get a mention.





As always, the readers' comments section following the article highlight the differing opinions people have about wild boar. The first comment pulled no punches:

- “Do people not ride in France, Germany, Spain or every single other country that has free-roaming populations of native wild boars?

All EU member states have a legal obligation to protect threatened native species, and to bring extinct native species back where possible. Otters, red kites, peregrine falcons, great bustards and white tailed sea eagles are all making a comeback, thank God, some with our help and some without. Now wild boar too are returning after a 300 year absence. We should be excited and grateful. European beavers next, I hope.

Residents may need to be **a little less cowardly** and have a little more imagination.”

The ‘coward’ theme caught on, and became the nom-de-plume *de rigueur*. Excerpts from some of the comments following the above are shown below:



From ‘Local Coward’

- I have to defend strongly the allegation about the local residents having a lack of imagination. We are all enjoying wild boar on the menu and have been thinking up numerous ways in which we can enjoy them. Wild boar sausages, burgers, joints with rosemary and thyme..... Any further ideas for how to enjoy them in this way would be gratefully received.

And from ‘Another Local Coward’, who also reiterates the important point that horses can be spooked by wild boar.

- I both ride and walk the local bridleways and I don't have a problem with 'wild' boar but my horse does, horses are well known for having a fear of pigs. So imagine my surprise one early summer morning whilst riding and I come across a few 'wild' boar on the bridleway. Then on my return down the lane after quite a hairy ride on an unsettled horse I encounter another, this one turned and trotted off but by this time my horse was very upset and nothing was going to calm him. A quick message to Local Coward, apparently locally shot 'wild' boar was selling very well at the local farmers market. Use your imagination and try to guess what I had for supper!



If the wild boar were dumped from out of the back of a lorry, that was breaking the law. However, if the authorities are trying to track down the perpetrators and get a result in court, they will have their work cut out on that one.

Fell off the back of a lorry?

Whilst on the subject of lorries and animals, we received the following interesting information and photograph of a piglet on the South Downs:



Photo: Alfie Goodland

“On the 27th of April my son and I saw and photographed a wild boar piglet on the Downs very near Brighton. Not an obvious place for it to be - no woodland for a few miles and lots of dog walkers around. We saw only the one piglet, but neighbours have seen a whole family in and around north east Brighton.

It did seem fairly unconcerned by our presence though - we could get within fifteen feet or so, which makes me think it is used to some kind of human presence. Best, Phil Goodland”

The local paper, The Argus, took the approach that the animal may have been dumped, and ran the following story under the headline [Farm animals abandoned on South Downs](#):



“Farm animals are being dumped on the South Downs because their owners cannot afford to keep them. Animal rescue workers have reported a growing amount of livestock abandoned there, including flocks of turkeys, chickens and peacocks in the last year. Charities say they are facing extra problems because of the difficulty in tracking down owners. A boar piglet was spotted on the Downs near Brighton this week. The young boar was snapped foraging Woodingdean, less than a quarter of a mile away from homes. Wild boar became extinct in Britain around the end of the 13th century but have made a comeback mainly because of escapes from farms and abattoirs”.

On a par with the Somerset boar, the tame demeanor of the piglet suggest a dump rather than a spread, but this is only speculation.

Wild boar piglets - not too cute to shoot?



Cute piglet (Ben Locke www.benlockephotography.co.uk)

gamekeeper had the dilemma about what to do with a sow and her piglets that were in the vicinity of his boss’s pheasant rearing pens. As stressful scenarios go, this is on a par with Amy Winehouse eyeing up your drinks cabinet shortly before you planned to entertain several important guests.

In the last newsletter we reported on the controversial subject matter of shooting sows with dependent piglets to reduce wild boar population numbers. To shed further light on this subject, we paste in comments below from a forum where a



Not so cute Amy Winehouse

Firstly a disclaimer (as we inadvertently upset someone the last time we attempted this scenario with wild boar coat colours): We highlight such a topic simply to show real-life scenarios that are occurring in the UK with wild boar management issues. We do not judge anyone’s game management ideas, abilities, or practices. We simply reproduce anonymously the gist of a forum conversation to potentially benefit wild boar management practices.



Dilemma:

I run a small shoot and recently bought an automatic camera suspecting one wild boar close by, but to my surprise saw a sow with umpteen piglets! The problem is I have got pheasants coming soon which need feed pellets, and I bet she will like them! Has anybody got any ideas how to keep her off my pens? I don't want to shoot her yet but may have no choice if she lets my birds out!

'Helpful' suggestions posted:

“A separate feed station well away from the pens might work, just kept topped up and left undisturbed and not too drastic a method to start off with?”

“The only thing that you can do is to put up a high seat and feed her up till a full moon, then shoot her in the head when she is in the open and wait for the little ones to return and give them the good news. Do not shoot a little one first as she will only come back when it is very dark and eat all your poults/maize etc. It is not easy you must be dedicated to sort them out.”

“I wouldn't shoot the sow as the youngsters will have no leader and spread out, possibly doing a lot more damage”

“DON'T shoot the sow. Shoot a young one and she will take them off somewhere safer. Shooting a sow with dependant young is about the most stupid thing you can do in boar management.”



“With strategic feeding and proper control you can have your pheasant shoot and a healthy boar population. If the pen has an electric wire around it it's no hard thing to set a couple of strands at the right distance to keep the boar out of the pen. For all you keepers with drum feeders refilling them every day and standing them upright after the boar have rolled them 20 plus meters will give you something to really moan about!”



“Some other methods for keeping wild boar out of your pheasant pens are a working radio set on intervals, spreading human hair around, hanging dirty socks and specially made spray deterrent, or a gas gun you use for pigeons”

“The worst thing you can do is shoot the lead sow. When you shoot mum, the piglets will have no leadership and will spread in groups around the area, creating havoc everywhere”



Outcome: “My boss says my boar has to be gone before the birds go in 2nd week in July”

...so that’s bad news for the sow, the piglets, and Amy Winehouse.

And if you are thinking of installing an electric fence, go easy on the current as the following [news clip](#) from Sri Lanka exemplifies!

“A man was killed on the spot after he touched a highly electrified fence deep inside the village of Kuchaveli in the Trincomalee district, police said today. Police identified the victim as Ranasinghe Amsar, 22, a resident from the same village. Police have found out that a farmer had electrified the fence in order to keep wild animals at bay, particularly wild boar. Kuchaveli police are conducting further investigations, while the farmer has been taken in for questioning.”

Effect of hunting on wild boar birthdays

A scientific study recently published in the journal ‘Evolution’ and titled [High Hunting Pressure Selects for Earlier Birth Date: Wild Boar as a Case Study](#) studied the impact that hunting has on a population of wild boar living within a forest in rest in north eastern France. Between 1981 and 2004 boar were captured, recorded, released and recaptured, creating a long term profile of how many boar existed of what sex, age and weight. In analysing the data, the researchers found that high hunting pressure changed the boars’ birthdays.



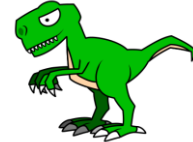
The wild boar are reportedly born all year, but the most common birth time is in mid April. When more hunting occurred, boar started giving birth earlier in the year than when less



hunting took place. So the boar responded to the hunt by bringing forward their birthdays, by an average of 12 days.

The suggested reason for this shift was to enable early-born boar to have a good chance of growing quickly, and reaching a size that enabled them to produce offspring of their own, before they fell to a hunter. Boar born later had a 50% chance of not even making it through the rest of the year, and dying before they could reproduce.

The study is a nice example of how animals can adapt their behaviour to ensure the survival of the species. "Nature will find a way", as Jeff Goldblum said in Jurassic Park.



Pigs have 'evolved to love mud'

More scientific studies to make the popular press include an article on how [pigs have evolved to love mud](#) published in the journal Applied Animal Behaviour Science. Reported by BBC on-line Earth News, the article reports that a researcher in the Netherlands has looked at wallowing behaviour in animals to find out more about what motivates pigs to luxuriate in sludge. The article reads:

"It is already well accepted that pigs use wallows to keep cool. The animals do not have normal sweat glands, so they are unable, otherwise, to regulate their body temperature.



The scientist who carried out the study, Dr Bracke, trawled the scientific literature for evidence of what motivates other animals to carry out similar behaviours. He examined closely related "wallowers", including hippos, which spend their time in water to keep cool and other hoofed animals, such as deer, who roll on the ground in order to scent mark, which has an important role in attracting a mate. That analysis has led Dr Bracke to propose that mud wallowing, like rolling, could play a role in reproduction in pigs. But more fundamentally, Dr Bracke suggests the behaviour could have evolved in pigs' most ancient relatives.

'We all evolved from fish, so it could be that this motivation to be in water could be something that was preserved in animals that are able to do so.' For many animals, this



would be too dangerous, because watering holes are ideal places for predators to ambush their prey.

‘But pigs, like many carnivores, are relatively large animals with enlarged canine teeth, so they would be better able to fend off an attack.’ So rather than pigs needing to cool down in mud because they do not have [functional] sweat glands, Dr Bracke thinks that they ‘did not evolve functional sweat glands like other ungulates because they liked wallowing so much’.

‘Pigs are genetically related to particularly water-loving animals such as hippos and whales,’ Dr Bracke said. He explained: ‘It seems to me that this preference to be in shallow water could have been a turning point in the evolution of whales from land-dwelling mammals.’ He concludes that the desire to wallow is probably hardwired and rewarding in itself. If so, wallowing could be an important element of a good life in pigs,’ said Dr Bracke”.

That may be so. However, it appears that the good life for wild boar also involves days out at the beach, complete with a tickle behind the ears!





Urban legend – wild boar destroys car

Here is the first (and only that we are aware of) urban legend concerning wild boar:

A chap driving back from an unsuccessful shooting trip hit a wild boar in the road in his car. Thinking that would nicely fill up his freezer he dragged the carcass into the back of his car. Unfortunately the boar was not dead just stunned, and a mile down the road he managed to get out just in time with one of his guns as the boar went absolutely berserk destroying the car to get out. The only option was to shoot up the car to kill the boar!

The boar below wouldn't even fit in a car in the first place!



http://www.my-hunt.com/trophy-room/NIKUC_BT/european-wild-boar/940/



Art project in the Dean involving wild boar

We bring news of an interesting art project shortly to take place in the Forest of Dean. The artist, Daniel Staincliffe, describes it as such:

[“Fauna Automata](#) is an on-going project where wooden mechanical sculpture (Automata) allow wild animals to trigger their own photographs. This process allows the elusive and often overlooked animals with which we share our urban and suburban space to be documented and revealed. The project has previously recorded images of squirrels, mice, magpies, sparrows, pigeons and most recently rats”



Photo: Daniel Staincliffe

Fauna automata is now turning its attention to wild boar. The publicity material reads:

[“Fauna Automata: British Wild Boar](#) is a new project by British artist Daniel Staincliffe exploring the recent reintroduction of wild boar in the UK.

An artist's residency in the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire UK, during July 2011, will see the artist produce a series of works, including video work, works on paper and wooden mechanical



Fauna Automata:
British Wild Boar



sculpture, all examining a once-native British species that has been absent from the landscape for over 300 years.

The project aims to raise public awareness of the presence of wild boar in the UK and to re-evaluate the species' cultural relevance, providing a new angle on the debate surrounding the future of the species in Britain.

A blog documenting the project and including the artist's research and progress, can be found at www.danielstaincliffe.com/WildBoar

We wish Daniel good luck with his project, and look forward to seeing the exhibit.

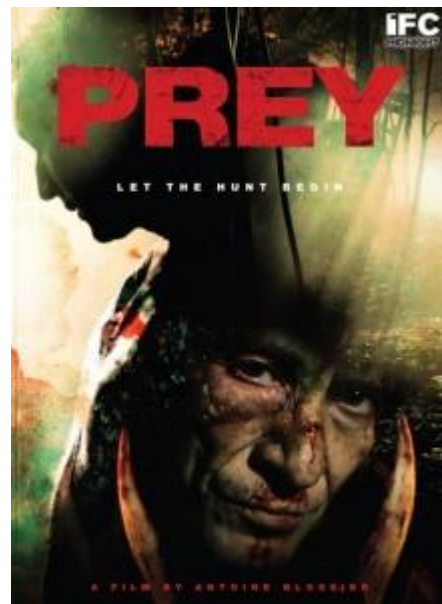
New wild boar creature-feature film

On the subject of art, a new creature-feature starring a wild boar has just been released, called Prey.

A [review](#) describes it as such:

“Not since *Razorback* has the tusked wild boar seen such a resurgence of notoriety on film.

When an older father and his adult son discover a group of dead deer at the edge of their farm, mangled in an electric fence, their natural suspicions are alerted to something odd at play. They pick through the cadavers and discover something bizarre – a rather large boar's tooth. By comparison to a trophy winning kill it looks to be the biggest boar they've encountered wandering about their woods, and having it roam loose in the woods isn't good for them or the farming community. The father gathers both his sons, and also brings his city dwelling son-in-law-to-be, for a hunt. Family squabbles play center stage while the men tramp through the woods only to discover a far greater disaster than their own interpersonal dramas. The land has been ecologically devastated and (surprise) it's the very same men who have done it through the use of a synthetic fertilizer that they have created and sell. The chemical hasn't just destroyed the woodlands, it's created mutated wild boars that have a lust for blood.





Prey is an effective and fun horror flick because it's simple, straight-forward and sticks to the tenants of basic horror film-making. It's not a movie that will hit anyone's "Best of 2011" list, but who cares? It makes for a perfectly entertaining and enjoyable way to pass an evening. I recommend it for a rental."

...and finally

Just to keep the wild boar in the Forest of Dean in line, the burger van at Cannop picnic site is selling wild boar sausages - the proprietor was understandably coy about where he sourced his meat!



Ben Locke www.benlockephotography.co.uk

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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