



March 2011

British Wild Boar Organisation

www.britishwildboar.org.uk



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

Dear All,

Welcome to March 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 big wild boar!

Photo credit: Cheye7211 (<http://i279.photobucket.com/albums/kk124/cheye7211/appalachian20.jpg>)



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The Forestry Commission and wild boar - a new era of glasnost

The Forestry Commission, with a new and applaudable attempt at public openness, have admitted they missed their cull target for wild boar in the Forest of Dean.

Following an interview with the Commission's deputy surveyor aired on BBC Radio Gloucestershire, an article on the same theme appeared in a local Gloucestershire rag, The Forester.

The full article can be viewed on this link '[Cull failing to control wild boar](#)', and the interesting points raised are bulleted below.



- It takes three rangers tasked with the cull up to four times as long to track down boar to shoot than deer
- There are at present 200 to 250 boar wandering the Dean, at a rough estimate.
- The Forestry will fall short of its target to kill 150 per year at the end of March [2011] by 35.
- Poaching was a big problem.

Noteworthy Forestry Commission quotes included:

"We are trying to control boar and get their numbers down to 90, but it's a constant battle because their numbers treble every year"





“Deer, sheep and squirrels do far more damage to trees, while boar encourage biodiversity by turning over the soil and allowing more wild flowers”

“But we are seeing the worst damage to the grassy verges yet”

The figures within the article may be true, misreported, misquoted, or just plain made up, but either way the following questions are still relevant:

1. On what basis are 90 wild boar (or any number for that matter) determined to be an appropriate population number?
2. On what evidence is the rough population figure of 200-250 wild boar based on?
3. How are cull figures being adjusted to compensate for the ‘big problem’ of poaching?

The answers of course, are that the numbers stated are purely arbitrary and not based on any evidence-based reasoning. The article however serves as a example of just how difficult it is for the Forestry Commission to manage wild boar populations. But, a relevant point about wild boar populations is rarely mentioned; namely that wild boar numbers are never stable from year to year, but fluctuate according to food supply and environmental conditions.



Rooted verges - indicative of population numbers?

Or, as the scientists put it, a wild boar population:

“... is controlled by a complex negative feedback system that acts with one (main) and two (secondary) years of delay (lags). The primary feedback might be explained by intraspecific competition for food resulting from fluctuations in mast production (acorns and beech), and the secondary feedback might be explained by the influence of weather conditions or the delay of a cohort to reach reproductive status.”

[Antonio Uzal and Carlos Nores \(2004\) Endogenous and Exogenous Constraints in the Population Changes of Wild Boar \(Sus scrofa LINNAEUS, 1758\). Galemvs, 16;83-98](#)

Got that? Good!



Interestingly, 'damage' is now seen by the Forestry Commission as the restoration of wild flowers, and damage to the grass kerbs seems to be the gauge of how many boar are in the forest – perhaps because rooted kerbs are the most visible sign to all and sundry of the boars' presence.

Wild boar recognised to contribute to diversity of plant life in a Forest

Following on from the Forestry Commission's recognition of wild boar as encouragers of plant diversity, research highlighting this issue recently appeared in the scientific press - [Large Forest Animals Contribute to Plant Diversity](#). The research analysed floral survey data carried out from 1976 to 2006 at a 'unique observation site in France due to its long-term monitoring data'.



Gypsy flower

The research highlighted that one particular plant, the gypsy flower *Cynoglossum officinale*, was not found during the first survey, but then appeared in 1981 and has since spread widely. One of the reasons for this spread was suggested to be because its seeds can latch on to the fur of animals thus ensuring dissemination.

The article notes that: "Wild boars are an excellent dispersal agent. Their fur comprises two strata, an undercoat of often curly hair and stiff bristles that can easily lock in and transport seeds over many kilometres, contrary to deer and roe deer with their shorter hair.

Wild boar behaviour is also a decisive factor in seed dispersal. When wallowing, their fur picks up seeds in the mud that are then transported to dryer ground when the boars scratch themselves, rub against trees or dig up the topsoil looking for food. After brushing boars killed by hunters, scientists counted a total of almost 40 different seed species. Thanks to its morphology and behaviour, the wild boar is a champion seed disperser."



Wallow



Rooting in the wrong place – Part 1

The Gypsy Flower article is further evidence that wild boar are ecologically important animals for woodlands, and would be expected to enhance biodiversity in woodlands in the UK, as opposed to reducing it. However, wild boar may be good for woodland, but they are not good for agriculture.

The pictures below highlight the mess wild boar can make to pasture land.



Photos reproduced with the permission of Apollo



...and to continue the theme of *big* wild boar, one of the suspected culprits is a large wild boar photographed in the vicinity by automatic camera:



photo reproduced with permission of Apollo

Interestingly, the large size of the boar is exemplified by comparison with the fallow deer taken from the exact same camera angle.



Photos reproduced with the permission of Apollo

So what does the future hold for this big beast? Probably not a great deal if it returns to the field, as it is likely to be shot. Reproduced below are selected quotes from a shooting forum that provide an



insight into the thought processes that result in the culling of such a fine beast. The hunter's vernacular has been slightly edited for clarity:

"At the risk of sounding heretical, but why would you want to shoot it? I would guess it is not the best eating, and I would guess that it is fine breeding stock, and I would guess that there are a greater number of smaller, more tasty, beasts available?"

"Its a case of the damage has to stop. We use bait points to keep it minimal in one area or corner of a field. He won't be shot as a trophy or as a tasty beast but when shot he will be eaten and not wasted. The ground is the priority for the landowners"

"He [the farmer] has that one field and is being forced to fence it in six weeks. We only enquired there a week ago and if we had done so sooner, when I first spotted the ground, we might have saved him a load of damage. We have now picked up next door which is damaged too but the wild boar will visit once the other field is fenced"



Another whopper!

<http://www.bz-berlin.de/bezirk/zehlendorf/jaeger-im-dauereinsatz-article378476.html>

So the big boar will be shot to prevent agricultural damage. However, he may yet have a future because he didn't get that big by being careless about his personal safety. A further quote from the thread gives an idea why:



“Oh he’s not daft boys. We were out last Friday and he was inside the tree line. After half an hour waiting he disappeared. We fed a small area that night and left and he was out again on Saturday night into Sunday morning. So we fed up again on the Monday and went up on Wednesday for 5 hours and he didn’t show. We looked at the camera pictures when I got in and he had been there the night before!”

And that typifies why wild boar control can be so difficult - culling wild boar, as the Forestry Commission have discovered, is a very time consuming process involving an awful lot of waiting around. Furthermore, wild boar are not hampered by inclement weather, the need for a firearms certificate, waiting several weeks for the Police Firearms Officer to return the certificate after having it amended for wild boar, forking out for the cost of a rifle, telescopic sights, ammunition, gun cabinet, trendy Realtree camo gear, obtaining landowners permission, providing references to prove you are not a certified lunatic, finding a vantage point that allows a safe shot, fear of losing your license through shooting a cat/cow/courting couple by mistake, having to go to work in the morning, needing to spend time with the kids, trying to keep the romance alive with the missus/hubby, and so on. And then there’s more waiting around because the boar, somewhat inconsiderately, decides not to show.

All this talk of waiting around reminds me that years ago I caught a 30lb plus mirror carp after several weeks fishing a known big carp hotspot. It was a monster and reeling it in was incredibly exciting. Flashes of gold lit the water as it surfaced, then an immense bow wave formed as it tore off down the lake again, serenaded by a screaming reel . I have never once fished for carp since, never wanted to, been-there-done-that, and I don’t want to have to do all that waiting around again. My carp-fever had subsided - I wonder if it is the same for people with pig-fever?



Incidentally, monster carp today are ten-a-penny, grown fat on high protein baits (boilies) catapulted into the water by the bucket full. Perhaps the same will happen to the wild boar from gorging on all the commercial pig nuts and maize put down by the hunters?



Rooting in the wrong place – Part 2

Spectacularly poor form was shown recently by a group of wild boar in Berlin, Germany, who had the audacity to root up and displace headstones in a cemetery for fallen British soldiers.



Photos from [Boulevard Baden](#) and [T-online](#)



An article in the German press titled [Wild boars destroy UK soldiers' cemetery](#) describes how:

The British Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemetery in the city's Charlottenburg district, usually characterized by immaculate landscaping, now looks like a ploughed field. Little remains of the closely cropped English lawn, and unearthed gravestones are tumbled about the grounds, which are the final resting place of British Commonwealth aircrew and prisoners of war who died in the Berlin area during both world wars.



The wild hogs already damaged some of the grounds last year, but when gardeners informed the city's wildlife control hunters, they were informed that it is illegal to shoot guns in cemeteries. "It's only authorized in an emergency". But Berlin wildlife officials plan to target the boars outside the cemetery, guessing that the porcine pillagers reside in the nearby Grunewald forest.

According to forester Marc Franusch, there are some 8,000 boars living in the Berlin area, with numbers increasing by some 300 each year. Around 1,500 are shot each year, he estimated. But the wild boars venture into the city more often than ever before, attracted by a "comfortable life and a richly filled plate".



The War Graves Commission Cemetery is one of two in Berlin. Some 3,576 Commonwealth soldiers are buried inside.

Of course, in the comments section below the article some wag has written *'German Swine!'*

To balance the levity, it is important to point out that the sacrifice these soldiers made to ensure our freedom today is not taken for granted nor disrespected. As such we are pleased to add this link to the [Help for Heroes](http://www.helpforheroes.org.uk) website.



Kill your speed

On the subject of emotive photographs, here are two from a road traffic accident in Germany to remind us of why we need to slow down on the roads - it is not a wild boar in the coffin.





The reason for the reminder follows an email received to the website from a colleague in Gloucestershire:

“Went through the Forest of Dean at 4am this morning to get to the airport, and had to stop twice to let two separate sounders cross the road”.



Wild boar on the continent

Quiz time – boar or badger rooting!

Returning to rooting, is all rooting attributable to wild boar? Recently we received to the website the following email and accompanying pictures:

“I have a question and some pictures that I took in the autumn. I was wondering if the signs are of wild boar? The signs are usually made in autumn or spring and always in the same place in this circular fashion. I thought it might be a badger, but after seeing a BBC program, it looks more like wild pigs?”



What do you think?



To us, this looks like badger rooting - the damage does not look severe enough for wild boar, particularly in the close up shots, so highly unlikely to be wild boar. The culprits are badgers.

And just for fun, who do you think caused these three rooted areas – boar or badger?



1



2



3

Answers at the end of the newsletter



Trichinella Testing In UK Wild Boar



The UK's Food Standards Agency has recently released interesting information concerning trichinella testing of wild boar in the UK. Trichinosis is a disease caused by a small parasitic worm and people can become infected by eating raw, undercooked or processed meat from wild boar that contains the larvae of the worm.

The blurb reads "This leaflet provides guidance for hunters on Trichinella testing procedures for feral wild boar carcasses. The information only covers Trichinella in feral wild boar shot by hunters for private consumption or for sale in local retail shops."

The leaflet can be accessed on this link:

<http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/trichinellatestingwildboar.pdf>



And just in case apathy kicks in, a timely reminder of what an unpleasant and potentially fatal disease trichinellosis can be, the following article recently appeared in an on-line veterinary site:

[Pig worm disease Trichinellosis affects six people in Spain](#)

In the North of Spain, six people have been infected with trichinellosis. One of the people died.

The people – from 52 to 58 years old – have been contaminated by eating meat of a wild boar. The boar was shot by themselves. The meat is under investigation.



Trichinellosis is a disease that comes from eating raw or undercooked pork or wild game that is infected with the larvae of a worm called Trichinella. The disease is also called trichinosis,

The initial symptoms of the disease are abdominal discomfort, nausea, diarrhoea, vomiting, fatigue and fever. Next usually come headaches, fevers, chills, cough, eye swelling, aching joint muscle pains, itchy skin, diarrhoea, or constipation. With heavy infection, patients may experience difficulty coordinating movements and have heart and breathing problems. In severe cases, death can occur.



Fortunately there is no trichinella in the UK at present, but vigilance is needed to keep it that way. However, wild boar are apt to carry a variety of unpleasant worms and parasites due to their consumption of quantities of soil when rooting up the earth combined with a liking for garbage, as the following photos from Germany exemplify:



<http://www.bild.de/BILD/regional/berlin/aktuell/2010/07/20/rollstuhlfahrer-angegriffen/badesee-jetzt-drehen-die-wildschweine-voellig-durch.html>



Modern day heraldry?



Days of
yore



Today



Tomorrow?





First piglets of the year

And finally, we just received from [Ben Locke](#) photos of some of the first piglets of the year, with mum close by, in the Forest of Dean:



ben locke
PHOTOGRAPHY





Quiz time answers – boar or badger rooting!

All three were badger rooting! How many did you get right?

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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