



September 2011

British Wild Boar Organisation

www.britishwildboar.org.uk



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

Dear All,

Welcome to Septembers 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.



Wild boar doing a spot of gardening at a house on the Swiss French border near Chamonix

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Legal disclaimer: None of the information contained in this news letter has been obtained through hacking into private phone calls, hiring private detectives, or bribing people in authority.

Wild boar not bad for biodiversity in Britain's woods

First out of the blocks is an article that appeared on the Wildlife Extra website highlighting the beneficial effect of wild boar on woodland biodiversity: [Wild boar not bad for biodiversity in Britain's woods](#). The interest lies in the fact that this is one of the few home-grown scientific studies investigating the effect wild boar are having on the diversity of our woodlands. Initial data suggest the woodlands surveyed are not suffering ecologically at all. Wild boar are a former native species so this result was probably to be expected, but if you are a fan of the boar it is always good to have some evidence.





The article is reproduced below, however, it does not cite any references to the source information, but it may originate from a digital reprint of an article titled [Boar, Bluebells And Beetles](#) from The Royal Forestry Society's Quarterly Journal of Forestry July 2011 FC report, which in itself is an interesting read.

Britain's bluebells and beetles are standing up to wild boar

Britain's beloved bluebell woods appear to be standing up well to the wild boar that escaped from farms and have been breeding here for the past 20 years, new research has found.

Extinct in 13th century

Native populations of wild boar became extinct in the UK during the 13th century but during the last two decades several small, isolated, breeding populations have established from animals which escaped following the start of commercial farming. Often regarded as a pest elsewhere, its effects in Britain have been little studied and because its current distribution is so restricted, it is not yet clear whether its presence should be welcomed, tolerated or prevented.

Dr Ralph Harmer of Forest Research studied the impact of wild boar on UK woodland plants and invertebrates. Working in woods near Rye, East Sussex, which are home to the UK's oldest wild boar population, he identified 12 sites with varying amounts of rooting. By surveying the woodland at the height of the bluebell flowering season and using a specially-designed "armoured" pitfall trap capable of withstanding the wild boar to collect invertebrates at each site, he was able to assess the impact of rooting on the woodland's beetles and bluebells.



According to Dr Harmer: "The most obvious sign of boar in these woodlands is soil disturbance caused by rooting. During spring many of these woods are carpeted in blue and white by luxuriant displays of bluebells and wood anemone and the potential effect of boar on bluebells has raised concerns."



33 species of beetle

His findings should, however, help allay these fears. Some 67,000 invertebrates - including 33 species of ground beetle - were identified from the pitfall traps, which were emptied every two weeks between April and August. Although the mix of beetle species varied between sites, rooting had no adverse effect on either the number of species found or the total number of beetles living in each wood.



There were large differences in the abundance of bluebells and the amount of rooting between woods, and overall there was generally more rooting activity where there were more bluebells. However, analyses found that boar do not strongly target rooting activity at patches of bluebells.

"There was no apparent adverse effect of rooting on either the ground beetle community or the other groups of ground dwelling invertebrates. Overall results suggest that if boar populations and rooting activity remain similar to those of the last 20 years then ground dwelling invertebrates may be largely unaffected and whilst there may be a reduction in the amount of flowering, bluebells are not unduly threatened in the short-term," he says.

Forest of Dean boar raise their media profile – several times

The wild boar in the Forest of Dean have been the subject of several media articles of late, and below is the gist of an article recently published by the Daily Mail:

['Ferocious' boars who roam the Forest of Dean transformed into lovable piggies who will eat out of tourists' hands](#)

By [Luke Salkeld](#) Last updated at 8:21 AM on 4th August 2011

As wild boar go, this lot don't seem very wild at all. Hundreds now live in the Forest of Dean, where several are happy to take food from visitors' hands and even accept a stroke on the





snout. Rangers at the Gloucestershire beauty spot warn that animal lovers should beware because boar can be aggressive and cause serious injury.

But David Slater, who took these photographs, insists that the creatures pose no threat. 'There have been no attacks on humans in the UK to date, and this year not even a dog has been reported injured by boar,' he said. 'Compare this with how many people are injured by or fear dogs, and fear of wild boar is completely out of proportion.' The boar community has flourished in the forest after up to 350 escaped from a farm a decade ago and others were illegally dumped by the side of a road. Experts say all the surviving animals and their descendants are now wild, and to avoid the population doubling every year the animals are subject to a carefully managed cull.

Another visitor said: 'Some of the tamer ones seem unconcerned by humans approaching them, and seem as curious about us as we are about them. I have seen people feeding them by hand, and they seem to like the attention.'



'They look as comfortable as pets, probably because lots were raised on farms and got used to people. However, you never know what could happen with an animal this size.'

The forest's chief wildlife ranger Ian Harvey, says staying well clear of them will reduce the chance of wild boar losing their natural instinct for caution around people.

Mr Slater admits boar can be aggressive to protect their young, just like cows or deer, but claims the cull is going too far with even suckling mothers and piglets being shot.

However Mt Harvey responded: 'We are not aiming to eradicate wild boar in the Forest of Dean. Our management objective is to reduce the potential for adverse interaction between the boar and people it is not to eradicate the boar.'

There are just 40 to 50 boar left in the core of the Forest, according to Mr Slater



Mr Slater claims that on one occasion he ‘befriended’ a female boar which was giving birth, and allowed him to stay and photograph her.

He said her behaviour and acceptance of him proves the boars do not need to be feared because they are not a threat to well-meaning people. He said: ‘While I was with this suckling female I felt we had a real psychic connection.’

‘I got as close as three metres away with my wide angle lens, but she always gave me the look to say please keep away when she needed to.



‘It goes to show that even with her young this boar was no threat to me or my well-behaved dogs because I was no threat to her. If people respect them then there is not a problem.’

The comments section following the article always hold a fascination, and following this article the intriguing comment below appeared (edited for brevity):

“Speaking as the person pictured above stroking the boar, why has this article been altered since I first read it?”



- Where are the comments of Ian Harvey?
- Where has the figure of 350 released boar come from? (20-40 was originally quoted by FC and Police, Only 120 were believed resident 2 yrs ago [Official FC figure])
- Why the change - lies/scaremongering?

I have spent many hours photographing boar in the forest as an ex Forest resident, they are largely shy critters if left alone. With so many humans using the forest encounters are inevitable, but not necessarily dangerous. Free roaming dogs and erratic human behaviour are usually to blame for problems. I do believe the boar need to be controlled, but hope the FC will do it humanely and legally. It is my belief that both Humans and Boar



can co-habit with a better educating of us humans and better information produced by the Forestry about how to behave when encountering boar. I object to the FC making financial gain from the boar”

- Brian Davis, Hereford, Herefordshire, 04/8/2011

Digging deeper it appeared the earlier version of the article was amended and given a slightly different slant – the original article is reproduced below for the sake of completeness. The tone of the original article is more in favour of the boar. A posting to our facebook page acknowledged as such: “[An unusually pro-wildlife article for the Daily Mail.](#)”

The interesting question is: Is this simply a journalist fine-tuning an article following receipt of further information (which would not be unusual except the article had already been released!), or is there something more sinister going on and the journalist has been got-at by the politically correct brigade!?! As usual, we cast no aspersions.

[Taming of the boars: ‘Ferocious’ creatures who roam the Forest of Dean transformed into lovable piggies who will eat out of tourists’ hands](#)

August 3rd, 2011

By Daily Mail Reporter (Luke Salkeld)

Last updated at 3:37 PM on 3rd August 2011

These are the heart-warming images that show a never seen side to Britain’s ‘ferocious’ wild boar as they are stroked and even eat out of people’s hands.

Photographer David Slater spent years getting up close and personal with the ‘beasts’ deemed so dangerous to people by the authorities they must be gunned down.

But Mr Slater claims the boar – once extinct from the UK – could be heading that way again because of poor animal management, fear propoganda, and money.





Studying his local population of the pigs in the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire, the wildlife photographer has captured the beauty of an animal so misunderstood by mankind.

Far from being ferocious Mr Slater's images show an adult wild boar being stroked by local people and even the animal being friendly with their pet dogs.



In another shot the adorably cute piglets – with their light striped coats – can be seen enjoying the forest with their protective mother.

Mr Slater admits boar can be aggressive to protect their young, just like cows or deer. On average there are two deaths and 60 injuries to people by cattle each year in the UK. But he claims a campaign to kill the animals is going too far with even suckling mothers and piglets being shot. Whole families are also being wiped out together. He said: 'There have been no attacks on humans in the UK to date, and this year not even a dog has been reported injured by boar 'Compare this to how many people are injured by or fear dogs, fear of wild boar is completely out of proportion.

'This is an animal welfare issue and will result in orphans dying of starvation or cold without their mother. 'This situation has already happened, with one rescued baby ending up on a private farm. 'Intensive hunting like this promotes extra breeding, a sort of population rebound after a sudden crash.

'I think this is all about money as the Forestry Commission have several lucrative meat contracts for boar meat with game dealers here in the Forest of Dean, and that is why they are being excessively killed, over 100 per year.' 'Maybe 40 to 50 boar are now left in the core of the Forest, but they are nearly all juveniles.'



Mr Slater said on one occasion he befriended a female boar who was giving birth, and amazingly she allowed him to stay and photograph her. He said her behaviour and acceptance of him proves the boars do not need to be feared because they are not a threat to well-meaning people. He said: 'While I was with this suckling female I felt we had a real psychic connection. Maybe she called for my help? even my dogs kept her company for hours at a time each day.'



'I got as close as three metres away with my wide angle lens, but she always gave me the look to say please keep away when she needed to. 'I think this could be the first time anyone has got photographs of a wild boar at a farrowing nest in the wild in the UK. 'It goes to show that even with her young this boar was no threat to me or my well-behaved dogs because I was no threat to her. If people respect them then there is not a problem.'

'This is a story of a large native mammal in the UK, provably beneficial to our woodlands and loved by many, being given another chance of survival and even as an attraction for wildlife tourism, but being ruined by out-of-touch authorities.' Chief wildlife officer Ian Harvey, from the Forestry Commission for the Forest of Dean denied boar were being over culled in the woodland.

He said: 'We do not cull piglets, neither sows with dependent young at hoof or the dependent young are culled. 'There may be specific instances where orphaned young, or the young of sows known to have been killed or seriously injured in, for example road traffic accidents have to be shot for welfare reasons. 'We do not cull animals to satisfy a meat contract, this (meat) is as a by-product of the cull and not a driver of the cull. 'The culling operation is very much a net cost operation, with venison sales simply off-setting that cost. 'With regards your comparison of boar to cows there is a key difference, cows are a large domestic animal and boar are a wild animal.'





‘Both have the potential to kill or seriously injure someone, at the current time we have no instances of anyone being killed by a boar, but we do have evidence of domestic dogs being killed.’

‘We are not aiming to eradicate wild boar in the Forest of Dean. Our management objective is to reduce the potential for adverse interaction between the boar and people it is not to eradicate the boar.’

So, did you spot the difference in tone between the two articles? The interest lies not so much in establishing a conspiracy theory, but in the way that the wild boar are reported in the popular press – as we all know, the media *changes* rather than *reflects* popular opinion – or does it?

Open Season

The increasing media profile of the wild boar in the Forest of Dean continued unabated with this article from a regular contributor to the local newspaper ‘The Forest of Dean and Wye Valley Review’. Rob



Ward lets of some steam below in an article titled Open Season:



The sow in question. I [Rob Ward] took this photograph of her and her piglets on March 24, 2011.

“WILD boar will always be a hot topic while they are here in the Forest of Dean and this is why I need to highlight them again. Whether you love them or hate them they are living



creatures and nobody with a heart would want to see an animal suffer, but that is exactly what is happening in our wonderful forest.

During the early part of 2011 I worked very hard with a friend, world famous wildlife photographer and conservationist Andy Rouse, and together, deep in the forest, we tracked and monitored a sounder (group) of wild boars for the most ambitious conservation visual media initiative ever staged in Britain. It's an initiative called 2020 Vision and all details of the project can be found online. [\[http://www.2020v.org/\]](http://www.2020v.org/)

After finding the boar, the next stage was for Andy to photograph them in the wild, in their natural habitat.

All was going well and it was great to see eight young piglets emerge with their proud mum in early March.

However, on March 31, while out checking on them, I found all eight piglets wandering, or rather running around the forest alone! Alarm bells started to ring right away as I have never seen a sow leave her piglets on their own in the past and as they were still on their own four hours later, I knew that the sow had to be dead.



I photographed this sounder the previous week and the sow was healthy, indicating that she had not succumbed to an illness or disease. Poachers may have taken her, but as the location was deep in the forest I am not so sure. I had to tell Andy later that day and it was then that I realised how close he had become to this sounder. He was emotionally gutted and for the first time in my life I felt ashamed of the way our wildlife was being treated in the Forest of Dean.



At present there is no closed season on the culling of wild boar and in my personal opinion, this is morally wrong as the piglets are dependent on their mum's milk for around three months. Other feeding sows have been known to take over feeding responsibilities if another sow, which has dependent piglets, dies. But this did not happen with the little ones we were monitoring and slowly they disappeared.



Basically when these little ones lost their mum it was no different to a human mother taking away her baby's milk within the first month of its life! Whoever took out this sow is aware of what they did and they also understood the implications of what will have happened to the piglets. In short they were doomed to suffer a death from malnutrition and starvation.

The welfare of the wild boar in the Forest of Dean needs to be addressed immediately.

Predominantly, the majority of wild boar births happen in the spring, so the implementation of a closed season would have to be from late February to early June or until the piglets have lost their dependency on their mum's milk. However, the sows have a gestation period of approximately four months, so I feel the culling of pregnant sows is also morally wrong.

I understand that the wild boar has no natural predators in the UK today and like our deer they require management, but what if there were little fawns running around out there, left on their own to die? Would that be acceptable, would it? I think not and as the wild boars are tight family units with strong bonds, they deserve to be treated in the same way as our deer, which have the luxury of a closed season!

To date (seven years) no human has been attacked by a wild boar in the UK and this is something that needs to be realised by the powers to be, which are calling for their eradication. Not the best start for the Forest of Dean's involvement in Britain's most ambitious conservation project.

A close season for wild boar

The call for a close season for wild boar has also appeared in a possibly more unexpected arena. Below is posted a .pdf of an article from field sports journalist Simon Barr that appeared in a recent edition of The Shooting Times and Country Magazine:

SHOOTING TIMES
& COUNTRY MAGAZINE



Have your say...

A close season for boar

Simon K. Barr, sporting journalist and wild boar enthusiast

As a shooter that manages 1,000 acres of boar territory, I feel compelled to comment on Lewis Potter's feature entitled, *This little piggy* (*Shooting Times*, 13 July).

Wild boar were a native species until they were hunted to extinction 300 years ago. Today's population was created out of escapes and releases from farms over the past 25 years. They are classified by DEFRA as an invasive non-native species. This affords them the same legal status as grey squirrels, which means wild boar of both sexes can be shot all year round — and they are.

If something is law, it does not necessarily make it morally right. I believe shooting boar during the spring and summer months is not in the slightest bit sporting. From experience, I know how difficult it is to tell the sexes apart at night (even with a lamp as Lewis did in his article) so the chances of shooting a sow with a dependent litter are incredibly high. We would not dream of shooting deer with dependants, so why risk shooting boar at this time of year?

It is inconsistent that DEFRA singles out wild boar from the UK's large mammals not to have a close season. Other non-native species that have escaped from farms, such as sika and Chinese water deer, have been given legal protection so why not boar? A year round open season conveys a message of eradication, not sustainable management. DEFRA has been incredibly elusive on the subject. In 2008, the Department published its highly anticipated *Wild Boar Action Plan* which



simply left wild boar management to the discretion of landowners. Frustrated industry commentators branded the document ambiguous and pointed out that it failed to provide any legislation, leaving the species to be legally treated like vermin. Shouldn't boar be given the same level of welfare rights as deer?

Yes, wild boar damage farmland but if managed properly rather than with a lamp, diversionary feeding is incredibly effective. On my ground, the minute I see damage, I feed in nearby woodland and the rooting instantly stops. It is that simple. Like with deer, your principal aim should be to manage the damage.

Lewis makes reference to the "luxury" of no legal restrictions on calibre for shooting boar. Although not law, the Home Office recommends a minimum calibre of .270 (this can be found in *Guidance to the Police — Firearms Law 2002*). Having shot many boar, I would even suggest .270 is too small and a .30 calibre would be the minimum to despatch larger animals at night effectively. This is also backed up by the Deer Initiative's best practice boar guides that are available online.

If you are going to shoot boar and want it to be sporting, think about the time of year and by what means you will go about it. Doing it with a lamp from a car window is no different from vermin control, but shooting from a high seat under a frosty moon will be one of the best hunting experiences you can have in the UK.

Have your say: if you have a view on a current news topic, send it, in no more than 500 words, to us at steditorial@ipcmedia.com.





Feral Wild Boar Management Plan Forest of Dean Period: 2011 to 2016

The previous articles about wild boar management were opinion pieces written by people who are very knowledgeable about wild boar and who are experts in their chosen arenas, whether it be photography, natural history or field sports. To get up to speed on the latest official (ie.



governmental) developments in the management of the Forest of Dean's wild boar, below is a link to the Forestry Commission's draft management plan for the Dean which makes for a comprehensive and interesting read. To access the document click [here](#)

New group formed - Friends of the wild boar

A new group has just formed calling themselves '[Friends of the Boar](#)'. The group state their aim is to see wild boar back in the UK.

"We want to see them managed properly without cruelty. We want more effort put into the understanding of wild boar, with an objective plan to educate the public how to live safely and peacefully alongside the wild boar. Presently, we don't believe this is happening. We believe the boar is persecuted and unfairly treated and the public are misled about the true character and socio-economic benefits that they bring to Britain."

A young toddler of one of the members of Friend of the Boar enjoys her natural heritage





More information about this group can be seen here: [‘Friends of the Boar’](#).

E-petition - The Provision of Seasonal Protection for Wild Boar in the UK



Several times we have highlighted the lack of a close season for the wild boar in Britain, so it was interesting to see an e-petition has been started by a chap called Paul Adkins:

“The Wild Boar (*Sus scrofa*) was a native species of the UK until extinction through loss of habitat and conflict with man. The wild boar has now though escapes and deliberate releases become free living in many areas of the UK such as the Forest of Dean where they have flourished. These are highly intelligent timid animals that are often misunderstood. This controversial species needs specific legislation to protect breeding females during the times of the year when they give birth and have dependent young who rely on the mother. Now hunted as a ‘game’ animal with commercial value this species deserves the same seasonal protection given to other game animals including deer, wildfowl and game birds to prevent suffering when females are shot and dependant young are left to starve to death. This petition seeks the provision of a closed season to protect breeding females and their young as is in place throughout Europe for this species.”

So, if you wish to have a say on the subject of wild boar in the UK not having the status of a closed season, the petition is on this link: [The Provision of Seasonal Protection for Wild Boar in the UK](#)

Art project in Forest of Dean snapped a wild boar

In a previous newsletter ([June 2011](#)) we reported on an art project from the Forest of Dean described by the artist, Daniel Staincliffe, as such:



“Fauna Automata is an on-going project where wooden mechanical sculpture (Automata) allow wild animals to trigger their own photographs.

It appears Daniel got a result as the following article reproduced from BBC News Gloucestershire on-line tells

[Forest of Dean wild boar caught on camera by artist](#)



An artist has captured a wild boar on film in the Forest of Dean by using trip wire-operated cameras. Daniel Staincliffe, who has moved into a tent in the forest for the project, set up 30 camouflaged cameras in an area boar are known to visit.

He was told about the location by the Forestry Commission which is equally keen to see the results of his project. His first photograph shows a boar setting off a trip wire with its snout. Boars have roamed wild in the Forest of Dean since 2004, when they were reintroduced following an absence of 700 years.

He said the cameras had been set up where there was evidence of boars visiting and wallowing in the mud.

"We've got a path here which we know has been used and there's some evidence of rooting as well," he said.

A cull was introduced in the forest last year after complaints of damage to gardens, danger to dog walkers and riders and boar-related road accidents.



And now for something completely different:

We have been made aware that a new clothing company has brought out an autumn range of wedding attire. The collection is to be premiered shortly and marketed under the 'Shotgun Wedding' label.



Poaching in the Dean

An interesting story appeared on-line in the This is Gloucestershire website, which we relate below:

"Inevitable" that boar poachers will shoot someone

A former councillor in the Forest of Dean said it is "inevitable" someone will soon be shot – as wild boar poaching is so rife. Alistair Fraser, a former district councillor, keeps four orphaned boar at his home Smallbrook Farm, near Woolaston, and is a staunch supporter of the breed.





He has pleaded with police to stamp out illegal poaching before someone gets hurt. And although he agrees that numbers of wild boar are spiralling out of control, he said they must be culled humanely. He said: "These poachers are bloodthirsty and they will shoot anything that moves. It's hard to know what's what at night. "It is inevitable that sooner or later someone will get shot."

Mr Fraser believes poachers are getting anything in the region of £400 for each boar they kill. He claims people are coming from as far away as the Welsh Valleys and has called for police to step up their efforts in bringing it to a halt. He said: "It is now a police matter. "There are some nasty people out there, and they need to be stopped. I've seen people with guns, and the bullets they use go a long way "I would urge anyone thinking of walking in the woods late at night to be careful."

Meanwhile, the Forestry Commission has recently bought new traps in its effort to cull 150 of the estimated 350 population in the Forest. Between April 1, 2010, and March 31, 2011, the Forestry Commission set a cull target of 150, based on a then estimated population at between 200 and 250 animals. The final cull came in at 122 animals.



Kevin Stannard, deputy surveyor of the Forestry Commission, said work is ongoing to control the numbers, but poaching must be stopped.

But he refuted the claim that people's safety is at risk. He said: "I certainly would not agree that it is 'inevitable' someone will be shot – despite the seriousness of the issue, I am confident that the true risk to the public is negligible." "We do liaise with the police over this matter, and we are confident that the police take the subject very seriously."

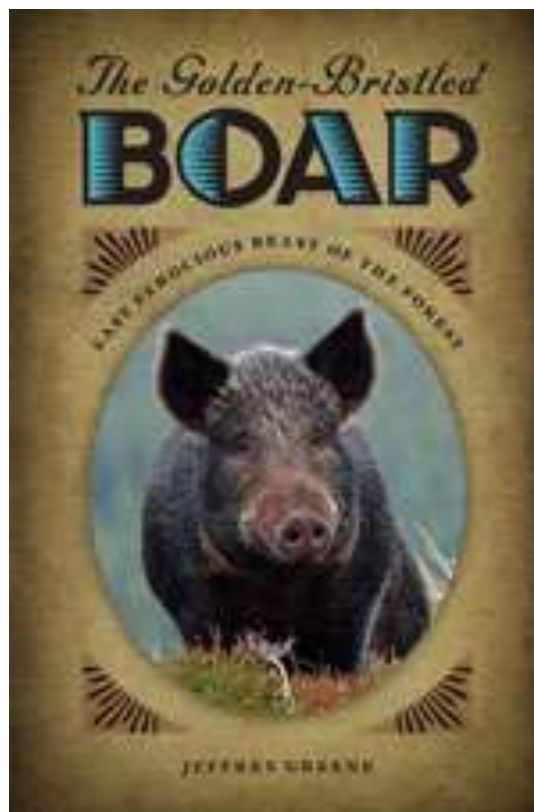
Wildlife officer Sergeant Simon Clemett said: "There is poaching that goes on, and we are working closely with the Forestry Commission to do all we can." "There is no reason for people to panic about this though."





New book out about wild boar!

Leaving these shores and crossing to France, a new book about wild boar has just been published: *The Golden-Bristled Boar* by prize-winning author Jeffrey Green. The publicity material is reprinted below, and I have to add that I was fortunate to be able to see this book at proof stage, and it is an absolutely cracking read, particularly for those of us who have a secret admiration for French culture. The Amazon link here for those thinking of xmas presents already: [The Golden-Bristled Boar](#). I highly recommend it!



...publicity material below



• "A truly fascinating, lucidly written, informative, entertaining, and valuable contribution to the growing canon of pig literature, or even of literature in general."

—William Hedgepeth, author of *The Hog Book*

• "The Golden-Bristled Boar is an elegant book that looks at the landscape and ecology of what would seem to be our most inelegant natural neighbor—the star of dark paintings and angry fables, as well as, by family connection, the food of colonial America.

Jeffrey Greene leads you deep in the forests of Burgundy—befriending hunters and biologists, and, along the way, bedazzling with stories of wild boar invasions throughout the swine-filled world. When you come out the other side, you are changed, not just in how you think about boars as a creature, but in how you think of them as the centerpiece of an ancient and wonderful country feast."—Robert Sullivan Jr., author of *Rats: Observations on*

The Golden-Bristled Boar Last Ferocious Beast of the Forest

Jeffrey Greene

192 pages, 6 x 9

25 b&w illustrations

Cloth 978-0-8139-3103-6 • \$22.95

April 2011

The wild boar appears to us as something straight out of a myth. But as Jeffrey Greene learned, these creatures are very real, living by night and, despite shrinking habitats and hordes of hunters, thriving on six continents.

Greene purchased an eighteenth-century presbytery in a region of ponds and forests in northern Burgundy between the Loire and Seine Rivers of France. He soon discovered he'd moved to one of the most densely populated boar areas in Europe. Following the gift of a side of boar from a neighbor, and a dramatic early-morning encounter with a boar-hunting party and its prey, Greene became fascinated with the animal and immersed himself in the legend and the reality of the wild boar.

Although it has no natural enemies, the boar is in constant conflict with humans. Most societies consider it a pest, not only wreaking havoc on crops and livestock, but destroying golf-course greens in search of worms, even creating a hazard for drivers (hogs on the roads cause over 14,000 car accidents a year in France). It has also been the object of highly ritualized hunts, dating back to classical times.

The animal's remarkable appearance—it can grow larger than a person, and the males sport prominent tusks, called "whettters" and "cutters"—has inspired artists for centuries; its depictions range from primitive masks to works of high art such as Pietro Tacca's *Porcellino* and paintings by Velázquez and Frans Snyders. The boar also plays a unique role in myth, appearing in the stories of Hercules and Adonis as well as in the folktale *Beauty and the Beast*.



the History and Habitat of the City's Most Unwanted Inhabitants

The author's search for the elusive animal takes him to Sardinia, Corsica, and Tuscany; he even casts an eye to the American South, where he explores the boar's feral-pig counterparts and descendents. He introduces us to a fascinating cast of experts, from museum curators and scientists to hunters and chefs (who share their recipes) to the inhabitants of chateaux who have lived in the same ancient countryside with generations of boars. They are all part of a journey filled with wonders and discoveries about these majestic animals the poet Robinson Jeffers called "beautiful monsters."

Jeffrey Greene is the author of French Spirits: A House, a Village, and a Love Affair with Burgundy and Water from Stone: The Story of Selah, Bamberger Ranch Preserve. A widely published poet, he is the recipient of the Samuel French Morse Poetry Prize and the Randall Jarrell Award in Poetry. He teaches at the American University of Paris.

Killer seaweed

Staying in France, a fascinating story developed about wild boar going to meet their maker after a stroll along the seafront went badly wrong. Wild boar are typically, and rather accurately, portrayed as being pretty much indestructible. However, they appear to have an Achilles heel, as the article below reported by [BBC on-line](#) highlights:





Wild boars dead amid algae on Brittany coast



More than 30 dead wild boars have been found on the coast of north-western France this month amid suspicion of algae poisoning, officials say. The carcasses, found in the water or on the shore, have led to fears about the risk from the algae to humans.

Three more boars were found on Wednesday near the mouth of the Gouessant estuary in Brittany, bringing the total to 31. A nearby beach, which is covered by piles of the algae, has been closed.

Some beaches in Brittany are regularly hit by the algae, but the problem appears to have worsened in recent years. Environmentalists and officials say it is a result of the nitrates in fertilisers used by the region's farmers.

In 2009 a horse-rider was rendered unconscious and his mount died after slipping on the algae, apparently after inhaling toxic gas released by the rotting seaweed.

'Not drowned'

Gilles Buet, a Brittany water official, said the reason for the boars' deaths was still unknown. "One of the theories we have is that the animals could have drunk water that could contain algae," Mr Buet told AFP news agency.

Local police official Philippe De Gestas said they were doing autopsies on some of the carcasses, as well as testing for hydrogen sulphide, a poisonous gas given off by the algae as they decompose. "They were not [otherwise] sick and they did not drown," he said. Tests on the water show a level of blue-green algae "above the alert level but below the danger level", local authorities said in a statement.

Thousands of tonnes have already been cleared from the coast this year



Is pepper spray effective against wild boar?

In contrast to the earlier bonhomie regarding wild boar in the Forest of Dean, for balance, we add that it must not be forgotten that wild boar, like many other animals that walk the earth, can at times be unpredictable and dangerous. We received two emails in quick succession that highlighted the fact and they were interesting because pepper-spray got mentioned in both. Neith referred to wild boar in Britain, but the sentiments are still relevant:

Firstly,

“I wonder if you could give me some advice please? Everyday I walk through an area that definitely has wild boar. Very often, at one particular spot, I hear a noise in the bushes of some animal moving, which I think might be a boar. Each time, I retreated, gave it some time and, I guess it, went away. How likely do you think it is it that it would attack?”

I'm a UK citizen, living in Korea where pepper spray is legal. Would this be a good defence in the worst case scenario if it were to attack me?”



Secondly,

“Would you be able to give any advice on how travellers should deal with wild boar in Romania if they encounter them? I suspect that they are more aggressive in Romania than here because hunting is quite common.”

Is pepper spray effective against wild boar?

And the answer to the question is pepper spray effective against wild boar – No!
...but please do email us if know something to the contrary!



And to remind us all up to show that occasionally wild boar do attack people (as, for example, do dogs [very frequently] and cows [very rarely]) below is an example of when it all went wrong for one gentlemen in India. Text based on a post to a forum about wildlife in Sri Lanka



<http://www.lakdasun.org/forum/index.php?topic=1090.0;wap2>

Incident Report - Wild Boar Attack (Sri Lanka)

Date: 18th December 2009

Time: 6.30 a.m. (The Sun had risen and the area was well lit up.)

Location: Bandarawela, Sri Lanka (10m away from quite a busy road. Fairly built up area. 1km from the town. Small garden with a few trees & bushes here and there.)

Incident: 72 year old man attacked and bitten by a wild boar. Unprovoked injury. Rather large bite wound in the abdomen area right of the navel. Severity of the wound has been reduced due to the fact that the individual was wearing a thick jersey of which the wild boar had bitten off a rather large part.

Treatment: First aid was administered at home. Trip to hospital. Anti-rabies (horse) serum was tested on the patient for which the patient showed signs of allergy. The only safe option was to administer a dose of anti-rabies (human) serum which is available only at the Anti-Rabies Unit, National Hospital, Colombo. Trip to Colombo on 18th night/19th morning. Visit to at the National Hospital. Anti-rabies (horse) serum re-tested and signs of allergy shown again. Anti-rabies (human) serum administered. EXTREAMLY painful (as per the patient). Return to Bandarawela.

Discussion: The place has a fair amount of vegetation, but, it's not a forest/jungle either. We do not have 'refuse' thrown about the place that would act as an open invitation for wild boar to visit us. We have spotted a couple of wild boar visiting our place on and off but these visits have always been at night time and the boar vanish with the slightest sound/noise that we make.



What made the boar hang around till 6.30 a.m.? I would expect a wild boar to return to its base at dawn or at least when human activity started to happen.

I have had encounters with wild boar before. They have always been in areas that have thicker vegetation than the place I live in. Anyway, I have never had any of such encounters been violent. The wild boar has always run away, never had I come across an incident of this nature. I do know that they attack when they are either injured or with their off-spring. We do not know if it was injured or what would have caused the fellow to attack?

The many informal discussions that took place after the incident (especially with medical staff at Diyatalawa & Colombo hospitals) has now convinced me that wild boar bites are now a common thing and the number of incidents that are reported keep increasing. In fact we were told that my father has been very lucky to have escaped with the severity of the injury he received.

Finally, I would like all those who walk about exploring the country to take something from this incident and be aware of the fact that wild animals including wild boar are very unpredictable and they do attack/bite and that the treatment is rather complicated and very painful. But, do not stop exploring. Thanks, Priyanjan.

When we get it wrong and other feedback



Many thanks to Simon Townsend emailing from a land-down under pointing out that what we referred to as a wild boar was in fact a collared peccary - our bad, no excuse for such poor attention to detail. Obviously we were distracted by something else in the picture. Simon writes:

Thank you for providing a most interesting publication with the British Wild Boar newsletter. However I must draw breath on your labelling as a Wild Boar what I suspect is actually a Collared Peccary on page 10 of the latest newsletter. As keeper at the Royal Melbourne Zoological Gardens as a younger man I was very familiar with this species. Considering this situation I think a closer





inspection of the photograph is in order. The other subject in the picture is clearly a Homo sapiens female of breeding age and from the northern sub species.

However, we are pleased to say that Feedback on the newsletter is generally very positive and encouraging. For example,

Thanks for a marvellous newsletter

I've been an avid follower of the BWB newsletter. There is nothing like it anywhere-- a very valuable resource.

Great newsletter, keep up the good work

I absolutely love reading your newsletter - thank you very much for keeping me on your mailing list.

But on occasion we have made the odd misjudgement or two, or caused a misunderstanding. So, while in the confessional, here are a few others we own up to:

"I was recently more than a little disappointed in the assumptions you had made regarding the reasons it was decided to take the spotted boar out of the gene pool. On your website you claim to be non-judgmental and simply report factually on all aspects of wild boar in the uk so I am surprised a private message to myself asking for more details was never received yet you openly posted your concerns on my boar management policy before you had done your [stated] fact checking."



"The article by the British Wild Boar Organisation is unfortunate in its tone and treatment of the subject matter. It seems strange that the British Wild Boar Association are happy to criticize our work but have not made contact with us in this regard."

Of course we learn from all the feedback and endeavour to get the appropriate tone and content right every time, but will still add the occasional tongue-in-cheek twinkle of mischief to stop us from becoming dull. However, we never aim to offend or mis-inform and we will take extra care in future editions.





Finally, at times I feel there is something missing from these newsletters and the increasing length would not be justified if there is no concurrent increase in interest or quality, so PLEASE, if there are any particular topics/aspects of wild boar you feel we should include, do tell us:

<mailto:comment@britishwildboar.org.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

Dr Martin Goulding

www.britishwildboar.org.uk

comment@britishwildboar.org.uk

mjgoulding@mjgoulding.freeserve.co.uk



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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