

Wild Boar Information Sheet



What are wild boar?

Wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) are the ancestors of our current farmyard pigs. They became extinct in Britain during the 17th century, mainly due to hunting and the destruction of forest habitat. In recent years and in some areas, wild boars have escaped from private farms/estates etc. and have returned to feed and breed in the wild. Their preferred habitat tends to be broad-leaved woodland and wild grassland. Male boar are usually solitary outside of the mating season, whilst females and their offspring tend to live in groups.

What do they look like?

Wild boars are pale grey to brown or black in colour. They have a thick hide with sparse bristles and some finer hairs. They also have a pair of sharp, continually growing tusks, which are larger in the male. Wild boars are much slimmer, tougher and more agile than the average farmyard pig. They can be up to two metres long and can weigh between 7 and 31 stone. Their life span is 15 - 20 years.

What do they eat?

Roots, fruits, nuts, fungi, insects, amphibians, reptiles, small mammals, birds, and carrion. Wild boar search for food mainly at dawn and dusk, rooting amongst the leaf litter and damp soil of open woodlands with its toughened snout. Boar have a keen sense of smell and will eat almost anything. Its main diet consists of plant material but it will happily gobble up any animals it can catch.

When do they breed?

During the autumn mating season, the male joins a herd of females and fights any male who challenges his position. Fighting boars use their tusks to slash at each other's shoulders. After mating, the boar leaves the herd, taking no part in rearing the young. After a gestation period of 3 ½ months, a litter of 3 - 12 piglets is born in the spring.

Are they dangerous?

Wild boar are usually timid and do not attack other animals and people. However, they can be very aggressive, especially females with young, or injured animals - especially when cornered or surprised. The male lowers its head, charges, and then slashes upward with his tusks. The female, whose tusks are not visible, charges with her head up, mouth wide, and bites. Such attacks are not often fatal to humans, but may result in severe trauma, dismemberment, or blood loss. Wild boar are included in the Dangerous Wild Animals Act (1976).

Vocalisations are very important, and wild boar are constantly grunting and chirruping to each other, and squeal when alarmed. A loud grunt is a warning.

What do I do if I see one?

Keep your distance and move slowly away. Do not approach or intimidate the boar in any way, especially if there are young present. Make a note of the approximate location, size and number of the animals and then report it to the Great Glen Way Ranger Service.

