

Wild Boar

Scientific classification	
Kingdom:	Animalia
Phylum:	Chordata
Class:	Mammalia
Order:	Artiodactyla
Family:	Suidae
Genus:	Sus
Species:	S. scrofa
Binomial name	Sus scrofa Linnaeus, 1758

The wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) or wild hog, often simply referred to as a boar, is a species of a pig in the biological family Suidae and the wild ancestor of the domestic pig. It is native across much of Central Europe, the Mediterranean Region (including North Africa's Atlas Mountains) and much of Asia as far south as Indonesia, and has been introduced elsewhere.

Although common in France, the wild boar became extinct in Great Britain and Ireland by the 17th century, but wild breeding populations have recently returned in some areas, particularly the Weald, following escapes from boar farms.

Name

The term boar is used to denote an adult male of certain species—including, confusingly, domestic pigs. However, for wild boar, it applies to the whole species, including, for instance, "sow wild boar" or "wild boar piglet".

Physical characteristics

The body of the wild boar is compact; the head is large, the legs relatively short. The fur consists of stiff bristles and usually finer fur. The colour usually varies from dark grey to black or brown, but there are great regional differences in colour; even whitish animals are known from central Asia. During winter the fur is much denser.

Adult boars average 120–180 cm in length and have a shoulder height of 90 cm. As a whole, their average weight is 50–90 kg kilograms (110–200 pounds), though boars show a great deal of weight variation within their geographical ranges. In central Italy their weight usually ranges from 80 to 100 kg; boars shot in Tuscany have been recorded to weigh 150 kg (331 lb). A French specimen shot in Negremont forest in Ardenne in 1999 weighed 227 kg (550 lb). Carpathian boars have been recorded to reach weights of 200 kg (441 lb), while Romanian and Russian boars can reach weights of 300 kg (661 lb). Generally speaking, native Eurasian boars follow the Bergmann's rule, with

smaller boars nearer the tropics and larger, smaller-eared boars in the North of their range.

The continuously growing tusks (the canine teeth) serve as weapons and tools. The lower tusks of an adult male measure about 20 cm (7.9 in) (from which seldom more than 10 cm (3.9 in) protrude out of the mouth), in exceptional cases even 30 cm (12 in). The upper tusks are bent upwards in males, and are regularly ground against the lower ones to produce sharp edges. In females they are smaller, and the upper tusks are only slightly bent upwards in older individuals.

Wild boar piglets are coloured differently from adults, being a soft[vague] brown with longitudinal darker stripes. The stripes fade by the time the piglet is about half-grown,[clarification needed] when the animal takes on the adult's grizzled grey or brown colour.

Litter size of wild boars may vary depending on their location. A study in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in the US reported a mean litter size of 3.3. A similar study on Santa Catalina Island, California reported a mean litter size of 5.[8] Larger litter sizes have been reported in Europe.[citation needed]

Behavior

Wild boars live in groups called sounders. Sounders typically contain around 20 animals, but groups of over 50 have been seen. In a typical sounder there are two or three sows and their offspring; adult males are not part of the sounder outside of a breeding cycle, two to three per year, and are usually found alone. Birth, called farrowing, usually occurs in a secluded area away from the sounder; a litter will typically contain 8–12 piglets.(p. 6)

The animals are usually crepuscular, foraging from dusk until dawn but with resting periods during both night and day.(p. 4–5, 8–9) They eat almost anything they come across, including grass, nuts, berries, carrion, roots, tubers, refuse, insects, small reptiles—even young deer and lambs.(p. 9–10)

Boars are the only hoofed animals known to dig burrows.

If surprised or cornered, a boar (and particularly a sow with her piglets) can and will defend itself and its young with intense vigor. 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.

Range

Reconstructed range

The wild boar was originally found in North Africa and much of Eurasia from the British Isles to Korea and the Sunda Islands. In the north it reached southern Scandinavia and southern Siberia. Within this range it was absent in extremely dry deserts and alpine zones.

A few centuries ago it was found in North Africa along the Nile valley up to Khartum and north of the Sahara. The reconstructed northern boundary of the range in Asia ran from Lake Ladoga (at 60°N) through the area of Novgorod and Moscow into the southern Ural, where it reached 52°N. From there the boundary passed Ishim and farther east the Irtysh at 56°N. In the eastern Baraba steppe (near Novosibirsk) the boundary turned steep south, encircled the Altai Mountains, and went again eastward including the Tannu-Ola Mountains and Lake Baikal. From here the boundary went slightly north of the Amur River eastward to its lower reaches at the China Sea. At Sachalin there are only fossil reports of wild boar. The southern boundaries in Europe and Asia were almost everywhere identical to the sea shores of these continents. In dry deserts and high mountain ranges, the wild boar is naturally absent. So it is absent in the dry regions of Mongolia from 44–46°N southward, in China westward of Sichuan and in India north of the Himalaya. In high altitudes of Pamir and Tien Shan they are also absent; however, at Tarim basin and on the lower slopes of the Tien Shan they do occur.

Present range

In recent centuries, the range of wild boar changed dramatically because of hunting by humans. They probably became extinct in Great Britain in the 13th century: certainly none remained in southern England by 1610, when King James I reintroduced them to Windsor Great Park. This attempt failed due to poaching, and later attempts met the same fate. By 1700 there were no wild boar remaining in Britain.

In Denmark the last boar was shot at the beginning of the 19th century, and in 1900 they were absent in Tunisia and Sudan and large areas of Germany, Austria and Italy. In Russia they were extinct in wide areas in the 1930s, and the northern boundary has shifted far to the south, especially in the parts to the west of the Altai Mountains.

By contrast, a strong and growing population of boar has remained in France, where they are hunted for food and sport, especially in the rural central and southern parts of that country. The situation is the same in Spain, where sounders of wild boars are not uncommon even near the suburbs of Madrid and Lleida.

By 1950 wild boar had once again reached their original northern boundary in many parts of their Asiatic range. By 1960 they reached Saint Petersburg and Moscow, and by 1975 they were to be found in Archangelsk and Astrakhan. In the 1970s they again occurred in Denmark and Sweden, where captive animals escaped and survive in the wild. (The wild boar population in Sweden was 80,000 in 2006 but is now estimated to be more than 100,000. In 2006 25,000 wild boar were killed by hunters in Sweden.) In the 1990s they migrated into Tuscany in Italy.

Wild boars, descended from domesticated pigs, are present in significant numbers in North Eastern Australia. Considered an exotic pest, they are

hunted for both sport and population control. They are aggressive and are known to be a vector for tuberculosis.

Status in Britain

Between their medieval extinction and the 1980s, when wild boar farming began, only a handful of captive wild boar, imported from the continent, were present in Britain. Because wild boar are included in the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976, certain legal requirements have to be met prior to setting up a farm. A licence to keep boar is required from the local council, who will appoint a specialist to inspect the premises and report back to the council. Requirements include secure accommodation and fencing, correct drainage, temperature, lighting, hygiene, ventilation and insurance. Occasional escapes of wild boar have occurred since the 1970s. Early escapes occurred from Wildlife Parks, but since the early 1990s more escapes have been from farms, the number of which has increased as the demand for wild boar meat has grown. By the 1990s, a breeding population was rumoured to have established in areas of Kent and East Sussex originating from escapes from boar farms as a result of damage to fences during the 1987 hurricane. In 1998, a MAFF (now DEFRA) study on wild boar living wild in Britain confirmed the presence of two populations of wild boar living in Britain, one in Kent and East Sussex and another in Dorset.[3] Populations of Wild Boar have however been confirmed in other areas such as Herefordshire and Gloucestershire.

The Herefordshire/Gloucestershire population, which is based in the Forest of Dean, originates from one escape of boar of Eastern European origin in 1997 from a farm near Weston under Penyard and another apparently deliberate release near Staunton in 2004 and together now form probably the largest single population in the UK with a total population well in excess of 200 with groups of over 30 having been seen and photographed in several different locations in the forest. Until 2007 the two populations were separate but the likelihood is that they will soon meet up if they have not already done so. There are recent reports of boar from this population being spotted on the Welsh side of the River Wye near Tintern. Two boar from the Forest of Dean population have qualified for Gold Medals under the Conseil International du Chasse (CIC) game trophy measurement system. The largest of these and the current UK record was shot near Ross on Wye in 2008 and scored 123.7 CIC points beating the previous record shot in the same area by 1.2 points. It had lower tusks of 23.9 cms and 23.1 cms in length and weighed about 240kgs.

Status in Germany

Recently, Germany has reported a surge in the wild boar population. This 320% growth in population during 2007—greater than in any other European country—has led to an increasing number of problems for Germany. Crops have been destroyed and dug up, pets and other animals killed, gardens, cemeteries, and graveyards have been trampled, and even the dead have been dug up. Ever more frequent attacks on humans and the risk of swine fever

have the German population concerned about the unprecedented population boom. Studies cite the number of piglets in a typical German wild boar litter is a potential feeder for the problem. According to one such study, "German wild boar litters have six to eight piglets on average, other countries usually only about four or five." [9]

Subspecies

Four subspecies group were recognized based on geographical information:

The Western Races:

- European Wild Boar *Sus scrofa scrofa*: The most common and most widespread subspecies, its original distribution ranges from France to European Russia. It has been introduced in Sweden, Norway, the USA and Canada.
- Iberian Wild Boar *Sus scrofa baeticus*: A small subspecies present in the Iberian Peninsula.
- Castillian Wild Boar *Sus scrofa castilianus*: Larger than *baeticus*, it inhabits northern Spain.
- Sardinian Wild Boar *Sus scrofa meridionalis*: A small subspecies present in Sardinia.
- Italian Wild Boar *Sus scrofa majori*: A subspecies smaller than *scrofa* with a higher and wider skull. It occurs in central and southern Italy. Since the 1950s, it has hybridized extensively with introduced *scrofa* populations.
- *Sus scrofa attila*: A very large subspecies ranging from Romania, Hungary, in Transylvania and in the Caucasus up to the Caspian Sea. It is thought that boars present in Ukraine, Asia Minor and Iran are part of this subspecies.
- Barbary Wild Boar *Sus scrofa algira*: Northern Africa
- *Sus scrofa lybica*: Middle East
- *Sus scrofa sennaarensis*: Extinct subspecies from Egypt and Sudan
- *Sus scrofa nigripes*: Central Asia

The Indian Races:

- Indian Wild Pig *Sus scrofa cristatus* (Indochina, India)
- *Sus scrofa affinis* (Southern India and Sri Lanka)
- *Sus scrofa davidi*

The Eastern Races:

- Manchurian Wild Boar *Sus scrofa ussuricus* (Manchuria)
- Japanese Wild Boar *Sus scrofa leucomystax* (Japan)
- Formosan Wild Boar *Sus scrofa taivanus* [10] (Taiwan)
- Ryuku Wild Boar *Sus scrofa riukiuanus* (Ryuku Islands, Japan)
- *Sus scrofa moupinensis* (Southern and Central China)
- Siberian Wild Boar *Sus scrofa sibiricus*: Siberia

The Indonesian Races:

- Banded pig *Sus scrofa vittatus* (Indonesia, might be a separate species)

The domestic pig is usually regarded as a further subspecies, *Sus scrofa domestica*—but sometimes as a separate species, *Sus domestica*. Different subspecies can usually be distinguished by the relative lengths and shapes of their lacrimal bones. *S. scrofa cristatus* and *S. scrofa vittatus* have shorter lacrimal bones than European subspecies. Spanish and French boar specimens have 36 chromosomes, as opposed to wild boar in the rest of Europe which possess 38, the same number as domestic pigs. Boars with 36 chromosomes have successfully mated with animals possessing 38, resulting in fertile offspring with 37 chromosomes.

Feral pigs

Domestic pigs quite readily become feral, and feral populations often revert to a similar appearance to wild boar; they can then be difficult to distinguish from natural or introduced true wild boar (with which they also readily interbreed). The characterization of populations as feral pig, escaped domestic pig or wild boar is usually decided by where the animals are encountered and what is known of their history. In New Zealand, for example, feral pigs are known as "Captain Cookers" from their supposed descent from liberations and gifts to Māori by explorer Captain James Cook in the 1770s. New Zealand feral pigs are also frequently known as "tuskers", due to their appearance.

One characteristic by which domestic and feral animals are differentiated is their coats. Feral animals almost always have thick, bristly coats ranging in colour from brown through grey to black. A prominent ridge of hair matching the spine is also common, giving rise to the name razorback in the southern United States, where they are common. The tail is usually long and straight. Feral animals tend also to have longer legs than domestic breeds and a longer and narrower head and snout.

A very large swine dubbed Hogzilla was shot in Georgia, USA in June 2004. Initially thought to be a hoax, the story became something of an internet sensation. National Geographic Explorer investigated the story, sending scientists into the field. After exhuming the animal and performing DNA testing, it was determined that Hogzilla was a hybrid of wild boar and domestic swine.

At the beginning of the 20th century, wild boar were introduced for hunting in the United States, where they interbred in parts with free roaming domestic pigs. In South America, New Guinea, New Zealand, Australia and other islands, wild boar have also been introduced by humans and have partially interbred with domestic pigs.

In South America, also during the early 20th century, free-ranging boars were introduced in Uruguay for hunting purposes and eventually crossed the border into Brazil sometime during the 1990s, quickly becoming an invasive species, licensed private hunting of both feral boars and hybrids (javaporcos) being

allowed from August 2005 on in the Southern Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul, although their presence as a pest had been already noticed by the press as early as 1994. Releases and escapes from unlicensed farms (established because of increased demand for boar meat as an alternative to pork), however, continued to bolster feral populations and by mid-2008 licensed hunts had to be expanded to the states of Santa Catarina and São Paulo.

Recently-established Brazilian boar populations are not to be confused with long established populations of feral domestic pigs (porcos monteiros), which have existed mainly in the Pantanal for more than a hundred years, along with native peccaries. The demographic dynamics of the interaction between feral pigs populations and those of the two native species of peccaries (Collared Peccary and White-lipped Peccary) is obscure and is being studied presently. It has been proposed that the existence of feral pigs could somewhat ease jaguar predation on peccary populations, as jaguars would show a preference for hunting pigs, when these are available.

As of 2008, the estimated population of 4 million feral hogs cause an estimated US\$800 million of property damage a year in the U.S.

Natural predators

Wild boar are a main food source for tigers in the regions where they coexist. Tigers typically follow boar groups, and pick off the weak or sick ones. Tigers have been noted to chase boars for longer distances than with other prey, though they will usually avoid tackling mature male boars. In many cases, boars have gored tigers to death in self defense.

Wolves are also major predators of boars in some areas. Wolves mostly feed on piglets, though adults have been recorded to be taken in Italy, the Iberian Peninsula and Russia. Wolves rarely attack boars head on, preferring to tear at their perineum, causing loss of coordination and massive blood loss. In some areas of the former Soviet Union, a single wolf pack can consume an average of 50–80 wild boars annually. In areas of Italy where the two animals are sympatric, the extent to which boars are preyed upon by wolves has led to them developing more aggressive behaviour toward both wolves and domestic dogs.

Striped hyenas occasionally feed on boars, though it has been suggested that only hyenas from the three larger subspecies present in Northwest Africa, the Middle East and India can successfully kill them.

Young piglets are important prey for several species, including large snakes, such as the reticulated python, large birds of prey and various wild felids. Adults, due to their size, strength and defensive aggression, are generally avoided as prey. However, they have been taken additionally by mature leopards; large bears (mainly brown bears); and mature crocodiles. All

predators of boars are opportunistic and would take piglets given the opportunity. Where introduced outside of their natural range, boars may be at the top of the food chain, but are also sometimes taken by predators similar to those in their native Eurasia.

Commercial use

The hair of the boar was often used for the production of the toothbrush until the invention of synthetic materials in the 1930s. The hair for the bristles usually came from the neck area of the boar. While such brushes were popular because the bristles were soft, this was not the best material for oral hygiene as the hairs were slow to dry and usually retained bacteria. Today's toothbrushes are made with plastic bristles.

Boar hair is used in the manufacture of boar-bristle hairbrushes, which are considered to be gentler on hair—and much more expensive—than common plastic-bristle hairbrushes. However, among shaving brushes, which are almost exclusively made with animal fibers, the cheaper models use boar bristles, while badger hair is used in much more expensive models.

Boar hair is used in the manufacture of paintbrushes, especially those used for oil painting. Boar bristle paintbrushes are stiff enough to spread thick paint well, and the naturally split or "flagged" tip of the untrimmed bristle helps hold more paint.

Despite claims that boar bristles have been used in the manufacture of premium dart boards for use with steel-tipped darts, these boards are, in fact, made of other materials and fibers—the finest ones from sisal rope.

In many countries, boar are farmed for their meat, and in countries such as France, for example, boar (sanglier) may often be found for sale in butcher shops or offered in restaurants (although the consumption of wild boar meat has been linked to transmission of Hepatitis E in Japan).

Mythology, religion, history and fiction

In Greek mythology, two boars are particularly well known. The Erymanthian Boar was hunted by Heracles as one of his Twelve Labours, and the Calydonian Boar was hunted in the Calydonian Hunt by dozens of other mythological heroes, including some of the Argonauts and the huntress Atalanta. Ares, the Greek god of war, had the ability to transform himself into a wild boar, and even gored his son to death in this form to prevent the young man from growing too attractive and stealing his wife.

In Celtic mythology the boar was sacred to the Gallic goddess Arduinna, and boar hunting features in several stories of Celtic and Irish mythology. One such story is that of how Fionn mac Cumhaill ("Finn McCool") lured his rival Diarmuid Ua Duibhne to his death—gored by a wild boar.

In the Asterix comic series set in Gaul, wild boar are the favourite food of Obelix whose immense appetite means that he can eat several roasted boar in a single sitting.

The Norse gods Freyr and Freyja both had boars. Freyr's boar was named Gullinbursti ("Golden Mane"), who was manufactured by the dwarf Sindri due to a bet between Sindri's brother Brokkr and Loki. The bristles in Gullinbursti's mane glowed in the dark to illuminate the way for his owner. Freya rode the boar Hildesvini (Battle Swine) when she was not using her cat-drawn chariot. According to the poem Hyndluljóð, Freyja concealed the identity of her protégé Óttar by turning him into a boar. In Norse mythology, the boar was generally associated with fertility.

In Persia (Iran) during the Sassanid Empire, boars were respected as fierce and brave creatures, and the adjective "Boraz (Goraz)" (meaning boar) was sometimes added to a person's name to show his bravery and courage. The famous Sassanid spahbod, Shahrbaraz, who conquered Egypt and the Levant, had his name derived Shahr(city) + Baraz(boar like/brave) meaning "Boar of the City".

In Hindu mythology, the third avatar of the Lord Vishnu was Varaha, a boar.

In Chinese horoscope the boar (sometimes also translated as pig), is one of the twelve animals of the zodiac, based on the legends about its creation, either involving Buddha or the Jade Emperor.[citation needed]

At least three Roman Legions are known to have had a boar as their emblems: Legio I Italica, Legio X Fretensis and Legio XX Valeria Victrix. X Fretensis was centrally involved in the First Jewish–Roman War, culminating with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish Temple in 70 AD. In addition, it was stationed in Roman-occupied Judea for centuries and was involved in numerous other acts of oppression against the Jews. By one theory, resentment of this Legion's boar emblem, which came to be identified with extreme destruction and persecution, partly accounts for the deep-rooted traditional Jewish aversion for pork. (The Bible does not single out pigs in comparison with the many other unclean animals whose flesh is forbidden; nevertheless, in actual Jewish culture pigs are clearly singled out for a special, highly emotional loathing, of a kind not directed at other unclean animals).

A boar is a long-standing symbol of the city of Milan, Italy. In Andrea Alciato's *Emblemata* (1584), beneath a woodcut of the first raising of Milan's city walls, a boar is seen lifted from the excavation. The foundation of Milan is credited to two Celtic peoples, the Bituriges and the Aedui, having as their emblems a ram and a boar respectively;^[30] therefore "The city's symbol is a wool-bearing boar, an animal of double form, here with sharp bristles, there with sleek wool." Alciato credits the most saintly and learned Ambrose for his account.

A story from Nevers, which is reproduced in the Golden Legend, states that one night Charlemagne dreamed he was about to be killed by a wild boar during a hunt, but was saved by the appearance of a child, who had promised to save the emperor if he would give him clothes to cover his nakedness. The bishop of Nevers interpreted this dream to mean that the child was Saint Cyricus and that he wanted the emperor to repair the roof of the Cathédrale Saint-Cyr-et-Sainte-Julitte de Nevers - which Charlemagne duly did.

The ancient Lowland Scottish Clan Swinton is said to have to have acquired the name Swinton for their bravery and clearing their area of Wild Boar. The chief's coat of arms and the clan crest allude to this legend, as is the name of the village of Swinewood in the county of Berwick which was granted to them in the Eleventh Century.

Richard III (r. 1483–1485) used the white boar as his personal heraldic device and symbol. It was also passed to his short-lived son, Edward.

Heraldry and other symbolic use

The wild boar and a boar's head are common charges in heraldry. It represents what are often seen as the positive qualities of the boar, namely courage and fierceness in battle. The arms of the Campbell of Possil family (see Carter-Campbell of Possil) include the head, erect and erased of a wild boar. The arms of the Swinton Family also possess wild boar.

