



Introduction

Wild Boar are now present in the wild after an absence of some 300 years. Coming across wild boar or their signs is likely to be a new or uncommon experience for many people. The following information and guidance is offered to those who may come across wild boar whilst out walking in the countryside. This guide links to others in the Wild Boar series¹.



Adult Sow, rooting

Current status

Wild boar are currently restricted to parts of Kent, Sussex, Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Devon and Dorset, but have the potential to spread. See map 1.

Description and behaviour

Adult boar stand up to one metre at the shoulder.

Adult males may exceed 150kgs in weight, adult females being somewhat smaller.

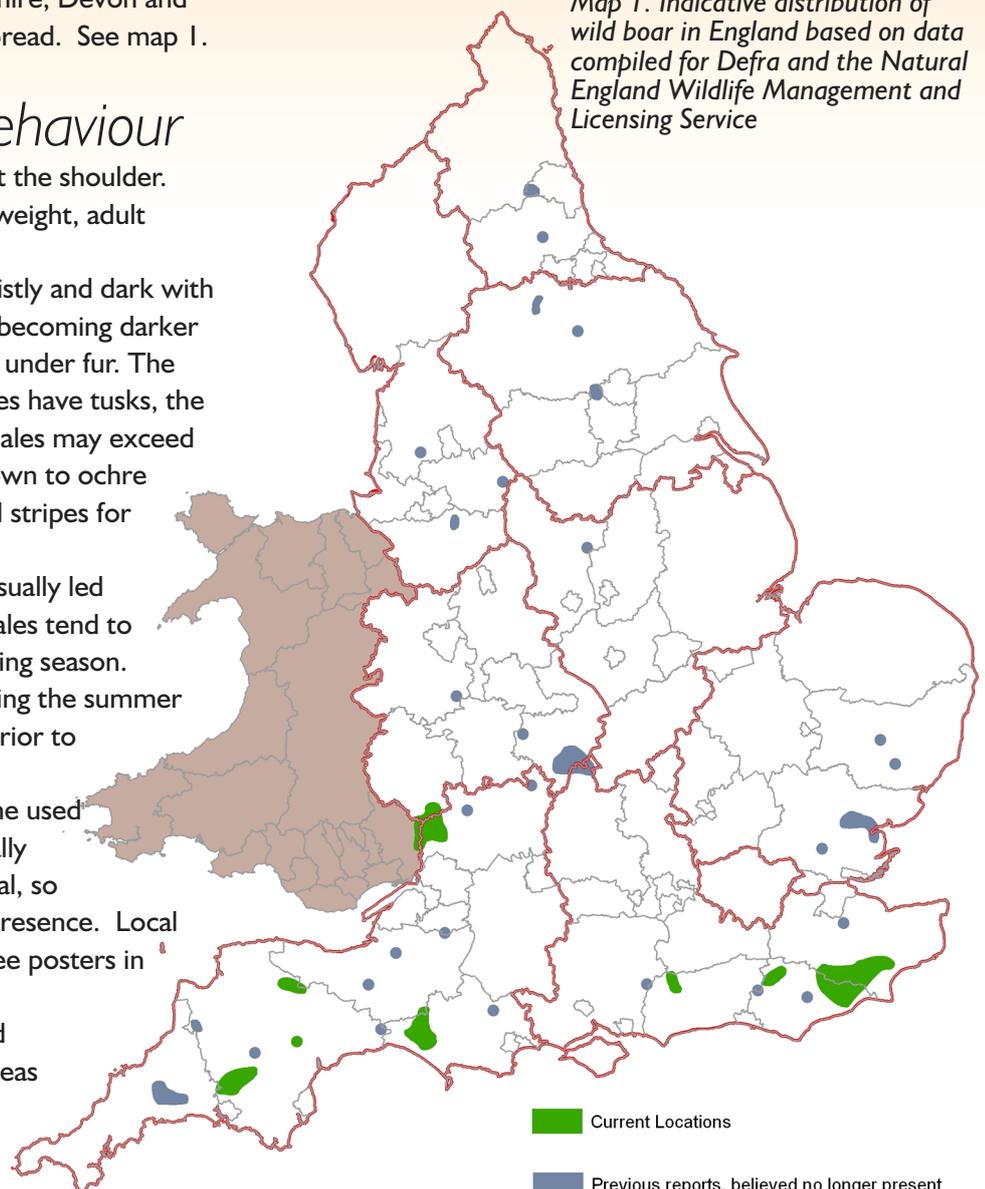
The summer coat of wild boar is bristly and dark with a ridge of long hair down the back, becoming darker brown or black in winter with thick under fur. The tail is straight, not curled. Both sexes have tusks, the lower tusks are very sharp and in males may exceed 20 cm in length. Piglets are red brown to ochre coloured with yellowish longitudinal stripes for the first 4 to 5 months.

Females and young live in groups, usually led by the oldest sow. Fully-grown males tend to be solitary, except during the breeding season. Young males often form groups during the summer after being pushed out by females prior to farrowing.

When undisturbed, boar can become used to the presence of humans but usually they are elusive and largely nocturnal, so people are often unaware of their presence. Local knowledge is useful, and you may see posters in known areas.

Wild boar react very quickly to food availability, changing their feeding areas

Map 1. Indicative distribution of wild boar in England based on data compiled for Defra and the Natural England Wildlife Management and Licensing Service



frequently. They often cause damage to grain and root crops, and to grassland when rooting in search of invertebrates and small mammals.

Signs

You are recommended not to search for wild boar but signs that you may come across are:

- ◆ seeing the boar themselves
- ◆ evidence of rooting behaviour on pastures or in woodlands
- ◆ rubbed or scraped trees
- ◆ dung
- ◆ hoof marks, often with two clear dew claw imprints behind the main hoof prints
- ◆ wallows with associated boar hoof prints
- ◆ scrapes or hollows made when resting
- ◆ boar hair caught in fences or damaged fences (boar hair has characteristic whitish split ends and can be easily distinguished from those of deer and other wildlife)
- ◆ farrowing nests (see Breeding)

Encountering wild boar

You may come across wild boar when working or during recreational activities. Wild boar are usually shy animals but may sometimes allow a close approach. There are very few documented cases of boar attacking people and a sensible attitude to encountering them should help to avoid any problems:

- ◆ If you see wild boar from a safe distance, do not approach them. It may be possible to simply wait until they have left the area of their own accord before proceeding. If not, try to leave the area by the same route you approached, or make a detour giving the animals a wide berth to avoid disturbing them.
- ◆ Avoid walking through dense undergrowth where wild boar may be encountered at close quarters.
- ◆ If you come across wild boar unexpectedly and very close, usually they will run away making a lot of noise. If they stand their ground, you should talk or shout, back off slowly then detour around the area.



Sow with piglets and juveniles

Dogs

Dogs may chase wild boar, causing them unnecessary disturbance. Adult boar are quite capable of seriously injuring even large dogs.

- ◆ Keep dogs on a lead in areas where wild boar are known or suspected.
- ◆ If you see wild boar and you have a dog off the lead, call the dog to heel and put it on a lead.
- ◆ If you have a dog off the lead and it chases wild boar or will not return when called, stay at a safe distance and continue to call the dog back; do not approach the boar.

Breeding season

With good feed both sexes mature in under a year. Boar are prolific and regular breeders, sows can come into heat between October and May but the height of the mating season is between November and January. Gestation is 3 months, 3 weeks, 3 days. Wild boar have a prolonged farrowing season. New litters may be born from February through to October, with a peak around April. Sows build a farrowing nest, a large construction of accumulated undergrowth, just before giving birth. Litter size is usually 4-6.

boar dung



rubbing post and tusk marks





damage to rabbit fence



rooting on pasture



rooting among woodland bluebells

During periods when wild boar are known or suspected to be having young:

- ◆ Avoid closely approaching wild boar.
- ◆ Avoid areas of dense undergrowth or thick cover that sows favour as resting and breeding places.
- ◆ Avoid getting between a sow and her young.
- ◆ A disturbed sow may adopt a face on, rigid stance and snort, this is defensive threat behaviour and the best action is to back off.

Reporting

Natural England's Wildlife Management and Licensing Service are interested in recording reports of wild boar in new areas, as well as instances of agricultural or other damage attributed to wild boar. Telephone: 0845 601 4523 or e-mail wildlife@naturalengland.org.uk

If you find a fresh wild boar carcass, report it to the your local VLA laboratory, contact details available from the VLA Diseases of Wildlife Scheme at: http://www.defra.gov.uk/vla/science/sci_wildlife.htm, phone enquiries on 01932 357314

If you are concerned that wild boar may have become a safety hazard in your area, you should inform the local Police.

Further Information

¹ See the wild boar guides at www.thedeerinitiative.co.uk

For general information on wild boar see <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/regulation/wildlife/species/wildboar.aspx>



Alert Sow