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**Sender:**

The Secretary of the Swiss Society of New Zealand Inc  
 Trudi Brühlmann  
 401 Marine Drive  
 Mahina Bay  
 Eastbourne  
 Lower Hutt 5013

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# HELVE<sup>IA</sup>

Magazine for Members of the Swiss Society of New Zealand Inc

## FAUNA IN SWITZERLAND

# Wild boar – Wildschwein

The wild boar is the wild ancestor of the domestic pig, an animal with which it freely hybridizes. Wild boar are native across much of Europe, the Mediterranean Region and much of Asia as far south as Indonesia. Populations have also been artificially introduced in some parts of the world, principally for hunting. Elsewhere, populations have become established after escapes of wild boar from captivity.



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, e.g. "wild boar sow" or "wild boar piglet".

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. During winter the fur is much denser.

Adult boars average 120–180 cm in length and have a shoulder height of 90 cm. Boars show a great deal of weight variation, from an average 100 kg to a record 300 kg!

The continuously growing tusks (the canine teeth) serve as weapons and tools. The lower tusks of an adult male measure about 20 cm; about 10 cm protrude out of the mouth. The upper tusks are bent upwards in males and are regularly ground against the lower ones to produce sharp edges.

Wild boar piglets are coloured differently from adults, having ochre, chocolate and cream coloured stripes lengthwise over their bodies. The stripes fade by the time the piglet is about 6 months old, when the animal takes on the adult's grizzled grey or brown colour.

Adult males are usually solitary outside of the breeding season, but females and their offspring live in groups called sounders. Sounders typically number around 20 animals, and will consist of 2 to 3 sows, one of which will be the dominant female.

Wild boar usually forage from dusk until dawn. They are omnivorous scavengers, eating almost anything they come across.

If surprised or cornered, a boar (particularly a sow with her piglets) will defend itself and its young with intense vigor. The male lowers his 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 may result in severe trauma and dismemberment.

Litter size is typically 4-6 piglets. Piglets weigh 750g - 1000g at birth. Rooting behaviour develops in piglets as early as the first few days of life, and piglets are fully weaned after 3-4 months. They will begin to eat solid food such as worms and grubs after about 2 weeks.

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). Feral animals tend also to have longer legs than domestic breeds and than wild boar, and a longer and narrower head and snout.

*from the internet*