

Book Excerpts

"Hunting Boar And Wild Pigs

The Definite Guide To More Successful Boar Hunting In California And Elsewhere

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Foreword

Back in the early Nineties when I started research for my book on wild boar hunting the Internet was still in its infancy. . . . Hunting as a general subject did not exist except for the occasional learned treatise on a game animal, mainly deer. Nothing about hunting . . . wild pigs in California.

Publishers offered one major printed book on the subject of wild boar hunting. It consisted mainly of anecdotal hunting stories and reports on guided hunting that featured the guide more than the game. The little information on wild pigs, the purported stars of the book, was very basic. The lack of organized, easily accessible information on where and how to hunt wild pigs in California motivated me to write the first version of my book *Wild Boar In California – Where And How to Hunt*. . .

To the best of my knowledge my work was the first book that gathered detailed information on specific locations of wild boar on private and public land in concise and easy to understand form. I compiled and published in book form complete and detailed information on hunting opportunities on private land, such as PLM (Private Land Management Program participants, BLM Bureau of Land

Management properties, U.S. Forest Service land and more. This information was public but had to be collected on paper directly from sources. We also contacted many of the PLM participants personally in writing and by phone to collect updated information.

The results became part of one of the early 'electronic books' on the Internet. We even had a printed version in those days. The idea was to distribute the book via the Internet and not in a printed version in order to make it easier to update. Consequently, we went through a number of revisions to keep the data up to date. . .

Hunting guides consider themselves boar hunting experts. They all have their own sales oriented websites with more or less generic information on wild pigs. Almost all establish their expertise by talking about 'sus scrofa', a term few of them had heard in the early Nineties, I reckon. . .

What did we learn from our experiences with updates to the data published in a book? What makes the new book better than its predecessor?

1. Since general information on wild pig locations, private ranches and hunting guides is abundant and easily accessible via search engines, we decided to give the new book a more useful direction and structure.

Rather than reproducing membership lists and other data streams, we will tell you where to find pertinent information by giving you the web source of the data in the form of their URL.

2. The source URL allows you access to the latest information. We still include the most essential sources in the book, such as PLM members, licensed hunting guides, official web sites, etc., as a separate appendix, each at the end of the book in case a source is no longer accessible. Just remember that the data in the appendix may not be current by the time you read it.

3. Whenever justified, links embedded in the text of the book will bring you directly to a supporting source or to more detailed information. This feature includes links to subjects that were discussed in detail in my wild boar hunting blog, including tutorials on hunting weapons, signs of the presence of wild pigs, tracking information and more.

4. The new book contains many more pictures than before. They are linked to the text for your perusal but reside somewhere else. This is necessary to keep the book file as small as possible.

5. Most importantly, the emphasis of the book shifted from enumerating wild pig locations, private ranches and hunting guides throughout California to a thorough study of boar and wild pigs, their habitat, their habits, how to locate and hunt them. Much of this knowledge, though crucial to hunting success, is jealously and closely guarded by successful hunters and professionals alike. If you ever hunt Fort Hunter Liggett or go on an unguided hunt on a private ranch, you will need it!

The new book *Hunting Boar And Wild Pigs - The Definite Guide To More Successful Boar Hunting In California* retains much of the valuable information in my previous book and its proven general structure but adds new dimensions of in depth information about wild pigs and true boar, at home and abroad, that many "free" boar hunting websites do not dare to share with hunters.

Though much effort has gone into writing this book, it still is a work in progress. Time and reactions from readers will tell what can be improved and how. Your constructive contribution are always welcome.

There is bigger and heavier game in California but none equals the tenacity, the cunning and the ferocity of a game animal that is quickly replacing deer as the most favorite game of Californians: **The wild pigs of California.**

Wild Boar in California

California is one of the three states with the highest populations of wild pigs. Therefore, it should be easy to locate one. Not really! Wild pigs are smart animals that know well how to stay out of sight and trouble. Their preferred habitat has plenty of features that allow them to blend in and vanish. It also must provide plenty of food sources. Ideally good boar habitat has to offer:

- a temperate climate
- sources of water
- good cover
- forested areas
- farm land
- fruit trees
- space to roam.

Where these conditions are met you can reasonably expect wild pigs. Oak studded grasslands and hillsides are best. Besides ample food supplies and good, thick cover the presence of water is essential, whether from running springs, creeks, watering troughs for cattle or as small ponds and muddy lakes. Wild hogs cannot take summer heat without access to water to cool off.

The number of wild pigs in California is unknown. It is estimated that at least 800,000 boar make their home in the state. Regardless of their actual numbers wild pigs are expanding their range and numbers in California. And in other states with boar populations, I might add.

Wild pig populations are expanding despite consistent hunting pressure. Over the past five years the number of hunters has not increased significantly. It is stagnating or even decreasing slightly. Sales of wild pig tags on the other hand are growing slowly. Paradox at first, but not so on a second look. The popularity of wild pig hunting is increasing. Boar are poised to challenge deer as the number one big game in California.

In the year 2006/2007 boar hunters purchased more than 54,000 wild pig tags. A little over 4,500 pig tags were returned by successful hunters. That represents an 8 percent success rate.

The actual success rate of an individual hunter is not only determined by his knowledge and skills but more so by his choice of hunting area.

Few of the above habitat requirements are met in Southern California. Consequently, there are very few wild pigs here. It is reflected in the most recent wild pig harvest report for 2006/2007. Los Angeles, San Bernardino and Riverside Counties submitted less than 1 percent of the pig tags for the Southern Central Region. Orange, Imperial, Inyo and Mono turned in no tags at all. San Diego County had a one time spike of pig tags in 2005/2006 but still was below one percent.

According to some recent sightings and reports, there is still a small but possibly expanding wild pig population around an Open Space Preserve near the San Diego River valley (<http://wildboarhunting.blogspot.com/search?q=wild+pigs+San+Diego>). Recent sightings (early October 2009) and at least one harvested wild pig (also reported in early October 2009) confirm the presence of wild pigs in the area. The boar seem to be expanding their range slowly.

A few unreported wild pigs may have been taken in rare areas, such as the above, where boar sightings have been reported. But the harvests did not get recorded. Most likely because they occurred where hunting is not allowed or can only be done by specially appointed and authorized hunters, such as law enforcement.

Moving north more and more of the requirements for a boar habitat are met. Wild pigs become more numerous and hunter success increases. For all practical purposes Santa Barbara County is the southern border of huntable boar populations. Except for one lonely small, private ranch near Riverside.

Santa Barbara County has a well-established wild boar population, mostly on private land. A few boar can be found at times on public land located in the Los Padres National Forest. For years the northern end of Lake Cachuma was rumored to have a small wild pig population. Most recent reports place the boar now further away from the lake in an area with numerous organic produce farms.

Vandenberg Air Force Base has been home to the largest wild pig population in Southern California. This group of boar contributes between two and five percent of all pig tags returned for the region. The number of wild pigs taken peaked in the 2003/2004 season (5%), but declined slowly to two percent in 2007.

Vandenberg AFB is open for hunting only to active or retired military, their dependents and a few other permittees. It stands to reason that the return of pig tags declined because many authorized hunters have been diverted to theaters of war. Information from hunters who hunted on the base recently indicates that the wild pig populations at VAFB is going strong. The majority of the boar taken there are good meat pigs that weigh in around 130 pounds.

Proceeding north, we are entering wild pig country in the counties of Kern, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, San Benito and Fresno. All return high numbers of pig tags. Over the years Monterey County has been the leader of the pack with over 20% of all tags returned from this region. During the 2006/07 pig tag period Kern County has almost pulled even by increasing the number of returned tags by three percent. In the same period Monterey County submitted five percent fewer tags than in the previous pig tag season. San Benito and Fresno are next best, followed closely by Tulare. The remaining counties of the region are stuck around 1% of pig tags returned. You can pretty much forget about Tuolumne and Kings.

Hunter success and with it the number of returned pig tags are not exclusively determined by the strength of the boar population in a given area, but also by how many private ranches allow hunting or have active guide services bringing boar hunters to the region. A good example is the Tejon Ranch in Kern County. This ranch has an excellent membership hunting program combined with annual memberships for outdoors activities and camping. I venture the guess that most of the wild pigs taken in Kern County actually were harvested on the Tejon Ranch. Numerous guide services and boar hunting ranches with good, stable wild pig populations operate in Monterey County....

The contenders, North Central and Northern Region, muster a measly 13 percent each for all of their counties combined.

In conclusion we can state the obvious: If you want to hunt wild pigs in California more successfully, head for Monterey or Kern County. Selecting a reputable guide or guide service in one of the two counties, gives you the best chance of encountering and harvesting a real wild pig. Even in the counties with the highest boar populations, your chances of getting your boar on public land are rather slim because there are few wild pigs on public land.

Of course, you can get your wild pig in other regions or counties as well. But it may be much harder work or more of a chance encounter with a good outcome. Consider the numbers above especially well when you embark on unguided hunts or on hunting on public land. Avoid hunting a ranch that has only a small population of 'transitory' wild pigs. They may be there when you arrive. But then they also may not. Why take a chance?.. .

Ask the owner of the ranch you consider for your wild pig hunt for information on their boar population. You should also ask the guide service for a report on boar populations in the area you will hunt. But beware: Both almost always report 'plenty of mean boar' on their properties.

Better yet, find the regional office of the Department of Fish and Game and call them. Their wildlife biologists can give good factual information. Most wildlife specialists are quite cooperative.

A Black Pig Is A Boar – Right? Wrong!"

Yes, wrong indeed. Read why in your copy of **Hunting Boar And Wild Pigs**.

You can order it [here](#).