

Il Cinghiale in Italia (The Wild Boar in Italy)

During the wild boar hunting season cinghiale may be shot on Wednesdays and Sundays. On these days you need to be very careful when out walking (fare una camminata) as accidents are common and countrywide the yearly death toll is about 50.

The contadini (farmer/peasants) have always believed the cinghiale to be destructive, and in fact with their large tusks set on a powerful head, and weighing in at between 100 – 200 kg (220 – 440 lbs) the wild boar can do a lot of damage to crops, vineyards, stone walls etc as they root around for nutrition. But it has been the reduction of their habitat together with the virtual extinction of their natural predators that has pushed the cinghiali out into agricultural areas.



Within their natural habitat, i boschi (the woods), cinghiali have a beneficial effect. Their large tusks are used not just in self-defence but also to excavate for the roots, insects, and even small animals that make up their diet, and it's pretty awe inspiring to see an area that has been ploughed up by these creatures, almost like someone has been at it with an industrial digger! This rooting around helps to bury seeds and destroy harmful insects thereby nurturing the woodland.

The cinghiale has a thick bristly hide with few blood vessels. This helps to protect it from injury and infection in the Macchia Mediterranea (the typical scrubby Mediterranean vegetation) and from the bite of animals such as the viper. The males in particular have a thick layer of protective fat, especially in the mating season when they frequently fight with their rivals. The female excavates a tana (den) and camouflages it with bushes and other vegetation, rearing her young in February and March. She usually gives birth (in Italian we say dare alla luce: lit. give to the light) to between two and four cinghialini (little boars), but in a good year she can have up to eight.

The usual social structure of the cinghiale consists of branchi (packs) of females: the mother and her new babies plus those born in the previous year. The young males leave these packs after two years and live a solitary life or join up with other small groups of males until the mating season.

Cinghiali are common throughout Italy, from the Valle d'Aosta in the north to Calabria in the south, and the islands of Sicilia and Sardegna. Their impronte (hoof prints) and excavations can often be seen when out walking or searching for funghi in the woods but, as they are quite shy and well camouflaged, one rarely sees the animals themselves.



Text source: <http://www.transparent.com/italian/il-cinghiale-in-italia-the-wild-boar-in-italy/>

Photos: <http://www.agraria.org/selvaggina/cinghiale.htm>

Facts & Figures

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| Name: | Sus Scrofa – Wild Boar |
| Class: | Mammals |
| Super-order: | Ungulates |
| Order: | Artiodactyls (ungulate with even number of fingers) |
| Sub-order: | Suiformi |
| Family: | Suidae |
| Genus: | Sus |
| Species: | Scrofa (Linnaeus 1758) |
| Reproduces: | October-January |
| Gestation period: | 112-115 days |
| Number of young: | 2-4 |
| Weaning: | about two months |
| Sexual maturity: | Males 10 months, active after 3-4 months Females 11-14 months depending on weight |
| Longevity: | More than 10yrs |
| Weight: | Those individuals not crossed with pigs weigh no more than 60kg (males) or 40kg (females) |
| Hybridisation: | In Italy it is very rare to find wild boar of pure stock that are not the result of accidental or deliberate hybridisation with domestic pigs. Hybrids tend to have: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• More young in a litter (12-14 young);• Greater size & weight (over 150kg in some instances);• Smaller front quarters and larger rear quarters;• A twisted rather than straight tail;• Large (even folded) ears rather than small upstanding ears;• Tusks that are longer but thinner;• Coats of different colour comprising shorter bristles/hairs;• Meat that is more pink than red in colour; and• Less evidence of a streak in the colouring of the young. |
| Sub-species: | In Europe there are three main sub-species: the Maremma wild boar (<i>sus scrofa major</i>), the Sardinian (<i>Sus scrofa meridionalis</i>) and the Central European (<i>Sus scrofa scrofa</i>). Given the wide distribution of the species, there are other sub-species such as those found in North Africa and Eastern Europe. |
| Coat: | Summer & winter. Both appear black/burned but the summer coat has fewer bristles/unit area. |
| Distinctive habits: | Wallow in mud to free themselves from parasites and to keep cool in summer. Root up/turn over ground using their snouts in order to expose food. |
| Feeding habits: | Omnivore – roots, tubers, fruits, invertebrates, small mammals, carcasses etc. Groups will attack/kill/eat large mammals if injured. |
| Dentition: | Reflects the wide range of eating habits. Molars used for grinding plant foods and meat. The lower tusks are special canines which protrude from the lip and curve upwards. The tusks protruding from the upper jaw are smaller. |

Source: <http://www.agraria.org/selvaggina/cinghiale.htm>