



Wild boars go hog-wild as upstate threat

The tough, ornery eating machines, animals already spotted in the Adirondacks

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ALBANY -- Capital Region homeowners know the frustration of having deer devour their bushes or rabbits ravage their bulbs.

Now there's a new animal poised to chomp its way through our yards: wild boar.

Don't worry, wild boars aren't tearing up local lawns or golf courses the way they are in Florida and Texas, but the large, rambunctious creatures have been spotted in Washington County and the Adirondacks. Wildlife experts report they have a solid hoof-hold in parts of Central New York and the Southern Tier.

"We've had some reports," said [Ed Reed](#), a wildlife biologist for the [Department of Environmental Conservation](#)'s Region 5, which covers Saratoga County and the northeast corner of the state.

Wild boars have been seen alongside a road in Argyle and by kayakers near Shushan.

Also known as feral swine, wild boars have been rampaging through the southern states for years, tearing up grass, ruining crops and generally causing havoc wherever they go because they will eat almost anything, are hardy and wily enough to survive.

City officials in Austin, Texas, hired snipers to kill the wild boars, and many states, including New York, allow hunters to take the animals year-round. In some locations, homeowners have used electric fences with mixed success.

Wild boars or hogs may be the latest in a decades-long run of invasive species to hit the state. They're among other unwanted interlopers such as zebra mussels clogging our waterways and pipes; purple loosestrife invading our grasses; and the emerald ash borer chewing through our trees.

Wild boars aren't the chubby pink hogs raised for food, nor are they the friendly pot-bellied pigs that are household pets.

Formally known as Russian or European boar, the dark bristly-haired animals can weigh up to 400 pounds. Considered fearless and mean, rampaging animals have been known to charge humans with their sharp tusks.

Despite their threats to people, the animals are also fast-moving threats to the environment. Their powerful hooves and snouts root through the ground like a small backhoe in search of seeds, berries, insects, carrion or anything else they can consume.

"There is almost nothing that they won't eat," said [Steve Joule](#), a wildlife manager with the Department of Environmental Conservation in Cortland.

The environmental destruction is serious, a federal expert said.

"It's almost like somebody plowed the field," USDA wildlife biologist [Justin Gansowski](#) said of areas where the animals have been, due to their digging and rooting abilities.

The animals are so unusual they have their own show on the [Discovery Channel](#). "Hogs Gone Wild" highlights the destructive antics of the animals, to the cheers or boos of the audience.

Complete with a "Do not attempt to perform the actions depicted in this program" warning, the program chronicles the exploits of professional trappers and nuisance animal removers who pit themselves against the powerful eating machines.

The hunters wrestle screaming piglets to the ground in a children's camp, erect corral-like traps and set a pack of dogs to chase down a jumbo boar that is ruining cropland.

There are no funds to trap the invaders, New York state and federal officials said.

As result, their population seems destined to rise, given their fecundity and survival abilities.

"They are now breeding on their own," said Gansowski, who is based in Castleton.

That worries people like Gansowski, since boars can carry pseudorabies, a viral disease not fatal to humans but which can sicken dogs, goats and cattle, as well as cats and raccoons.

The boars spotted in Washington County may have escaped from one of the hunting preserves there, as was the case with Southern Tier boars, which went north after escaping preserves in Pennsylvania.

In other cases, they are swine that have escaped from farms, or were set loose by farmers. The boars revert to a wild state after several generations.

Hunting preserves have increased in recent years as dairymen and crop growers find it ever more difficult to survive.

With 540 deer and elk farms, hunting makes up the fastest growing agribusiness sector in the state and keeps some family farms in business, said [Dave Vanderzee](#), who operates Easton View Outfitters in Washington County.

In addition to deer, Easton View is one of about 20 preserves in the state that also offer boar hunting.

Hunters like the challenge due to the intelligence of the boars and the amount of meat they yield.

Vanderzee says he guards against escapes by using fencing that is sunk into the ground so they can't burrow their way out of his preserve.

"The meat is the prize. Pork chops and bacon," he said.

Read more: <http://www.timesunion.com/local/article/Wild-boars-go-hog-wild-as-upstate-threat-1935154.php#ixzz1V7fmb8WW>