The boar
by Silvia Sgrosso

- Class *Mammalia*
- Order *Artiodattili*
- Family *Suidi*
- Genus *Sus*
- Species *scrofa*

The Eurasian wild boar *(Sus scrofa)* , is, among big mammals **the species** certainly **more widespread in the territory of Grumento Nova**
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Since 1970s in most of European countries this species has had a considerable increase in quantity with a simultaneous expansion of its range, with the exception of Great Britain where wild boar disappeared in the late seventeenth century (Massei and Genov, 2000).

In Italy the boar has been significantly reduced its area since the end of the sixteenth century, because of the **continuous persecution by man**. After the Second World War has been a growth of wild boars number and an enlargement of its range, especially in mountainous and internal areas where human presence was poorer. This increase of population density has been further encouraged by the numerous **entries of wild boars imported from countries of Central and Western Europe** and also from specimens coming from wild boars farming interbred with pigs or with middle-European samples. This led to pollution of local ecotypes and, in some areas, situations of overcrowding, with consequent damages to agricultural activities.

The boar is suitable for different environments and climates, although it prefers the temperate regions, it is spread from northern Europe, to northern Africa and is well adapted in all the regions in which it was introduced by man, such as South America, Australia and New Zealand. The broad-leaved forests that produce acorns, rich of underwood, glades and meadows, are the environments which the boar prefers, even if it shows a remarkable ability to adapt.
The boar is a sturdy animal with limbs and tail relatively short; the muzzle is short and stocky in males and more elongated in females; in adult males, called ***verri***, the canines are much more developed than in females; even the larger size of male is one of the characters of sexual dimorphism of this species. Although the stocky and sturdy morphology, this
Suida
is
able to run, jump, trot and even swim
.

The boar, as omnivores , utilizes very different trophic resources and is also able to diversify its diet in relation to the availability of food present on different environments and in different seasons. Not being able to use efficiently the plant component, this species must supplement its diet with animal proteins or vegetables with a high energy content, such as seeds, tubers, rhizomes, etc.

As most of the wild mammals it's a **mainly nocturnal animal** and more easily visible in the twilight hours even if it is not excluded to meet it during the day.

As is well known the boar has a **high reproductive capacity**; but generally breeds only once a year and usually born 3-5 pets, even if, exceptionally, there have been birth of 7-8 pets (Massei et al. 1996). The crossbreed between pig and wild boar has led to an increase in the number of pets and a phase shift of the reproductive period. The estrus of the females belonging to the same group is, like other mammals, synchronized in the way that all pets born in the same period. The mating time is the only period in which adult males, usually solitary, come together with females and pets that, on the other hand, are typically social animals. The herds are mainly female and can also be numerous; are made up of family units often related to each other. In the herd exist complex hierarchical relationships, the older female is dominant over the others and the pets are raised and defended by all the sows.
This species has a remarkable vocal repertoire which together with the olfactory communication, thanks to which boars are able to recognize their conspecifics in the sites of marking, represent the main mode of communication between different individuals.
The presence of wild boars is often cause of conflict with the category of farmers because of the damage that this species can do to crops. More generally, the impact on the vegetation is characterized by a particular behavior of excavation, called *grufolio* (rooting), which has the purpose of feeding on tubers, rhizomes, roots and underground animals. While in various natural habitats this behavior has different effects ranging from the increase in plant species present (Welander, 1995) to a decrease in appetite species in favor of those poisonous (Bratton et al, 1982), in the case of crops the damage resulting from the sampling is aggravated by excavation activities which lay bare the roots. Among the cultivated species in the European countries, preferred crops seem to be wheat, corn, barley, oats, rice, sunflower, potatoes, beets and different types of fruits such as grapes, watermelons, etc.

Like other mammals, the study of wild boar can be done by the research of life signs as footprints, droppings, tracks of digging (grufolio), insogli (mud pools where wild boars get rid of parasites), scrapers (tracks of barking on plants, etc.).

Due to the damage caused to crops often, even in protected areas, are started putting down programs, defined selective but only sometimes they are, with different modalities of capture and / or killing. Unfortunately, we have to emphasize that, very often, these reduction plans aren't preceded by adequate studies on the density of individuals in a given area lacking, therefore, of necessary information for a proper management of the population.

Currently, as regards the area of Grumento Nova and more generally of Agri Valley, there aren't available scientific data on population density and distribution of this species. What is certain, however, is that the wild boar represents, in this territory, the main wild prey of wolf, and its presence represents an important alternative to the predation of this carnivore on domestic animals.

Bibliography

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