

WILD BOAR, TURKEY'S MOST SOUGHT-AFTER BIG GAME

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Since ancient times Wild boar (*Sus scrofa* L.) had the position of being the unique wild game of interest for the men living in Anatolia. Wild boar is currently the most popular big game hunted in Turkey. It is very similar to those living in Europe, Russia, Caucasia and Iran, and exists in huntable numbers in the forests of northern, southern and western Turkey (in fact almost everywhere except in open flat areas and in the high mountains).

The places where the Wild boar can be found in great numbers in Turkey are: Kırklareli-Demirköy, Tekirdag-Malkara, Istanbul-Sile, Yalova and Belgrat forests, Sakarya-Hendek, Karasu, Bolu-Düzce, Mudurnu, Mengen, Gerede, Zonguldak-Ulus, Yenice, Devrek, Bartın, Kastamonu-Tasköprü, Araç, Tosya, Daday, Azdavay, Sinop-Ayancık, Boyabat, Gerze, Samsun-Bafra, Carsamba, Tokat-Niksar, Ordu, Giresun, Trabzon, Artvin, Balıkesir-Sindirgi, Bayramiç, Kepsut, Biga, Bursa-Orhaneli, Gemlik, Armutlu, Inegöl, Yenisehir, Afyon, Kütahya, Aydın, Muğla, Antalya, Mersin-Anamur and Karabük forest areas.

Habitat selection of Wild boar changes depending upon the regional characteristics of the area. Sites of this animal in Turkey may be divided into three main zones which are influenced by the Black Sea, Mediterranean and semi-continental climates. Wild boars use the different habitats in relation to their availability in these regions. They prefer marshy areas, lake and stream edges mainly where woods have a dense understory, shrubs, and uncultivated lands within wooded areas used for feeding, bedding and resting.

In the Black Sea Region, Wild boar selects the coppices that are dominated by chestnut (*Castanea sativa*), and, further inland, pure or mixed oak stands. In winter, it can be found in

mixed deciduous at low altitudes where the rooting activity is maximum. The most preferred micro-habitat types are those that can ensure food or shelter and include muddy places or water accumulations where it can take a mud-bath and get itself body scratched by rubbing itself against tree trunks.

Wild boars make great damage to corn, barley, wheat, potatoes, sugar beet, bean, leek, lucerne, meadow, grapevine, hazelnut when resources in natural habitat are not sufficient and especially with an increase of their populations. Damages are mainly done during summer - early autumn. In this period, these animals rarely come out into the open to feed during the day: night is the time when they roam and plunder the fields. About 20 to 30 years ago, the Wild boar could heavily affect the local economy in many areas where the villagers used to spend the night in small huts in the fields.

Hunting of Wild boar is free whole year in Turkey, because of its damages to agriculture. Control of this animal has been carried on by local people and agricultural organizations in companies that were promoted by the government.

As a natural consequence of disappearing of some wet lands and marshy areas, and destroying of some wooded and bushes areas for various causes, Wild boar has also become extinct in those places. Some populations especially in western parts of Turkey have recently decreased because of its flesh becoming valuable as an expert matter.

In next decennary, as demands for its flesh and hunting grows, it seems to be necessary to take measures for restricting hunting period and conserving it in some locations.