

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust Malvern Group

Thursday January 3rd 2019

John Dutton: Wild Boar of the Forest of Dean

Wild boar were hunted to extinction in our forests in the 13th century so it was something of a surprise when some were spotted in the 1990s in Kent! John Dutton, Senior Lecturer in Ecology at the University of Worcester, explained that these boar and others around the country are escapees from wild boar farms or even intentional “liberations”.

It is estimated that there are around 2000 wild boar now in the Forest of Dean, mostly active at night so they are not often seen. Controversy rages about whether they are a problem or not. On the negative side, they cause damage to fields and roadside verges, possibly causing erosion and reduction of species diversity in some places. On the positive side, their rooting behaviour has been shown to regenerate and redistribute species especially wetland flora, and swards of bracken are broken up. They are not aggressive (despite sensational reports in the media), and they cause far fewer collisions with vehicles than deer or indeed other cars. They are part of our ancient woodland ecosystem and certainly benefit wildlife tourism in the area. Surveys in the area have shown that most people want them controlled but not totally eradicated.

