

RECURRENCE OF WILD BOAR (*SUS SCROFA*) AROUND JODHPUR, RAJASTHAN AFTER 50 YEARS

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Wild Boars were once very common in the Thar Desert (Prater, 1971). Up to the thirties of last century, Wild Boars were so common around Jodhpur that people avoided walking in the outskirts of the town (Prakash, 1975)! However, their populations declined and Wild Boars were last sighted in 1950 in the western outskirts of Bhuteshwar Forest Block, Jodhpur (M.L. Purohit, pers. comm.). Up to 1955, Wild Boars were common at Sardar Samand (I. Prakash, pers. comm.) some 60km southeast from Jodhpur, after which they disappeared from the area. By the late 1960s Wild Boars had completely vanished from western Rajasthan, except for a population introduced into the Gajner Sanctuary by the Maharaja of Bikaner (Rahmani, 1997; Bhargava, *et al.*, 2000).

On 13 April 2001 at 0615hr, I saw four Wild Boars (one female and three sub-adults) feeding on the dead carcass of a cow near Machiya Safari Park, some 5km from Jodhpur City on the Jodhpur-Jaisalmer Road (26°18'N and 73°08'E). On seeing me they ran away but after 20 minutes one female and one sub-adult came back. The next day, at 1730hr, I observed one adult female and three sub-adults. After a few minutes they were joined by an adult male and another sub-adult. All six Wild Boars fed on the carcass. After 6-7 minutes of active feeding, the adult male with tusks charged at the adult female and a sub-adult. The female moved away to feed on bones from another carcass three meters away.

From a wildlife and environment point of view, this is a good sign that this species has returned after 50 years, and that too as a potential scavenger, replacing the declining population of scavengers like hyenas and jackal. This re-occurrence may also help to improve eco-tourism in Machiya Safari Park. But, at the same time mismanagement of dumping sites of carcasses and encroachment of forest lands may force these wild boars to move into crop fields. Because they are fast breeders with no natural predators, a time may come when these Wild Boars turn

a menace to farmers of the region.

There are two possible reasons for their return to this region. 1. It might be the result of migrated population from Pakistan as local farmers near border districts have observed them crossing the border. People in Pakistan do not kill them due to religious reason (Roberts, 1977); 2. The population has increased at Gajner Sanctuary near Bikaner and spread all along the Indira Gandhi Canal. Because of the seepage of water from open canal, shallow water lakes and swampy conditions have developed along the canal. Establishment of large-scale tree plantation along the canal, have given perfect habitats for Wild Boars for breeding. A Wild Boar population along the canal was also observed in earlier studies (Rahmani, 1997; Bhargava *et al.*, 2000).

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