

VIRGINIA FOREST LANDOWNER UPDATE

Events, news, and information promoting the stewardship of Virginia's forest resources.

VIRGINIA FOREST LANDOWNER
EDUCATION PROGRAM

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Safeguard Your Forest

By: Bill Worrell, Virginia Cooperative Extension

Surprise! Surprise! Surprise! These were not the actual words I said when I realized that someone who was cutting timber on my neighbor's property appeared to also be cutting timber on my property. Since I was worried, I decided to hike up the mountain to take a closer look. And yes, I found a man cutting my trees. I immediately told him to stop cutting because my trees were not for sale! The man said he just worked for the logger as a timber cutter and he was told to keep cutting until he got to the flagging that marked the boundary line. The timber cutter suggested that I go down to the log landing and talk with the logger.

I found the logger at the bottom of the mountain, but he was not happy when I told him he was stealing my trees. The logger said he purchased the timber from my neighbor, who had marked the boundary line with flagging near the top of the ridge. I informed him that the line my neighbor marked was wrong. I told him that the property line was the fence that my grandpa had built on the mountain about sixty years ago. We both walked up the mountain in search of the old fence and I was surprised I could not find it. Of course, since it was not being used, it hadn't been repaired or maintained for years. We found the flagging my neighbor had used to mark the property line, but it was in the wrong place. I told the logger to stop cutting trees in this area until we could determine the actual property line. I also asked him when he would be paying me for my trees, but he did not have an answer.

I returned to my house where I called my neighbor to tell him the line he marked was wrong. Then I called the state forester's office for advice. The local county forester told me that my property line had to be clearly marked in order for me to prove that someone was cutting and stealing my timber. I told him that Grandpa had built a fence on the property line back in the late 50's and that was good enough to mark the boundary line. The county forester suggested I contact a consulting forester for more help with this timber theft case. After going through the list of consulting foresters, I finally found someone who was willing to visit with me and to look over my timber theft case.

My consultant told me the first thing we had to do was locate the legal property line to prove that trees were cut on my property. We read over the deed description of the property and looked around in the woods for a couple of hours, but were unable to locate the exact property boundary. My consultant suggested I contact a surveyor to make sure the property line was where I thought it should be. So once again, I found myself calling a professional to ask for help in this timber trespass dispute.

I found a surveyor who came out and surveyed the property lines, and his price was high. Once the line was marked, it was clear that my neighbor had incorrectly marked his boundary lines. My consultant proceeded to determine the volume and value of the trees that had been taken from me. I contacted the logger and my neighbor and asked them to pay me for my trees, the cost of the survey, and the cost of the consultant. They were not happy with the amount I was asking them for and told me that was way too much money. So my next step was to make a phone call to yet another professional, an attorney.

As it turns out, Virginia does have a timber theft law which was revised in 2004, making it easier for victims to win cases. Landowners who have had their timber stolen can file either criminal or civil charges.

Criminal cases are more difficult to win, so most landowners pursue civil charges. Landowners who have their timber intentionally stolen are entitled to up to three times the stumpage value of the trees that were cut, plus reforestation costs (not to exceed \$450/acre) and the cost of hiring a consultant. However, even if a landowner wins the case, it is his or her responsibility to collect the money.

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The nature and extent of timber theft varies. Timber theft may be a clearcut of hundreds of acres of pine; or timber theft may be the removal of a single high-value hardwood log. This photo shows the latter, where an individual cherry tree was stolen.

Photo by: Bill Worrell, VCE.

EVENTS CALENDAR			For the most complete listing of natural resource education events, visit the on-line events calendar at www.cnre.vt.edu/forestupdate		
Contact	Date	Location	Event	Time	Fee
DCR	Jan., Feb. & March	Virginia State Parks	A variety of events and activities For a complete list, visit: www.dcr.virginia.gov/parks	Varies	Varies
MN	Year-round	State-wide	Virginia Master Naturalist Volunteer basic training www.virginiamasternaturalist.org/chapters.html	Varies	Varies
EP	June 17 - 22; Nominations are due by April 30	Appomattox	67th Annual Holiday Lake Forestry Camp This camp provides field experiences in forestry and natural resources and is ideal for students considering careers in these fields. It is open to any Virginia resident aged 13-16 who has an interest in natural resources and has not attended before. Any adult not related to the teen can nominate on-line at: www.dof.virginia.gov/camp/ .	All week	\$75*
CU	Tuesdays, Jan. 29 - Feb. 26	On-line	Master Wildlifer Program This award-winning program brings together a panel of renowned wildlife biologists, conservation experts and habitat managers for educational sessions on wildlife ecology and management. Sessions will cover white-tailed deer, coyote, wild hog, non-game wildlife conservation and wild turkey.	7 - 8:30	\$100
JG	Feb. 19	Petersburg	Selling Your Timber Join forestry professionals at this one-day class to learn how to protect and sell your timber. Topics will include: boundary line maintenance, working with a forester, harvest planning, drafting a strong contract and timber taxation. On-line registration available at: www.cnre.vt.edu/forestupdate .	9 - 4:45	\$25*
AD	Feb. 23	Culpeper	10th Annual Woods & Wildlife Conference Join Virginia Cooperative Extension for a full day of presentations and workshops geared to help both large and small acreage landowners become better stewards. On-line registration available at: www.cnre.vt.edu/forestupdate .	9 - 4:45	\$45/person; \$80/couple*
JG	Feb. 27	Stuart	Selling Your Timber See above.	9 - 4:45	\$25*
JG	Feb. 28	Abingdon	Selling Your Timber See above.	9 - 4:45	\$25*
JF	Feb. 28	Goochland	What's Not to Like About Invasive Species? Did you know that ten percent of Virginia's forestland is covered with invasive plants? In this class, you will learn about invasive plants and insects in Virginia, and why management is necessary to slow displacement of our native species.	6 - 8	Free
JG	March 4	On-line	On-line Woodland Options for Landowners Registration opens Jan. 7, class begins March 4. Learn the basics of forest management, from setting goals and objectives to developing a management plan. A cadre of natural resource professionals serve as mentors to answer questions and guide students. View syllabus and register on-line at: www.cnre.vt.edu/forestupdate .	NA	\$45
GP	April 11-13	Hot Springs	Virginia Forestry Summit Join the Association of Consulting Foresters, the Virginia Division of the Society of American Foresters, and the Virginia Forestry Association for their annual meeting. Educational programs will be available for natural resource professionals, logging business owners and forest landowners.	Varies	Varies
JG	April 26-28	Appomattox	5th Annual Forest Landowner Weekend Retreat Join fellow forest landowners, the Virginia Department of Forestry and Virginia Cooperative Extension for an interactive weekend learning about actively managing your woodlands.	Program ends at 12:00 p.m. Sun.	\$60/person; \$90/couple** or \$30/person; \$45/couple*

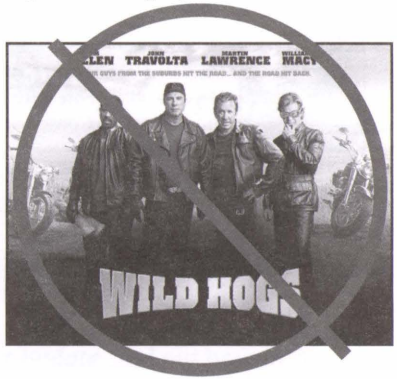
* includes meals; ** includes meals and lodging



You Ain't From Around Here! Exotic Invasive of the Quarter: Wild Hogs (*Sus scrofa*)

By: Jennifer Gagnon, Virginia Tech

Let me make this clear up-front, this article has nothing whatsoever to do with the film *Wild Hogs* starring Tim Allen, John Travolta, Martin Lawrence and William H. Macy. I apologize if you thought otherwise. But I ask that you keep reading, for I suspect you may find the information below far more interesting and entertaining than the above-mentioned film. Personally, I am hog-wild to be writing about the intelligent, athletic (yes, that's right) and highly-adaptable wild hog. I have so much information to share about the number one invasive species in the US, that this article will be two parts. Part 1 will cover wild hog history, biology, and damage. Part 2 (in the Spring 2013 issue) will cover range, control recommendations and what Virginia is doing to keep wild hogs under control.



Just one fence away from going wild.
Photo by: Scott Bauer, USDA Agricultural Research Service.

So what is a wild hog? Is it the same as a feral hog or a wild boar? What is the difference between a wild hog and a domesticated pig? A wild hog is any pig outside the property of its owner which cannot be claimed by its owner. Really, any pig not in a pen, with no apparent home. So, if Wilbur had escaped the Zuckerman's barn, he would have become a wild hog. But, not all wild hogs are the same. Here the story gets a bit complicated.

All animals referred to as hogs/pigs/swine/boars/razorbacks are descendants of the Eurasian wild boar (*Sus scrofa*). Eurasian wild boar were first brought to the US in the 1890's as a big game species (they are smart, so they are fun to hunt....see Connell's "The Most Dangerous Game"). All of these initial introductions were into fenced shooting preserves. Many of these were followed by secondary introductions into other locations. A number of these later releases were made into unfenced areas. In other instances, the wild boar were able to break out of the fenced enclosures (hence the famous saying: you can't fence a pig).

In Europe, the Eurasian wild boar was domesticated and raised as livestock, or domesticated swine. Domesticated swine were brought to the US by early European settlers and raised as free-range livestock. Many of them disappeared into the woods and became feral hogs.

Both Eurasian wild boar and feral hogs are still here today. In addition, wild boar and feral hogs can interbreed, resulting in populations of hybrids. Distinguishing among the three types can be very challenging, and in terms of the damage they cause and methods of control, it doesn't matter which type they are. So the collective, wild hogs, is the most appropriate term to use when referring to hogs/pigs/swine/boar not in captivity. And none of these should be confused with the javelina or collared peccary (*Tayassu tajacu*), a native pig-like animal found in the southwestern US.

Wild hogs can now be found in 47 states, 36 of which have established populations (the animals have been there at least 2 years and are reproducing). Wyoming, Delaware and Rhode Island are the only states claiming to not have wild hog populations. The wild hog population in the US is estimated to be between 3-8 million individuals. The population has exploded since 1990 (when the population was estimated at 500,000). This population explosion is known as the pig bomb.

What caused the pig bomb? Well, like so many invasive species, wild hogs are adaptable to a wide variety of habitats. And they are very good at reproducing. In fact, there is no known animal this size or larger that is better at reproducing. Sows (the females) can start having litters when they are as young as 3 months; litters are large, averaging 6 piglets, but up to 12. They breed year-round and can have up to 2 litters a year. Additionally, hunting wild hogs has become very popular in the US, and Eurasian wild boar are once again being brought into the country for sport (the legality of this practice varies by state).

Wild hogs are easy to identify. If you see a pig in the woods, it could be a wild hog. In the wild, males weigh up to up to 200 pounds; sows are somewhat smaller, weighing in at 175 pounds. Full-grown adults are about 36" at shoulder height and 5-6' long. There are numerous tales of Hogzillas and Sons of Hogzillas, weighing in at over 600 pounds. But hogs these sizes are most likely recently-escaped domesticated swine. These swine will lose their domesticated characteristics within a few generations.



Several sounders of wild hogs. Note the variation in coloration. Photo by: Billy Higginbotham, Texas AgriLife Extension Service.

Hog coloration is extremely variable. Their coats can be black, white, red-brown, or spotted. Some have belts, some do not. Some have white faces, some do not. There is controversy in the literature over whether or not coloration can be used to identify the type of wild hog (Eurasian wild boar, feral hogs or hybrid). But again, this isn't terribly important.

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Sows are social animals and travel with their piglets (in groups called sounders) and sometimes join up with other sounders. The males are solitary except when they are breeding. Extremely large groups of wild hogs (100+) are sometimes found near large food and water sources, but these groups don't remain intact for long.

The home range of a wild hog averages 4 square miles, but can be as large as 50 square miles, depending on the resources available. Wild hogs are creatures of habit, so typically many paths are found in these areas. The movement of wild hogs is described as drifting, wandering, or aimless. Unless they are properly motivated. When they are, they can run up to 30 miles per hour, jump 3 foot fences, swim up to 2 miles, turn sharp corners while running, ascend very steep inclines, and jump/climb out of 5-6' tall corrals. In fact, the only thing wild hogs can't do (at least not yet) is fly. I told you they were athletic. The next time someone calls me a hog, I'm going to thank them!

Wild hogs have an amazing sense of smell. They can smell things up to 7 miles away. Their eyesight is good too, and they have been known to respond to a visual threat up to a mile away.

Wild hogs are not finicky eaters. They will eat anything that has calories and will fit in their mouth (kind of like me when I get home from work in the evenings). Most of their diet consists of plants (88%), then animals (10%); their remaining diet consists of fungi, algae, and miscellaneous items such as rocks, sticks, soil and garbage.

So what's the big deal? As a forester, I've known for a long time that wild hogs are trouble. Wild hogs love to dig up and eat the roots of freshly-planted tree seedlings. They will also root up lawns. In addition, they can cause severe habitat damage, including stream sedimentation. Sedimentation decreases spawning habitat for some fish species, reduces mussel production and interferes with many aquatic invertebrates' life cycles. Although the majority of their diet consists of plants, they will also eat turkey, quail, and grouse eggs, and small animals such as salamanders, frogs, snakes, and even fawns. And, these aggressive critters compete with our native wildlife for food.



Wild hog damage to a lawn. Photo by: Billy Higginbotham, Texas AgriLife Extension Service.

Wild hogs carry a number of diseases which can affect humans, livestock, wildlife and house pets. Two common diseases are swine brucellosis and pseudorabies. Swine brucellosis is the most well-known, as hunters coming into contact with blood, fluid or tissue during the field dressing or butchering process can become infected. Pseudorabies does not affect humans, but can be transmitted to domesticated swine, weakening them and causing reproductive problems. It can also be transmitted to other farm animals, such as cattle, sheep, and goats, wild mammals such as foxes, raccoons and skunks, and cats and dogs. For these species, the disease can be fatal. There are stories about wild hogs attacking humans, but in reality, these are rare and typically not fatal. But wild hogs have been known to attack dogs.

While estimates of economic losses from wild hogs vary greatly, in Texas, which has an extremely high wild hog population, annual losses from damage are estimated at \$50 million, and an additional \$7 million is spent on control efforts.

To find out how wild hogs are affecting Virginia landowners and what steps are being taken to stop them, stay tuned for the Spring 2013 edition of the newsletter. If you can't stand the suspense, there is a wealth of information available at:

- <http://www.dgif.virginia.gov> (search for wild hogs)
- <http://feralhogs.tamu.edu/>
- <http://e-answers.adec.edu> (search for wild hogs)
- http://www.extension.org/feral_hogs (you will need to register to access this site)
- <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0486946/>
- And you can like Feral Hogs on Facebook

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EVENT CONTACTS

Contact	Name/Affiliation	Phone	e-mail/website
DCR	Department of Conservation & Recreation	804/786-1712	www.dcr.virginia.gov
MN	Master Naturalist Coordinator	434/872-4580	www.virginiamasternaturalist.org
EP	Ellen Powell	434/220-9083	ellen.powell@dof.virginia.gov
CU	Clemson University Extension	http://www.clemson.edu/extension/natural_resources/master_wildlifer/	
JG	Jennifer Gagnon	540/231-6391	jgagnon@vt.edu
AD	Adam Downing	540/948-6881	adowning@vt.edu
JF	Jason Fisher	434/476-2147	jasonf@vt.edu
GP	Glenda Parrish	804/278-8733	gparrish@vaforestry.org

Theft cont. from page 1

In my case the timber theft wasn't malicious, but a result of poorly marked boundary lines, so my attorney's recommendation was to file a civil suit against my neighbor and the logger for the value of the timber stolen and additional damages to my property. I was not happy about having to pay a lawyer to fight these guys in court, so I decided to visit with my neighbor and the logger once more before filing suit. And that was a good move on my part because they finally decided to pay me for my trees once they saw I was going to take them to court.

So, in the end, I did receive payment for the value of my trees. But what did the entire process really cost me? Countless phone calls to foresters, consultants, surveyors, attorneys and to the logger and my neighbor, and months of my time. I wonder what it would have cost me to maintain the boundary lines over the years. If only I had painted trees along the fence that Grandpa built to maintain the property line, I might have been spared all this trouble and surely would have been spared the cost of that survey.

Fellow landowners, don't let this happen to you. In the next edition of the *Virginia Forest Landowner Update*, find out how to locate and mark your boundary lines to help protect your timber assets. But in the meantime, what do you do if you notice someone is cutting your timber illegally?

- Nicely ask them to stop cutting your trees. If they don't,
- talk to the owner of the logging operation. If that doesn't stop them,
- talk to the landowner that gave them permission to cut the trees. If that doesn't work,
- call the Sheriff's office to report theft. And if they are still cutting your trees,
- call your attorney.

For more information about timber theft:

- Dealing with Timber Theft: <http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/420/420-136/420-136.html>
- Prevent Timber Theft: <http://www.dof.virginia.gov/mgt/print/Prevent-Timber-Theft.pdf>
- Virginia Code: <http://leg1.state.va.us/000/src.htm> (click on Table of Contents, Title 55, Chapter 18, Sections 55-331, 55-332, 55-334, 55-334.1)

Bill Worrell is the Southwest District Forestry & Natural Resources Agent; 276/889-8056; bworrell@vt.edu.

Upcoming Landowner Programs

We have a spring calendar full of educational opportunities for forest landowners, both new and experienced. A few of these programs are highlighted below. Please see the Events Calendar on page 2 for dates and locations.



Master Wildlifer Program

If you are a forest owner interested in managing the wildlife on your land, this award-winning on-line program from Clemson is for you. Over the course of 5 weeks, you will learn the foundations of wildlife habitat management, and specifics on managing both game and non-game species (including wild hogs). You can watch this program live from your home computer and ask the presenters questions. On-line registration is available at: http://www.clemson.edu/extension/natural_resources/master_widlifer/.

10th Annual Woods & Wildlife Conference

Well over 1,000 Virginia forest owners have attended this annual conference. A wide variety of topics are covered and are designed to appeal to both new and experienced owners, as well as both large and small acreage owners. This year's topics include: black bears, early successional wildlife habitat, marking and maintaining property boundaries, fire as a management tool, edible landscaping, pond design and maintenance, beneficial insects, and firewood management. On-line registration is available at: www.cnre.vt.edu/forestupdate.

Selling Your Timber

Most forest owners will sell timber once, maybe twice in their lifetime. If you are thinking about a timber sale, this program will give you a greater understanding of: strategies to protect your timber resources; steps involved in a timber harvest; ways to minimize your tax burden after a timber sale; resources that are available to assist you. On-line registration is available at: www.cnre.vt.edu/forestupdate.

On-line Woodland Options for Landowners

If you are a landowner new to forest management, this 12-week on-line course will provide you with a strong foundation for understanding your woods. This course covers the history of forests in Virginia, maps and other tools used in forest management, basic tree identification, soils, forest types, and silviculture. The course is best suited to owners of larger acreage, but all are welcome. The end of the semester hands-on field trip is always a highlight of this course. Syllabus and on-line registration are available at: www.cnre.vt.edu/forestupdate.

5th Annual Forest Landowner Weekend Retreat

New to forest management? Immerse yourself in a weekend of forestry-related classes, field trips, and hands-on activities. This program will introduce you to management planning, working with a professional forester, tree identification, using forestry equipment, and much more. Additionally, there is plenty of time to share experiences with fellow forest owners and natural resource professionals. On-line registration will be available in February at: www.cnre.vt.edu/forestupdate. A fall Retreat is also planned for Sept. 6-8 in Wakefield.

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Useful Resources

It's that time of year again! if you sold timber in 2012, you will want to check out this important tax information from the USDA Forest Service:

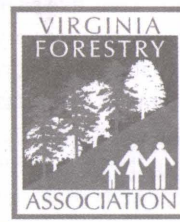
- Tax Tips for Forest Landowners for the 2012 Tax Year (<http://www.timbertax.org/developments/TaxTips2012-Final.pdf>)
- Federal Income Tax on Timber: A Key to your Most Frequently Asked Questions (<http://www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/library/taxpubfaqs.pdf>)

We will also have sessions on timber taxation during our Selling Your Timber Short Courses (see Events Calendar for dates and location).

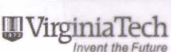
Learn how to protect your forest from potential negative effects of a changing climate using the USDA Forest Service's TACCIMO tool at: <http://www.forestthreats.org/research/tools/taccimo>.

And, for those of you who are Apple product users, the VT Tree Identification App, which was featured in the Fall 2012 edition of this newsletter, is now available free for the iPhone! Search for VT Tree ID in the App Store.

CONTACT OUR SPONSORS AND STATE NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AGENCIES:



Virginia Department of Forestry	Virginia Tech Department of Forest Resources & Environmental Conservation & Virginia Cooperative Extension	USDA Forest Service Forest Stewardship Program	Virginia Forestry Association	Virginia SFI Implementation Committee and Virginia Tree Farm Committee
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