

Wild pigs stalk Cabrillo campus

By KATHARINE BALL
STAFF WRITER

Apparently marching towards civilization, a group of wild pigs left their rural haunts to root for food around Cabrillo College last weekend.

"During the weekend, 12 in all were seen," said Alice Harper, who has been compiling pig sightings for the Santa Cruz County Feral Pig Subcommittee.

"They were seen rooting on both sides of Soquel Drive," Harper said.

Two photography students discovered seven pigs roaming around Sesnon House, on the west side of Soquel Drive, at twilight on Sunday. They took pictures which have not yet been developed, Harper said.

Harper said the pigs, which can weigh up to 400 pounds, seem to be more numerous than ever this year. Both the dry winter and their proliferation are apparently driving them from their usual habitat in out-

lying areas of the county closer into town.

"Cabrillo is the most populated area where they have appeared," Harper said.

She said North Coast ranches and the Forest of Nisene Marks State Park have been particularly hard hit by the porkers, who root up native plants, create erosion and pollute creeks as they snuffle around in search of foodstuffs, which for them range from plant roots to snake eggs.

Harper said one apple rancher in the Watsonville area had found pigs in his orchard after he began irrigation, which apparently attracted them.

The rancher declined to be interviewed, for fear of attracting wild pig hunters to his property. Pigs recently surpassed deer as the most popular game animal in the state, Harper said.

Harper said the rancher "didn't want anyone shooting around his house."

The pigs have also been rooting in great numbers around the Lockheed Missiles and Space Company on Empire Grade, said a maintenance worker there.

The worker, Ron Belknap, said the pigs were not causing any particular problems for the weapons and space research station.

"They are definitely here — more this year than have ever been before," Belknap said. "They don't bother us, though. They're nocturnal. They're just out foraging for food. They're out doing their thing."