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Sunset Park Plagued By Pig On The Run

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Photo by: FRED FOX
Marlin Anderson kneels beside a trap he had installed in attempt to capture a pig that lives in a nearby mangrove. The animal has been tearing up his yard.

TAMPA - If you spot a wild pig in south Tampa, you're not hallucinating.

A brown and white pig is loose, foraging in people's yards. Some call it the Sunset Park Porker.

According to Marlin Anderson, who has seen the oinker about 15 times, it is about 50 pounds and ``runs like a bullet."

The pig scours throughout Sunset Park. It is white with a dark brown ``saddle" that covers its back and torso, Anderson said.

It is unknown whether the pig is a wild boar or a stray pet, but the animal doesn't have tusks or long hair.

``It's my understanding that they're looking for earthworms and other insects ... that they can smell the food," Anderson said. ``They can smell the earthworms and grubs underneath the grass. The snout, I've been told, is extremely tough."

Anderson, who lives on San Jose Street, said the pig lives in a swampy area near his home. The creature first attacked his front yard March 5.

Anderson said the pig has plundered about 1,000 square feet of the yard.

After spotting the pig, Anderson called Hillsborough County Animal Control. He was referred to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, which referred him to a professional trapper.

Anderson now has a pig trap in his front yard.

But much like the Roadrunner, the pig is too wily to be caught. The squeal machine enters the trap and eats the corn bait, but it avoids the spot that shuts the trap.

The swine used to eat corn at dusk, but it has learned, Anderson said. Now it comes out late at night, when Anderson isn't around to see it.

``He's getting smarter," Anderson said. ``He really pays attention, and he's noticing that [various] people are showing up at dusk and trying to hunt him."

The pig's ultimate fate is up to it, said Tom Mullen, field supervisor for Animal Capture of Florida. If the pig is healthy and tame, it probably will be given to a farm in the Plant City area, Mullen said.

Sunset Park residents hope that will happen soon.

The porker is causing minor chaos throughout the neighborhood.

Early last week, it ripped up about 20 square feet of Gil Cook's front yard on Sunset Boulevard. When Cook went outside to grab the newspaper, he noticed the mess.

``I don't know what its taste buds call for, but it sure did a good plowing job," he said.

The pig's path of destruction leads at least to the corner of Lois Avenue and Estrella Street. That's where 10-year-old Thomas Reynolds saw it.

``It was running around, digging up roots," he said. ``I saw it run around everywhere."

Ellie Montague just wants the pig caught. She said it is a neighborhood nuisance.

``We've all been joking about barbecued pig," Montague said.

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This story can be found at: <http://news.tbo.com/news/MGANNODH5SD.html>

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