

SWARA

the voice of Conservation in East Africa

THE IVORY POACHING SPECIAL

BURNING IVORY

Signal or smoke screen?



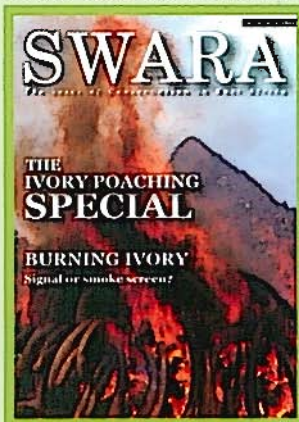


Photo: © Paolo Torchio



THE EAST AFRICAN
WILD LIFE SOCIETY

The Impala is the symbol of the East African Wild Life Society. 'SWARA' is the Swahili word for antelope.

Editor
Andy Hill

Assistant Editor
Samuel Maina

Editorial Board
Nigel Hunter, Michael Gochanja,
Esmond Martin, William Pike, Paolo Torchio, Kalpan
Patel, Patricia Kameri-Mbote, Mordecai Ogada, Lucy
Warungi

Design & Layout
George Okello

Circulation and Subscriptions
Rose Chemweno

Advertising
The Business Platform Ltd
Tel: 254-20-3587879
Cell: 0722-7703671/0736-375111
Email: info@businessplatform.co.ke

Advertising / Sales
Gideon Bett

SWARA Offices
Riara Road, off Ngong Road,
Kilimani, Nairobi

P.O. Box 20110-00200, Nairobi, Kenya

Tel: + 254 (20) 3874145
Fax: + 254 (20) 3870335
E-mail: info@eawildlife.org

SWARA is a quarterly magazine owned and published by the East African Wild Life Society, a non-profit making organisation formed in 1961 following the amalgamation of the Wildlife Societies of Kenya and Tanzania (themselves both founded in 1956). It is the Society's policy to conserve wildlife and its habitat in all its forms as a regional and international resource.

Copyright © 2010 East African Wild Life Society. No part of this publication may be reproduced by any means whatsoever without the written consent of the editor. Opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily the official view of the Society. SWARA accepts the information given by contributors as correct.

THE EAST AFRICAN WILD LIFE SOCIETY

PATRONS

The President of Kenya
The President of Tanzania
The President of Uganda

CHAIRMAN

Fredrick Owino

VICE-CHAIRMAN

Tom Fernandes, John Emily Otekat, Jake
Grieves-Cook

TREASURER

Stanley Ngaine

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Nigel Hunter

TRUSTEES

Frederick IB Kyanja, Albert Mongi,
Hilary Ng'weno, Mohamed Jan Mohamed

MEMBERS OF COUNCIL

Mike Norton-Griffiths, Maj. Gen. (Rtd.) Peter
Waweru, Joseph Gilbert Kibe, Virginia Wangui
Shaw, Esmond Martin, Kalpan Patel

PROGRAMME AREAS

Conservation Advocacy and Education,
Species Conservation, Forests and Water
Catchment, Wetland, Marine and Coastal
Reserves, Wildlife Conservation in and outside
National Parks and protected areas

HONORARY MEMBERS

Chas G Allen Jr, M Bishop, Mr & Mrs H E
Rocoveri, James H Webb

EAWLS HEAD OFFICE

P O BOX 20110 - 00200,
Riara Road, Kilimani, Nairobi
Tel: 254-20-3874145 Fax: 254-20-3870335
Email: info@eawildlife.org

Members are requested to address any
queries to the Executive Director
info@eawildlife.org

Letters to the Editor: swaraeditor@gmail.com



SWARA appreciates the continued support it
receives from Fauna and Flora International

EAWLS WORLDWIDE REPRESENTATIVES

AUSTRALIA

Trevor Fernandes
Wildlife Safari
(Australia)
213 Railway Road
Subiaco WA 6008

BELGIUM

John Rowland
11 Rue Falder
1050 Brussels

Robby Bolleyn
Fotografie
Dascottelei 95 Bus 7
2100 Deurne-
Antwerpen

CANADA

Dr N J C Mathews
12-1400 Park Street
Pemberton
V0N 2L1

GERMANY

Klaus Fenger
Zugspitzstr. 65
8100 Garmisch-
Partenkirchen

Jutta & Dirk Ohlerich
Schutzbaumstrasse
50
D-63073 Offenbach

IRELAND

David Bockett
30 Zion Road
Dublin 6

KENYA

Mark Easterbrook
P O Box 208
Malindi

Suthar Kiran
P O Box 1000
Meru

NETHERLANDS

Stichting EAWLS
Ridderhoflaan 37
2396 C J Koudekerk
A/D RIJN

SPAIN

Lidia Sanchez Rugules
c/o Nutria 26
La Moraleja 28109

SWEDEN

Hugo Berch
Össjö Gård
S-266 91 Munka-
Ljungby

SWITZERLAND

Anton-Pieter Duffhuis
Vollenweld
CH - 8915 Hausen
Am Albis

Therese & Bernhard
Sorgen
Erlenweg 30
8302 Kloten

POLAND

Grzegorz Kepski
Białobrzaska 30/39
02-341 Warsaw
Poland

UGANDA

Michael Keigwin,
Uganda Conservation
Foundation, P O Box
34020, Kampala

UNITED KINGDOM

Prof Bryan Shorrocks
Environment Dept.
University of York
Heslington
York
YO10 5DD

USA

Keith Tucker
Chief American
Representative
Acacia Travel, 19985
Powers Road, Bend,
Oregon 97702 USA

Mr & Mrs Harry Ewell
Financial
Representatives
200 Lyell Avenue
Spencerport
NY 14559-1839

Wil Smith
Karen Zulauf
Deeper Africa
4450 Arapahoe
Avenue
Suite 100, Boulder
CO 80303
www.deeperafrica.
com

Kurt Leuschner
70065 Sonora Road
#267
Mountain Centre
CA 92561

Lawrence A Wilson
3727 Summitridge
Drive
Atlanta
GA 30340

Gordon Crombie
2725 Park Ave
Franklin Park
IL 60131

Grant & Barbara
Winther
867 Tauric Pl. NW
Bainbridge Island
WA 98110

Charles Kasinga
Kenya.com Inc
16152 Beach Blvd
Suite 117
Huntington Beach
CA 92647-3523

The illegal ivory road to China – and vanishing elephants

SWARA devotes much of this last issue of 2011 to ivory poaching because the exception of illegal slaughter in recent years is fast becoming a norm and threatens an iconic species with near extinction, especially in Southeast Asia, West and Central Africa.

It is important in 21st century conservation to be able to add facts and figures to an argument encased in emotion, ranging from indifference to outrage. We are indebted to Esmond Martin and Lucy Vigne, long-time collaborators with SWARA, for their contributions to this issue, both in inspiration and words on the page.

Supported by the Elephant Family, The Aspinall Foundation and Columbus Zoo and Aquarium, the two have produced a report which shows that the highway upon which illegal ivory travels leads to China, something Martin explained in SWARA 2009:03. It's not new information. We all knew it. But in this issue we provide the data to support the arguments to stop this illegal trade.

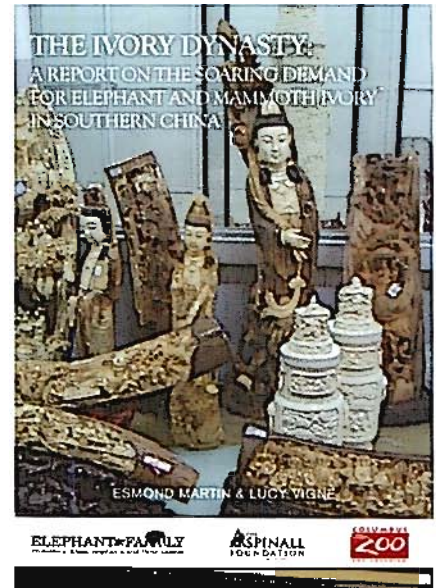
The Ivory Dynasty: A Report On The Soaring Demand For Elephant And Mammoth Ivory In Southern China is an unemotional 22-page document that builds on Martin's and Vigne's earlier work.

Its main findings will surprise few, but it does add some alarming figures to conservation conjecture. It is also the first survey of Chinese ivory factory owners and retail traders since the 2008 CITES-backed sale of ivory to China. It says:

- There is evidence of widespread illegal ivory sales, soaring demand and poor law enforcement.
- China's system of paper permits on legal ivory is widely abused.
- Between Guangzhou and Fuzhou,

119 outlets were seen to be selling elephant ivory.

- Almost two thirds (63%) of all of the ivory items for sale had no proper ID card or none was available.
- There were few reports of checks or confiscations by Chinese authorities of illegal ivory items in the shops.
- Hidden ivory items were found along with illegal ivory objects from endangered and poached Thai elephants.
- Consumer appetite for ivory in China is soaring. A total of 6,437 elephant ivory items were counted in Guangzhou, which represents a 50% increase since Martin's last survey in 2004.
- Demand for legal mammoth ivory has shot up by 100% in the same city, bringing the total mammoth and elephant ivory count to almost 13,000 pieces.
- Government-owned tusks sell for \$455/kg on average, whilst privately owned raw ivory is fetching \$750/kg at the factory level. Good quality mammoth tusks are meanwhile fetching \$400/kg wholesale.
- The legal sale of mammoth ivory in China is compounding the risk of illegal elephant ivory being passed off as legal mammoth ivory.
- Martin and Vigne conclude: "It is shocking that the retail ivory trade is not better controlled in southern China. China continues to be the largest importer of illegal ivory in the world, mostly from Africa, but also from endangered Asian elephants. Inspections of shops would not take much money



nor manpower in southern China and would cut down this illegal trade significantly if carried out effectively. Such law enforcement is urgent to reduce elephant poaching.

International understanding of the ivory market has been hampered by some erroneous figures, as Stiles, Martin and Vigne write. Stiles, a consultant of the IUCN African Elephant Specialist Group, also contributes his thoughts on the much-photographed tusk-burning in Kenya.

In addition, there are articles on poaching on the Congo basin, South Africa and Kenya, which help map the extent of the problem. In the spirit of SWARA being "a forum for informed debate," as its charter states, we are also running Felix Patton's articles on Traditional Chinese Medicine and on two contrasting lodge styles, and their effect on conservation. ●

AJH

Exaggerated ivory prices can be harmful to Elephants

by Dan Stiles, Esmond Martin and Lucy Vigne

The TRAFFIC press release on the report into Vietnam's ivory market¹ unleashed a wave of misinformation that has been quoted in countless places (see box for a small sample). Unfortunately, the press release was never shown to the report's author before publication; otherwise the prices that led to the misinterpretation would not have been released in that way.

High wholesale prices of over \$1,000/kg for raw ivory only occur in Asia for very large tusks, tusk tips, or when tusks are in unusually short supply, and must not be taken out of context and quoted as the norm. The \$1,500/kg was a claim made in an expensive tourist boutique about Asian tusks imported to Vietnam from Laos, and the higher \$1,863/kg was a retail price in an antique shop for a 200g polished tusk tip cut from a captive Asian elephant.

The report pointed out that no African raw ivory was seen during the survey in Vietnam and that raw ivory was very scarce at the time, which resulted in wholesale prices of Asian raw ivory in the country being probably the highest in the world. The prices certainly did not refer to African raw ivory, nor were they indicative of prices elsewhere in Asia. As for the tusk tips, these were retail prices, not wholesale, and tusk tips are not representative of average raw ivory prices. The report's author acknowledges here that he

'An assessment of the illegal ivory trade in Vietnam said Vietnamese illegal ivory prices could be the highest in the world, with reports of tusks selling for up to \$1,500/kg and small, cut pieces selling for up to \$1,863/kg.' TRAFFIC press release, February 16, 2009.

'TRAFFIC says that tusks can sell for as much as \$1,500 (£1,000) a kilo in Vietnam and small pieces of worked ivory for more than \$1,800 a kilo.' BBC Wildlife, April, 2009.

'The price of illegal ivory is, according to TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring organization, a staggering \$1,500 a kilo.' Born Free press release, 15 April, 2009.

'Demand ... drove the wholesale price for high-quality ivory from \$200 per kilogram in 2004 to \$850 per kilogram by 2007. The price doubled again by 2009 [\$1,700/kg].' Sam Wasser, et al., Scientific American, July, 2009.

'Although it is difficult to price ivory exactly recent reports indicate that it can be sold in China for as much as \$1,700/kg.' International Fund for Animal Welfare press release, 17 March, 2011.

should have explained the prices in more detail in the Vietnam report.

A later TRAFFIC survey in Thailand found no large tusks on the market, only smaller tusks. The report said: "Small tusks less than five kg cost from \$286-429/kg in early 2008"². Why is it that these lower correct prices were not quoted by NGOs, scientists or the media? The answer is that only exceptionally high prices are selected by those wishing to draw attention to elephant poaching in order to gain more publicity. Unfortunately, inflated prices may have the opposite effect by tempting more poachers and traders into the ivory business.

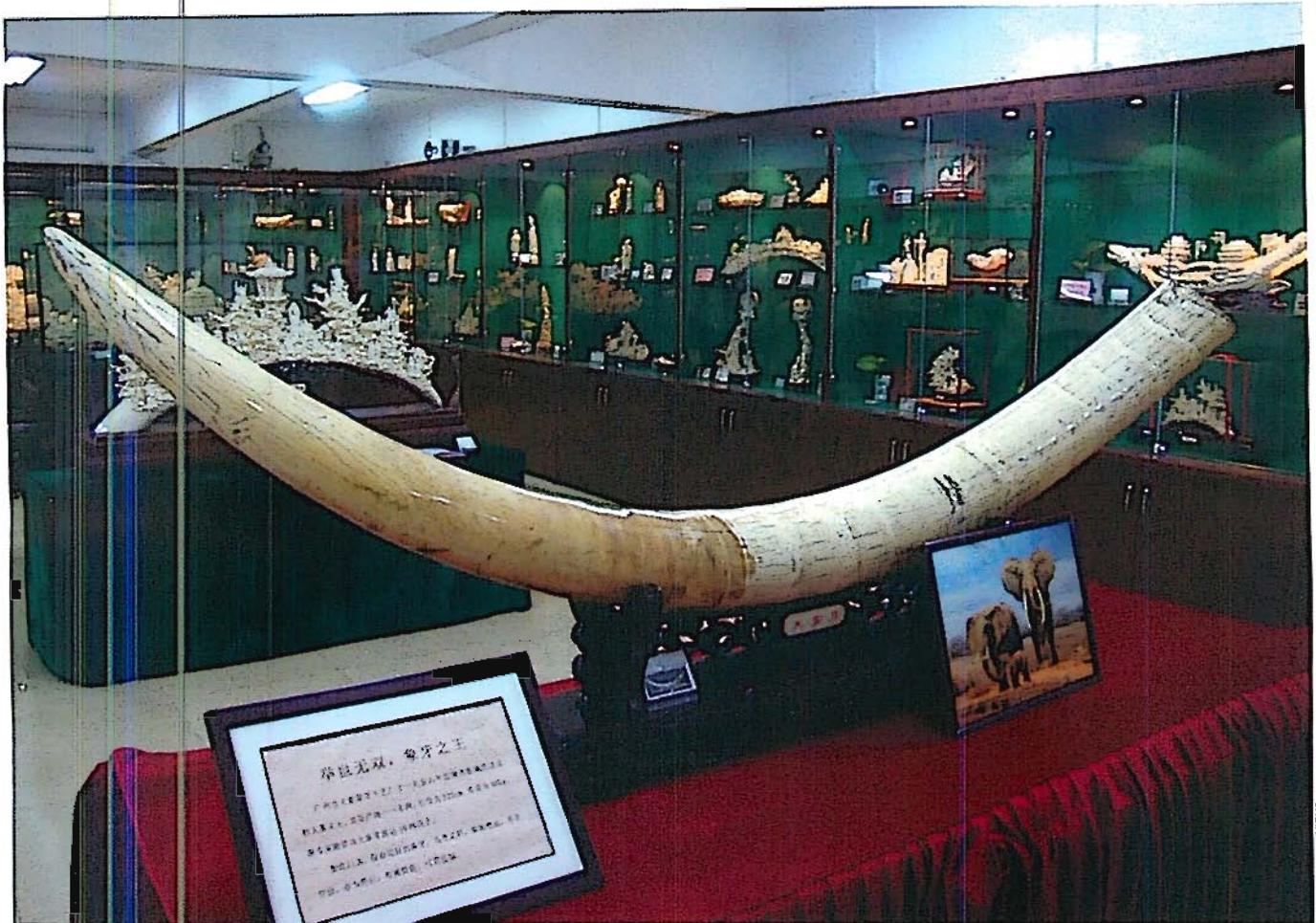
Again, in the August 2011 edition of Vanity Fair, which has a huge global circulation, the editor of Alex Shoumatoff's article stated that raw ivory in southern China at the factory level was said to fetch \$700 a pound, which is \$1,540/kg. This figure came from an indirect source, not from factory staff, and is more than double the price ivory traders and ivory factory managers state they have actually been paying in southern China, according to a survey conducted by Martin and Vigne in January 2011.³

The CITES Secretariat has also been concerned about inaccurate high prices being quoted in publications. In August

¹Stiles, D. (2008). *An assessment of the illegal ivory trade in Vietnam*. TRAFFIC Southeast Asia.

²Stiles, D. (2009). *The elephant and ivory trade in Thailand*. TRAFFIC Southeast Asia.

³Martin, E. and Vigne, L. (2011). *The ivory dynasty: A report on the soaring demand for elephant and mammoth ivory in Southern China*. Elephant Family, The Aspinall Foundation and Columbus Zoo and Aquarium.



This is the famous Daxin ivory display room at their ivory factory in Guangzhou.

PHOTO BY: LUCY VICINE

The CITES Secretariat has also been concerned about inaccurate high prices being quoted in publications. In August 2011, it said: “The Secretariat has consistently, over a long period of years, warned against quoting what appear to be grossly-inflated figures.

2011, it said: “The Secretariat has consistently, over a long period of years, warned against quoting what appear to be grossly-inflated figures (and many in the NGO community agree that they do not actually reflect what is commonly paid in the black market), as this must inevitably help prompt speculative poaching”.

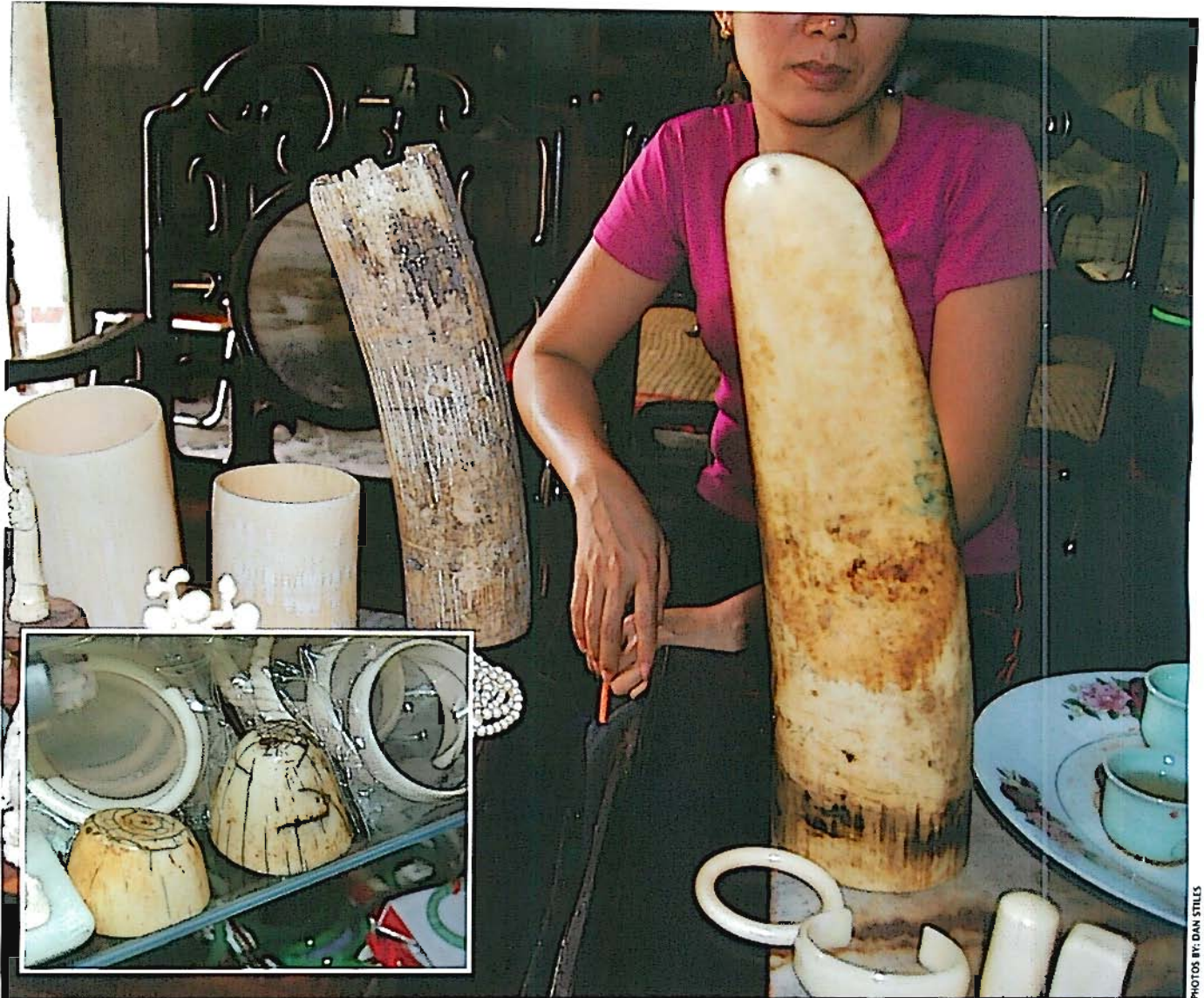
There has indeed been an increase in prices for raw ivory in the last few years in Asia and this suggests growing demand, particularly in China. Factors causing this include increasing prosperity, fashion, competition, perceptions of future value, etc. The rising prices are also due to factors affecting supply, such as government seizures and associated risks including bribes and concealed shipping. Because price is such an important indicator of demand and market trends, we would recommend that a thorough study from direct sources (poachers, traders, factory managers and carvers) be

conducted to investigate price trends, both in Asia and Africa.

There are methodological difficulties in collecting accurate raw ivory prices. Some investigators pose as ivory buyers, or as agents of other dealers, or less commonly say that they have tusks to sell. Sometimes investigators say they are simply collecting information for personal research on this traditional art form or perhaps for a book, stressing that they have no connection with government or law enforcement agencies. The 'buying' ploy will produce more cooperation from the informant as there is a financial interest. If the 'researcher' hat is worn, the informant will sometimes expect to be paid.

Problems that present themselves in collecting ivory price data include:

- (1) Trust - the informant must believe that you are who you say you are, and are not associated with law enforcement or other threats.



PHOTOS BY: DAN STILES

TOP. The middleman in a Vietnamese village near Hanoi wanted US\$ 870/kg for the 3 kg tusk said to be from Laos.
 INSERT: These tiny tusk tips were selling in Viet Nam for the equivalent of more than US\$ 1,600/kg each. The prices were starting prices in a retail shop and were not representative of raw ivory prices.

- (2) Knowledge - the informant should have accurate information on current market prices. It is common to receive a great range of prices from informants, partly due to limited informant knowledge.
- (3) Variability - there might actually be great variability in prices, as a result of variable sources of ivory and compartmentalised supply chains. This occurs particularly with an illegal commodity in which co-conspirators maintain secrecy.
- (4) Truthfulness – the informant should reveal actual prices eventually. There is always a degree of negotiation in any

business transaction. Thus, if the investigator is posing as a potential buyer, the first asking price will often be inflated. If the investigator is wearing the researcher hat, in which no negotiation takes place, s/he should assess the person's truthfulness through conversation and repeat questioning. It helps if the investigator is experienced and has knowledge of what reasonable prices to expect, though s/he should keep an open mind.

Collecting, analysing and reporting prices of a commodity such as raw elephant ivory, which is usually illegal,

pose other problems. The first factor to note is where in the commodity chain the price is collected. This is almost never specified in NGO and press reports. An individual tusk has many prices as it travels from the poacher, through middlemen and possibly through various countries, to workshops. The geographical location of the tusk as it moves along the chain influences the price as it is subject to transport and handling costs.

A second factor is the size of the tusk, again rarely specified in NGO and press reports. In general, the larger the tusk, the higher the price per kg. We would recommend four categories: small (< 5

Table 1. Recent wholesale average raw ivory prices in Africa in US dollars

Location	Year	Level	Average of all sizes	0-5 kg	5-10 kg	10-20 kg
CENTRAL AFRICA¹						
Cameroon, SE	2010	Poacher	33	26	26	40
Congo, north	2010	Poacher	21	12	20	31
DRC, NE	2010	Poacher	34	16	29	56
Cameroon, Yaounde	2010	Middleman	41	33	40	50
DRC, Kisangani	2010	Middleman	97	50	90	150
EASTERN AFRICA						
Kenya, north ²	2008	Poacher	33	-	-	-
Kenya, south ²	2009	Poacher	38	-	-	-
Kenya, SE ³	2010	Poacher	43	-	-	-
Kenya, SE ³	2011	Poacher	67	-	-	-
Tanzania, north ²	2009	Poacher	63	-	-	-
Ethiopia, Addis Ababa ⁴	2009	Workshop	81	81		

Table 2. Recent wholesale average raw ivory prices in Asia in US dollars

Location	Year	Level	Average of all sizes	0-5 kg	5-10 kg	10-20 kg
China, south ⁵	2010	Workshop	-	750	900	-
Japan ⁶	2009	Middleman	-	278	333	-
Philippines ⁷	2009	Workshop	320	-	-	-
Philippines ⁷	2010	Workshop	446	272	409	625
Thailand ⁸	2008	Workshop	-	358	-	-
Vietnam ⁹	2008	Workshop	791	791	-	-

N.B: The prices are averages for each weight class; the actual price for an individual tusk could be somewhat more or less than what is indicated in the tables.

Sources for tables

1. Stiles, D. (2011). *The Elephant Meat Trade in Central Africa: Summary Report*. Occasional Paper 45, IUCN.
2. Martin, E. (2009). China's growing ivory demand kills more elephants. *Swara* 32 (3): 36-38.
3. Information from captured poachers in Tsavo area to E. Martin.
4. Martin, E. and Vigne, L. (2010). The status of the retail ivory trade in Addis Ababa in 2009. *TRAFFIC Bulletin* 22 (3): 141-146.
5. Vigne, L. and Martin, E. (2011). Consumption of elephant and mammoth ivory increases in southern China. *Pachyderm* 49: 79-89.
6. Vigne, L. and Martin, E. (2010). Consumer demand for ivory in Japan declines. *Pachyderm* 47: 45-54.
7. Information from craftsmen and retailers in Manila to E. Martin.
8. Stiles, D. (2009). *The elephant and ivory trade in Thailand*. TRAFFIC Southeast Asia. All prices are from Asian ivory. No pieces larger than 5 kg were found.
9. Stiles, D. (2008). *An assessment of the illegal ivory trade in Vietnam*. TRAFFIC Southeast Asia. All prices are from Asian ivory. No pieces larger than 5 kg were found.

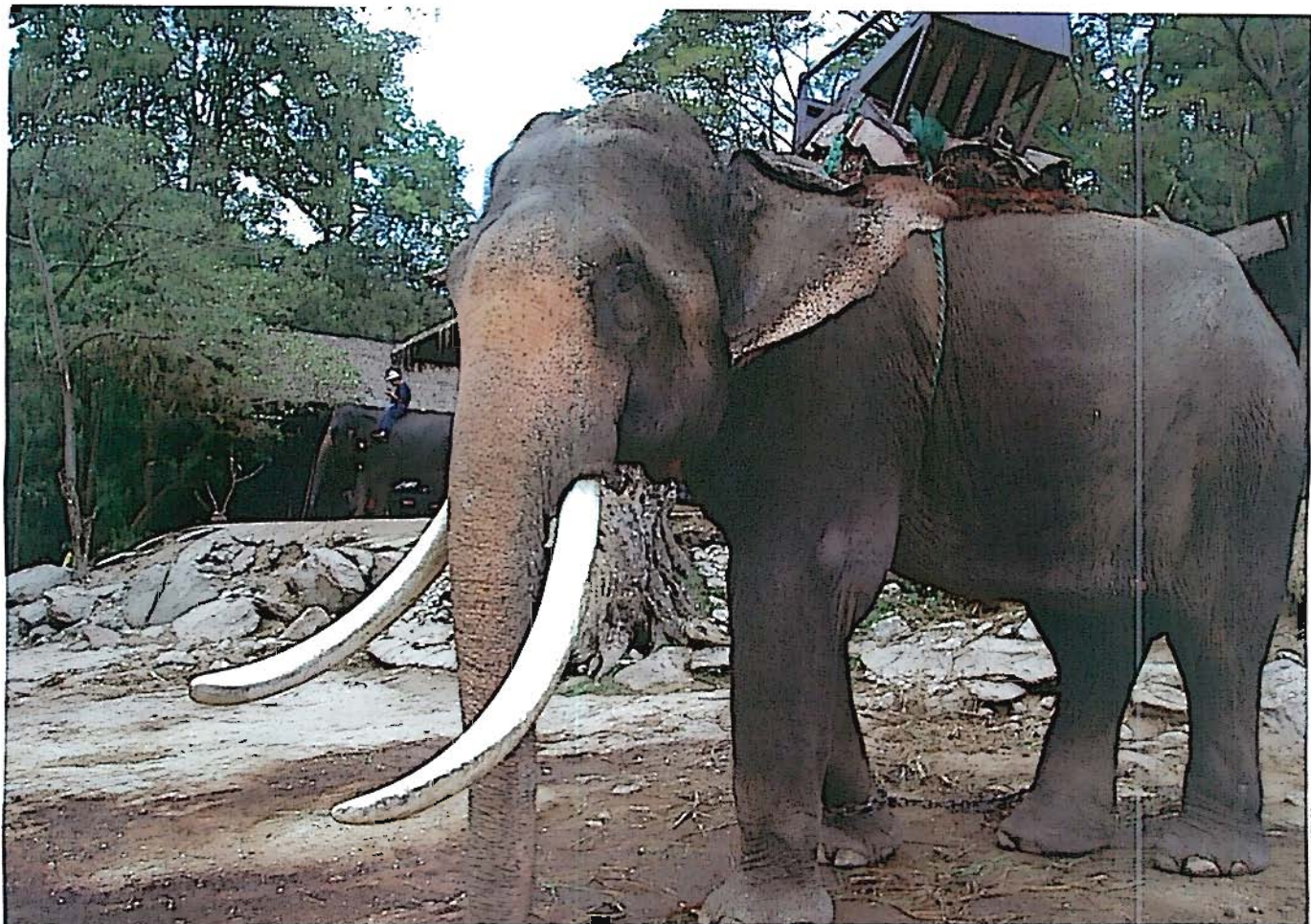


PHOTO BY: DAN STILES

Asian bulls can have large tusks, like this tusker in northern Thailand. These tusks would be worth up to \$40,000 sold to a Chinese ivory factory.

kg); medium (5-10.kg); large (10-20 kg); and very large (> 20 kg).

The third factor is ivory quality. A tusk free of cracks, blemishes and signs of weathering or decomposition is worth much more than a flawed tusk. If the tusk is cut into pieces, the tip and solid centre are more valuable than the hollow end-section. There are other factors that can influence prices, but these three main ones account for about 90% of the variation.

The best that an investigator can do is to record and report accurately the prices gathered from informants, taking into consideration the above factors. We would like to take this opportunity to present some raw ivory prices that we have collected from direct sources in the field in Africa and Asia from 2008 to 2011 (See tables).

The average of seven prices for small ivory in Vietnam is \$791/kg with the two tusk tips removed (as they were not wholesale prices), which fits with prices in southern China. One can see that there is an extremely large differential between prices in Africa and those in eastern Asia - the result, most likely, of a combination of supply shortages and transport expenses and risk factors in Asia.

We would urge those who are dedicated to reducing the scourge of elephant poaching to collect and report accurate data on ivory trafficking. With good data, scientifically informed policy can be formulated to achieve elephant conservation. ●

DAN STILES first came to Kenya in 1971 to assist on the Koobi Fora paleoanthropology project at Lake Turkana. He has taught at the University of Nairobi from 1977-1981 then worked for UNEP and other UN agencies for several years. He has researched extensively in Africa and Asia on forest and drylands natural resource utilisation. Since 1999, he has been carrying out ivory trade studies and currently is co-ordinating an IUCN elephant meat and ivory study in Central Africa.

ESMOND MARTIN has a PhD in geography from the University of Liverpool. He specialises in studying the illegal trade in wildlife products, especially rhino horn and elephant ivory. He began this research in the 1960s, examining the smuggling of ivory, mangrove poles, liquor and people in the Indian Ocean using traditional dhows. He has recently been studying the mammoth ivory trade.

LUCY VIGNE was born in Cape Town and brought up in London. She has a degree in Zoology from Oxford University. She has lived in Kenya all her adult life, working as the first Executive Officer for IUCN's African Elephant and Rhino Specialist Group in the 1980s. She has been researching the ivory trade in Asia and Africa investigating ivory demand world-wide.