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SWARA

The voice of Conservation in East Africa



GRÉVY'S ZEBRA

FLAGSHIP CONSERVATION INDICATOR

THE VULTURE SUMMIT
GLOBAL CONCERN

IVORY SLEUTHING - FAKES RULE



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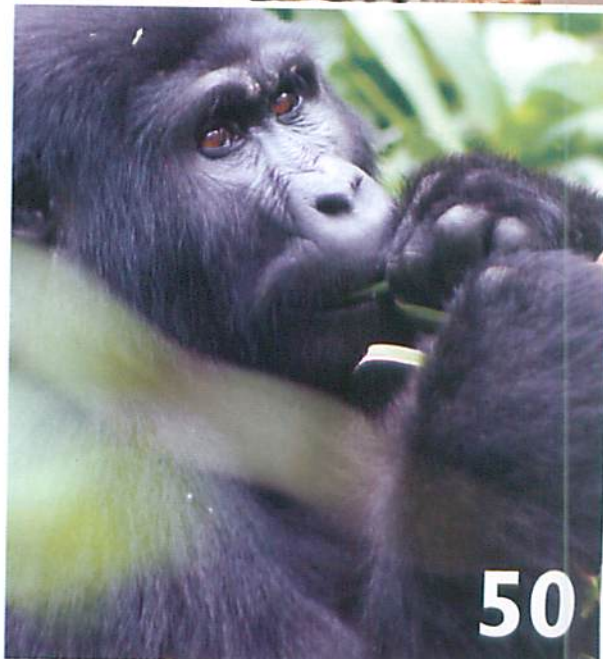
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Photo: © Suzi Ezsterhas



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.

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Tourists underwrite Morocco's illegal trade in wildlife artefacts



Crowds gather at a bird market held twice a week on the edge of Fes' Medina.

Exotic Morocco has everything a tourist could dream of – from desert wastes to snow-capped mountains and a rich cultural heritage and cuisine in between. But tourists, alas, whether wittingly or unwittingly, are not only supporting the holiday trade – they are backing an illegal trade in live species and wildlife products.

Morocco has a rich and varied natural landscape of mountains, deserts and coasts containing diverse wildlife. It has an impressive cultural heritage of the largest functioning medieval city in the Muslim world, magnificent old buildings, a unique cuisine and a present-day lifestyle based on traditional Islamic beliefs adapted by influences from the French Protectorate Period (1912-1956), such as the

widespread use of the French language. Morocco attracts a huge number of foreign visitors, 9.3 million in 2010, more than double the number in 2001, mostly from nearby France and Spain.

Foreign tourists, along with some of the 35 million Moroccans, support an almost totally illegal retail wildlife trade in live species and their products. This retail trade has hardly been studied in detail, although there have been surveys of the wholesale export of some species, such as the extensive international trade in wild-caught tortoises (*Testudo graeca graeca*). We, therefore, decided to examine what wildlife and their products are offered for sale in the retail shops and stalls in two of the most frequently visited cities in Morocco during three weeks in December 2011.

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PHOTOS BY: ESMOND MARTIN

These are our findings:

FES

Fes, a city of a million people, was our first place of study. Approximately 300,000 people live in the Old City, or Medina, carrying out a traditional way of life that has remained almost the same for centuries. For example, the tanneries in Fes are some of the most striking sights to witness anywhere in the Muslim world. Dating back to the 10th century the scene has changed little in appearance: men can be seen standing in cauldrons of gushing water, treating skins of goats, sheep and cows with pigeon dung, cow urine and other substances. Some workers apply various dyes in vats. Surrounding the medieval scene are roofs covered by the very brightly dyed skins in the sun. The workers are an hereditary guild, passing their skills from one generation to the next.

The tanneries are not the only businesses carrying on in a traditional manner in Fes. There are literally

In the wild, tortoises daily walk amazingly long distances. Being packed together in small boxes in which they can barely move around causes stress and leads to premature death.



PHOTOS BY: ESMOND MARTIN



TOP & BELOW: Tanners in Fes slosh about in the debris of animal skins, a scene practically unchanged for centuries.

thousands of small, specialised workshops where artisans make furniture, carpets, leather goods, metal objects, clothing, etc. The government supports them directly by not levying value added tax on goods sold in the Medina. Many workshops make a variety of goods primarily for the domestic market, but also items for tourists. They are located off narrow lanes where no cars or trucks can operate, so people transport goods on

the backs of donkeys, mules and horses. Interspersed among the workshops are thousands of small retail stalls selling locally-made curios.

In the Medina and the Ville Nouvelle, the so-called 'new city' begun by the French in the early 20th century, there are larger antique/souvenir shops. In five of these shops we saw 27 ivory items probably only two of which were made after 1990, the date of the international ivory trade ban of CITES.

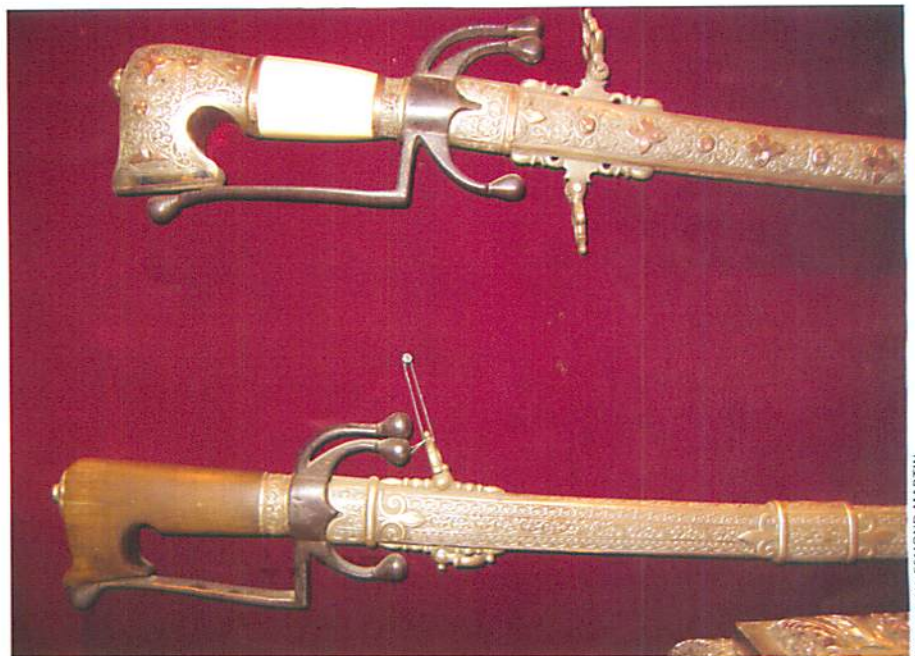
We saw no brand-new ivory items for sale. Those made after 1990 were one necklace and one tortoise figurine from Central or West Africa. The older items comprised nine knife rests, five jewellery items, four animal figurines, two carved tusks and two polished tusks (all made in West or Central Africa), a glove stretcher and a set of brushes (all made in Europe). Vendors told us most of these ivory items were at least 25 years old. Additionally, we found a mid-19th century sword with an ivory, silver and gold inlaid handle made by Berbers – the most expensive item with ivory in Fes at 100,000 dirhams or USD 12,048. Such shops offer discounts of 20% and occasionally up to 30%. The cheapest item was a 1-cm wide ring for USD 18.

For hundreds of years up to around 1920 ivory was crafted in Fes and other



TOP: The ferrets for sale at Fes' bird market are often removed from their cages so that people can see how tame they are.

BELOW: Some Berber-made 19th century swords seen in the antique shops of Fes and Marrakesh have rhino horn or ivory handles.



PHOTOS BY: ESMOND MARTIN

places in Morocco into a variety of objects, especially weapons, including rifles with ivory stocks and daggers or swords with ivory handles. The carvers also made jewellery, Koran boxes, containers for gunpowder, inlaid furniture and artificial human teeth: it is not entirely clear why Moroccan craftsmen stopped working ivory 100 years ago. This has certainly not been the case in other Arab countries in Africa, such as Egypt and Sudan, where carving is still taking place.

Moroccans gave one main explanation which was that the Berbers started using cheaper camel bone

instead. We saw thousands of camel bone items, many inlaid into wood and sometimes into metal objects. Most common were small squares of camel bone that entirely covered an item and were glued on together with metal wires said to allow the bone to expand and contract in the different seasons. The inlaid items included furniture, boxes, bowls, lamps, urns and weapons; and they were mostly 20 to 50 years old, vendors said. The larger items do not

sell quickly as they are heavy. Many are dyed with henna to make them an orange/brown colour, not resembling ivory. In contrast, in Egypt and Sudan, most camel bone items are bleached to simulate ivory and used to carve figurines, and jewellery.

A camel bone walking stick was priced at USD 783 in Fes while a solid ivory walking stick in Egypt was the same price, although ivory is a far superior and more expensive material.

The large pieces of furniture inlaid with camel bone in Fes were very highly priced. A cupboard made in the 1950s was USD 30,000.

The use of camel bone started declining around 1990, despite the huge increase in foreign tourists, and by 2008 had ended in Fes and elsewhere in Morocco except on special order. We spent eight days trying to track down a camel bone workshop in Fes but never found one. Again, the craftsmen's material of choice was replaced by a cheaper one, cow bone. Also, a less expensive metal, zinc, is now used instead of copper wire to hold the cow bone inlay pieces together. Many workshops on view in Fes use cow bone, but even this material is starting to be replaced by plastic that is even cheaper. The vendors claim that many customers do not care what materials are used, are often unable to recognise what they are anyway, and prefer the lower price and lighter weight of the plastic objects.

The most expensive raw material from a wild animal crafted in Morocco was rhino horn, for making weapon hilts. The use of rhino horn ended around 1910. In Fes we found for sale only four such items: two old daggers and two old swords with rhino horn hilts. Three were crafted in Morocco, and the other was a Yemeni curved traditional dagger. The Berber-made dagger dated from the late 18th century and was priced at USD 4,200, while a late 19th-century Berber-made sword with a rhino horn hilt was USD

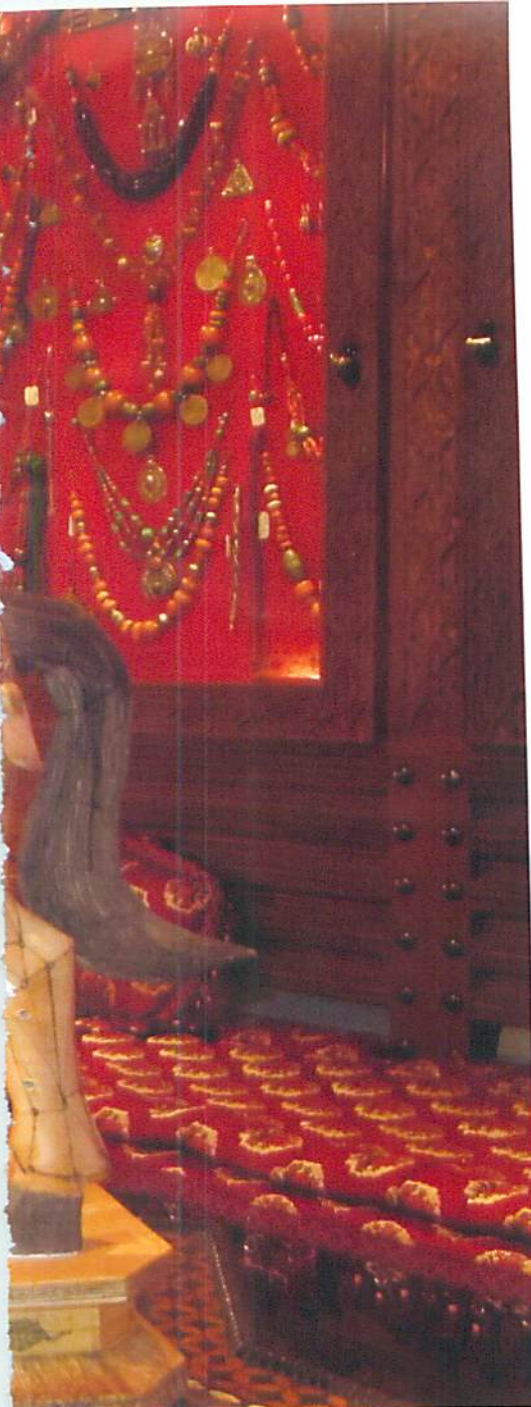


THE USE OF CAMEL BONE STARTED DECLINING AROUND 1990, DESPITE THE HUGE INCREASE IN FOREIGN TOURISTS, AND BY 2008 HAD ENDED IN FES AND ELSEWHERE IN MOROCCO EXCEPT ON SPECIAL ORDER.

8,400, and a sword, perhaps from the 14th century, made in Fes for a Jewish family, inlaid with gold and silver, was priced at USD 18,750.

Fes also has a retail trade in small live animals and birds. Quite a variety is in the bird market, located at Bab Jamai just outside the Medina. There, next to the wall surrounding the Medina, around 50 vendors offer birds for sale

on Friday and Sunday mornings, mostly doves, pigeons and song birds. Several hundred potential customers and fanciers of these birds wander around, all Moroccans crowded together, to assess quality and prices. We saw no foreign tourists during our two visits. Birds ranged in price from USD 2.0 to around USD 150. Ferrets were priced from USD 48 for juveniles to USD



PHOTOS BY: ESMOND MARTIN



TOP LEFT: This horse, covered with rectangular slices of polished camel bone, is a good example of Moroccan artistry, and was for sale in an antique shop in Fes.

TOP RIGHT: There were seven Barbary macaques being paraded around Djemaa el Fna in Marrakesh to earn money from tourists taking their photos. These monkeys are not very friendly, and the handlers keep them held on leads.

BELOW RIGHT: Waiting for tourists, the snake charmers in Djemaa el Fna in Marrakesh were intermittently displaying 44 snakes and putting those that were not being shown into woven baskets.

180 for adults that have been trained; they are often used by farmers to catch rabbits in their cultivated fields. Inside the Medina in cages on the pavements and cages of live chameleons and other lizards for sale as pets.

MARRAKESH

A city of almost two million people, Marrakesh's prosperity is due to tourism. Four-and-a-half times as many tourists, based on bed-nights, visit Marrakesh than Fes, and there are many more items made from wildlife products, some of which include ivory and rhino horn.

Marrakesh's Berber origins in the 11th century led to its rise as a medieval

metropolis, attracting caravans bringing in gold, ivory and slaves from the Mali and Songhai empires. There are spectacular ruins, palaces, mosques, madrasas, gardens, and the most famous attraction of all, Djemaa el Fna in the centre of the Medina. This is a large square, the name of which means 'the Assembly of the Dead'; it was the site for public executions up until the 19th century.

Depending upon the time of day, the square is crowded with musicians and story-tellers, traditional restaurants, orange-juice vendors, water sellers, scam artists, pick pockets, acrobats, women artists applying henna from syringes to decorate women's hands and feet, snake charmers, entertainers



PHOTOS BY: ESMOND MARTIN

TOP: Ivory sculptures, such as these from West and Central Africa, were offered for sale in a Marrakech antique shop for between USD 1,000 and USD 2,000 each.

BELOW: There were 18 traditional medicine stalls in Djemaa el Fna in Marrakech during our visit that offered a variety of items for sale; half were selling animal products, such as dried hedgehogs, porcupine quills, antelope horns, ostrich legs and eggs, tortoise shells, and dried lizards, especially chameleons.

with Barbary macaques on lead ropes, Berbers selling traditional medicines made from animal products and many stalls that appear at dusk to cook Moroccan specialities for diners. From early morning until after midnight, the square is alive with all sorts of activities, legal and illegal, mostly for the attention of Moroccans but also for foreigners.

During daylight hours, one can see Barbary macaques being led around the square to attract the attention of foreigners who may wish to take photographs and give an appropriate tip. The macaques are mostly caught in the Atlas and Rift Mountains. We asked the manager of these monkeys, who calls himself the *Marchand des Singes*, what price he can sell a monkey for and he said an adult was USD 482 and an untamed baby one USD 422 before bargaining. Foreigners sometimes buy the monkeys to take home, unlike the Moroccans who generally fear handling them.

Competing with the macaque keepers for tourist money are snake charmers



These 60-cm ivory tusks are actually musical instruments with a hole for blowing (called side-blown horns) and were selling for about USD 1,000 each. Also there were old ivory bangles for around USD 500 each before bargaining. All were made in Central and West Africa.

who display horned vipers, cobras and other species on the paved ground in the square. These are caught in the desert around Marrakesh. The poisonous snakes look docile, apparently because they are fed a depressant to reduce their movement. Few tourists are ever bitten by them. On one morning we counted 44 snakes being displayed; we saw additional ones kept in boxes.

In another part of the square, a group of men, mostly Berbers, offer animal and plant parts for decoration, for white magic and also for traditional medicines for Moroccans. Of the total of 18 such stalls, half displayed animal products for sale. The two most popular items were dried chameleons (30) at USD 5.0 each in five stalls, used against black magic or for good luck, and hollow ostrich eggs (25) at USD 16 each also in five stalls, to cure indigestion. There were also dried ostrich legs for USD 30 each, the fat of which is used to cure rheumatism, and we saw dried hedgehogs used as hair conditioner

for USD 9.0. The vendors sold various wildlife items for decoration, such as porcupine skin for USD 12 and quills for USD 2.0; antlers for USD 14 each; gazelle horns for USD 25 a pair and their skins for USD 54; stuffed iguanas for USD 10; and pairs of wild boar tusks for USD 120.

Branching off the square are narrow streets lined on both sides with hundreds of small shops and stalls displaying rather poor quality souvenirs for the foreign tourists and consumer goods for Moroccans. There were some ivory and rhino horn items, and we also found some in the Ville Nouvelle, the newer part of the city built by the French in the early 20th century.

We found 102 ivory items made before 1990 and 13 made after 1990 on display for sale in Marrakesh. Of those made since 1990, there were three fruit carvings from China and 10 objects from Central and West Africa (six female statues, one bangle, one ring, one carved and one polished tusk). In

total there were 40 carvings of people, 25 wrist bangles, seven daggers with ivory handles, five arm bangles, four rifles with ivory stocks, four knives with ivory handles and 30 other items. The rifles and daggers were made in southern Morocco, while nearly all the other items named above were made in Central and West Africa. The least expensive were simple earrings and pendants for USD 102. The most expensive was a European Art Deco 30-cm-tall statue of a female priced at USD 43,373. Old Berber-made antique weapons were even more expensive than in Fes, ranging from USD 14,000 to USD 31,000.

Ivory items in Marrakesh were all generally more expensive than in Fes. An old bangle, 1½cm in width, was USD 66 in Fes and about USD 465 in Marrakesh. An old carved tusk of 40-50 cm was USD 1,413 in Fes and USD 2,265 in Marrakesh. In Marrakesh the new ivory items were much more expensive than the old. A new 1½cm bangle was about USD 900, nearly double the price of an old one, while a 12½cm carving of a human figure was about USD 900 for an old one and USD 2,000 for a new one. This is mainly because the raw material is much more expensive nowadays, but perhaps also because there are many wealthy Europeans living in Marrakesh who collect Moroccan artefacts.

The ivory items for sale that were crafted in West and Central Africa are

CONSERVATION

usually transported by citizens from the countries in these regions to Marrakesh or they are brought back by Moroccan businessmen. One Tuareg vendor told us that he had relatives in Mauritania and he consequently visited the country regularly and bought ivory objects (probably carved farther south) to sell in his shop in Marrakesh. We had expected that more West and Central Africans coming through Morocco would bring worked ivory to Morocco to sell illegally to help finance their journey to Europe looking for work, or when they travel through Morocco on their way to Hadj in Saudi Arabia. However, the Moroccan, Spanish and French authorities have recently cracked down on the illicit movement of these people.

Most of the customers for ivory items in Morocco are foreign tourists. It is not accidental that vendors in Marrakesh offered four times as many ivory objects for sale as Fes because Marrakesh receives so many more foreigners. Vendors told us that the main buyers of ivory items are visitors from southern European countries, France, Italy and Spain, followed by Germans and then Americans. We saw no Chinese on our visit; they have been encouraging ivory sales in many other African countries.

The Marrakesh antique/souvenir shops also displayed old weapons with rhino horn hilts: 10 daggers and five swords, almost four times as many as we saw in Fes. All were at least 80 years old, according to the vendors. They ranged in price from about USD 5,780 to USD 26,500 for the daggers and from about USD 6,800 to an unusually high price of USD 120,000 for the swords.

As in Fes and other main cities in Morocco, vendors in Marrakesh sell on the pavements in the Medina live animals for pets, such as tortoises for USD 6-12 and chameleons for USD 12-26, common birds and squirrels, mostly to Moroccans and but occasionally to foreign tourists. ●

**We wish to thank the
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Morocco in December
2011.**

Wildlife regulations in Morocco

Trade in wild animals, dead or alive, and their products is illegal in Morocco, and it is illegal to display them for sale. No imports or exports of endangered wildlife products are allowed, according to CITES, of which Morocco has been a member since 1976, except for antiques and if a permit is granted. However, the Moroccan government has very rarely issued such a permit, and people find it relatively easy to smuggle out antique ivory and rhino horn items in their luggage.

Most vendors in Fes and Marrakesh were aware that their wildlife products were illegal, and those selling ivory were particularly wary. One antique dealer in Fes, for example, told us that in 2010 he sold an ivory statue carved in the Cote d'Ivoire to a foreigner, agreeing to post it to him. Customs, however, confiscated it so the vendor felt ethically obliged to return the money to his client; the vendor was not allowed to get his ivory statue back from Customs, but such confiscations are rare. In Marrakesh the managers of the more prestigious antique shops immediately warned us against purchasing items made with wildlife products for export, explaining that there was a law against so doing. In other antique/souvenir shops selling ivory, vendors were concerned by our questions and a few became uncooperative. Some did not want to give their shop addresses, presumably in fear of prosecution. One owner of an antique shop chased us into the street to find out what we were doing - a common hazard for researchers asking too many sensitive questions!

The present law does not enable government inspectors to enter shops to look for wildlife or wildlife products without permission from the owners. Officials told us that this law will change when the new wildlife bill is passed. The present law does, though, permit government authorities to inspect and confiscate illegal wildlife cargo at the international land borders, airports and seaports.

The Moroccan government does allow some sport hunting for certain species, usually restricted to certain times of the year. The main quarryies are wild boars, hares, birds (including partridges, pigeons, quails, ring doves and turtle doves) and vermin. These hunted animals, however, cannot be sold for any purpose.

All trade in wild animals and their products in Morocco is illegal. While a few vendors were aware of possible repercussions regarding their illegal sales of wildlife products, such as ivory, and did tell potential customers that taking them out of the country is not allowed, most were unconcerned about displaying and selling their goods as the laws on wildlife trade are commonly ignored. It is not known what effect wildlife sales have on the indigenous species in Morocco, but in the 20th century, Morocco lost its lions (probably in the 1920s) and leopards (in the 1980s) from hunting for the skin trade as well as from habitat loss.

Government officials involved in wildlife matters admitted that they need to tighten law enforcement, knowing that animals and their products are illegally for sale in the Medinas of the main cities, not just for Moroccan customers but also in some souvenir shops for foreign tourists. Officials need to inspect outlets with wildlife and wildlife products for sale and warn vendors against the trade, and if they persist, confiscate their items.

Morocco somewhat surprised us by its small number of ivory artefacts and wildlife for sale. We had expected to find much more evidence of north-bound economic migrants from Central and West Africa using ivory to pay for their journey. We do not know if the migrants are themselves aware of the risk bringing in ivory or whether they are searched at border posts. While the Moroccan authorities have obviously managed to educate local dealers on the law against wildlife trade, many dealers flout it. The authorities need to be stricter to ensure that Morocco does not become a market nor a conduit to other countries for African wildlife and wildlife products, especially ivory. ●