

The Ivory Markets of Africa by Martin, E. & Stiles, D. (2000), 84 pp., ISBN 9966-9683, unpriced. Save the Elephant, Nairobi/London.

The indefatigable wildlife trade investigator, Esmond Bradley Martin, and his colleague, Daniel Stiles, visited 22 African cities in 15 countries to compile this report. Travelling separately, mostly between May and November 1999, they identified 654 retail outlets offering c. 110,000 ivory artefacts for sale, some quite old. As well as performing the extraordinary task of counting all of these items without buying a single one, they noted worked and raw ivory prices, while Stiles made estimates of the weight of the displayed pieces. More than 70 workshops employing some 600 craftsmen were also tracked down.

The items for sale ranged from necklaces and bracelets through animals and figurines to carved and polished tusks, the majority being quite small. The main buyers were reported to be tourists from France, Spain and Italy, diplomats, UN and other foreign military personnel and non-governmental organization (NGO) staff. The biggest market visited was Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, with 20,000 ivory pieces on display, followed by Harare, Cairo, Addis Ababa, Luxor and Lagos. The cheapest raw ivory was found in Harare (\$US 8–17/kg) and the most expensive in Cairo (\$US 80–137/kg), clearly reflecting the abundance or absence of live elephants in the countries concerned. (An average price of c. \$US 100/kg was obtained for the 50 tonnes of raw ivory sold legally to Japanese buyers in the CITES-authorized ivory auctions in Southern Africa in April 1999.)

While the amount of ivory on sale may come as a surprise to the uninitiated, some limited comparative data from the past suggest that raw ivory prices and the quantities and prices of worked ivory were lower in 1999 than 10 years previously, everywhere except in Lagos. The authors infer that the main reason must be the 1989 ban on legal trade and fear that the legal sale in 1999 may lead to increased demand. However, the risk of drawing such an easy conclusion is demonstrated by careful study of some of the admirably detailed country-by-country material, which takes up the bulk of the report.

For example, it emerges that in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)—formerly Zaire—between 1989 and 1999, the number of retail outlets and workshops fell substantially, while the amount of raw ivory processed dropped from over 60 to some 19 tonnes per annum, with only about 1 tonne being worked internally. Nevertheless, within this overall decline, there was a drop after 1989 followed by a gradual recovery, leading to a boom during Mobutu's last years. This was followed by a steep fall in 1997 when Kabila took over, dramatically curtailing the number of foreigners going in and out

of Kinshasa, and then reducing raw ivory supplies as a result of the continued fighting in Eastern DRC blocking all lorry transport from this region. This suggests that internal fluctuations in supply and demand and in the enforcement of controls play a significant part in determining the level of the local trade and that looking for reasons for the 1989 ban or the limited experimental trade in 1999 is, at best, extremely risky.

What is more significant is that this document lays out systematically for the first time a detailed picture of the traffic in raw and worked ivory across many African borders along well-defined routes, especially from Central African range states to markets in West and north-eastern Africa. All of this activity, except for the export of non-commercial worked pieces with permits from Zimbabwe, is illegal under CITES. The CITES authorities, who have already asked Egypt to put their house in order, should be redoubling their efforts and extending them to the other CITES parties identified by Martin and Stiles. Clearly, the illegal export of raw ivory, originating chiefly in Central African 'producer' countries, to China, Taiwan and South Korea is even more damaging to elephant conservation than the intra-African trade. Its scale can be inferred from the 18 tonnes of raw ivory being processed annually in one country, DRC, which is not being sold locally.

The authors are to be congratulated on assembling such a valuable quarry of material with considerable care. They are wrong, however, to criticize 'faulty or ambiguous media coverage' (p. 77) for suggesting that EU citizens can legally import non-commercial worked ivory items with permits from Zimbabwe for personal use, because this is indeed the case. Moreover, the total of 3324 items recorded as being on offer in Kinshasa has been transposed into the total table on p. 71 as 4324.

Robin Sharp
Trustee, Fauna & Flora International.

Endangered Species, Threatened Convention: The Past, Present and Future of CITES edited by Hutton, J. & Dickson, B. (1999), ISBN 185383 636 2 (paperback), 185383 667 2 (hardback), £14.95 (paperback), £35 (hardback). Earthscan Publications Ltd., London.

This book is essential reading for anyone involved or interested in the workings of the CITES. The volume provides a series of expert essays organized into four sections: background; CITES in practice; case studies; and the future of CITES. The essays are well informed, lively and, in some instances, controversial.

There is an underlying and questionable theme running through the book: the idea that international trade

was perceived as the predominant threat to species at the time the Convention was drawn up. That may have been the understanding for certain species of animals, but experts have acknowledged from the outset that habitat loss is the main threat to plants, including those listed on CITES. The successes and failures of CITES may be incorrectly viewed if the Convention is judged against losses of biodiversity from causes it was not designed to address. The species case studies presented highlight shortcomings in the application of the Convention in the conservation of high profile species. Success stories can no doubt be found from amongst the other thousands of species subject to CITES controls. The chapter on the 'significant trade' process outlines a mechanism already developed within CITES, which offers one of the best means of increasing conservation success.

The suggested ways forward for CITES are radical and thought-provoking. Fundamental changes in relationships between community resource management and global regulation, and between CITES and the Convention on Biological Diversity, are called for. The goals are ambitious and worthy of wide debate.

Sara Oldfield
Fauna & Flora International.

The publishers are offering paperback copies of the book at a special price of £13, inclusive of postage and packing. Interested readers should contact Nim Moorthy, Assistant Marketing Manager, at: Earthscan Publications Ltd, 120 Pentonville Road, London N1 9JN, UK. Tel.: 44 20 7278 0433; fax: +44 20 7278 1142; e-mail: nmoorthy@earthscan.co.uk