

Ivory | continued from page 1

elephant ivory from animals that weren't poached. "I attended the Third Advisory Council meeting in Washington on June 9 to speak on this issue. That committee, whose members were calling for an ivory ban before they held their first meeting, made their first recommendation only four days later for a ban."

Strauss and his wife, who lived for decades in Zimbabwe, where they owned a safari company, were in town this week for a meeting of the Hill Country chapter of the Safari Club International, which funds and directs programs intended to conserve wildlife.

The Strausses, who are retired Leakey residents, said much of the

proceeds from hunts they sponsored went to local communities. Sport-hunted trophies of ivory are still allowed into the U.S., but no commercial imports are allowed, which Stone says removes the incentives for African nations and communities to value elephants.

The animals are known to sometimes devastate crops and kill human beings in Africa, so if the tusks of legally-hunted animals can't be sold, the animals may be more prone to simply being regarded as a nuisance and eradicated, Stone said.

She and the Strausses are hoping the U.S. Congress passes a bill under consideration, H.R.5052 — the Lawful Ivory Protection Act of 2014 — which eases the current federal ban.

However, the stance of the Fish and Wildlife Service is that a nearly complete ban on commercial elephant ivory trade is the best way to ensure that U.S. domestic markets do not contribute to the decline of the species.

Violating the new federal rule, if prosecuted as a violation of the Endangered Species Act, is punishable by as much as a year in prison and a \$100,000 fine for an individual or \$200,000 for an organization. Those who engage in illegal wildlife trade under the act may also face prosecution under the Lacey Act's anti-trafficking provisions, which carry a maximum penalty of five years in prison and fines of \$250,000 for an individual or \$500,000 for an organization.



Above: Linda Stone, left, and Alec Strauss look at an elephant tusk that has been engraved. Due to new federal laws enacted in February, more restrictions have been added to the import and sale of ivory.

Left: Stone does crimsnow work done on a piece of woolly mammoth tusk.

Below: A pair of old ivory castanets are on display in the home of artist Linda Stone.

Tom Holden/Times Photo Editor photo@dailytimes.com

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