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Ivory and Ivorine

Elephant Editors

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CAPTIVE ELEPHANT POPULATION OF NORTH AMERICA: 1979 UPDATE

As in the previous two issues, we have summarized information about captive elephants in North America into table form. The information was graciously provided by Janice Olsen of the International Species Inventory System (ISIS).

	<u>U.S. Zoos</u>	<u>Canadian Zoos</u>	<u>Total</u>
African Elephant	81	11	92
Asian Elephant	<u>122</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>126</u>
Total	203	15	218

All in all, 218 elephants were held captive in eighty-five North American zoos (excluding circuses) as of December 31, 1978. Total known elephant population in North America can be summarized as:

Elephants held in zoos as given by ISIS	218
Elephants held in Canada as given by Toby Styles (see newsletter No. 2, pp. 32-33)	12
Elephants held in circuses as given by Richard J. Reynold, III. (Of these, 13 were African; see reference 801)	<u>277</u>
Total (as of April 30, 1979)	507

IVORY AND IVORINE**IVORY**

Below are excerpts from a news release sent to us by the Fund For Animals on March 12, 1979.

"The worldwide demand for ivory, combined with destruction of the elephant's habitat, are annually wiping out hundreds...of these animals,...endangering their future survival. Last year the U.S. Department of Interior placed the African elephant on the threatened species list...(see Elephant Newsletter No. 2, pp. 10-13)."

Ten days later we received a letter from Congressman Anthony C. Beilenson entitled "Beilenson to Reintroduce Legislation to Protect Elephants and to Ban the Importation of Elephant Ivory."

"'We must take immediate action to curtail the international trade in elephant ivory if we want the elephant to survive,' Congressman Beilenson stated."

"'Unfortunately, these regulations (stated in H. R. 10083) have not been very effective,' Beilenson said. 'The partial ban is difficult to enforce

and illegal ivory still flows into the United States, especially in the form of ivory curios from Hong Kong.'"

On November 27, 1978, an article entitled "China: from Carving to Caves" appeared in the Tulsa Tribune. It was sent to us by Ken Kawata (December 4, 1978). Excerpts are included.

In an ivory carving factory:

"Served the inevitable tea, we listen to the manager explain his ivorycutting works. He is flanked by very large ivory carvings of the most intricate design and workmanship. Whenever he tells about his quotas being exceeded, we clap, and he claps as well.

'How much ivory do you use a year?'

'Several hundred tons.'

'Isn't the elephant an endangered species?'

The question is ignored, but as we progress through the factory, we are told the employees believe elephants drop their tusks once a year.

One of our group, dividing the weight of an average tusk into 200 tons, figures it would take 400 elephants to keep this plant supplied with ivory for a full 12 months.

It's hot in the factory and almost every craftsman works under the wash of electric fans. Much of the intricate detail in the tusks is created by electric hand drills or drills so tiny they resemble dental equipment. All the shavings and ivory dust are saved to form a composition material."

IVORINE

Various nature-conservation groups, including the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (January 12, 1978), EcoSystems, Ltd. (January 6, 1978), and Beauty Without Cruelty (January 15, 1979), have recently approached chemical plants such as Dow, Dupont, and Hoffman la Roche for a substitute for genuine ivory, namely, synthetic ivory.

This "ivorine" is already being distributed in the form of manufactured jewelry and ornaments by Messrs. Romanoff, International Limited, but it is not certain whether this can be obtained in cylindrical or other forms suitable for carving. The purpose of obtaining the "ivorine" in basic forms is to enable the ivory carvers of India, China, Hong Kong, and Africa to continue their livelihood without harming elephant populations.

In order to be successful enough to reduce the demand for real ivory and subsequently diminish the killing of elephants, the "ivorine" must equal real ivory in durability, texture, color, and "carve-ability." A difficult task, but we are hopeful regarding its development in the near future.

Incidentally, tusks made from fiberglass are being successfully moulded in Nairobi, Kenya. "They look pretty much like the real thing..." See reference 396.