



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY
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An elephant's ear used as a canvas for a painting offered for sale at the Safari Club International convention. Photo credit HSUS.

Potentially Illegal Wildlife Products, Unethical Captive-Bred Lion Hunts Exposed at Safari Club International Convention

Undercover investigation exposes the sale of threatened species products in likely violation of Nevada's wildlife trafficking law, captive lion hunts marketed in violation of SCI's policy

The World's Largest Trophy Hunting Convention

Every year Safari Club International, a trophy hunting industry group, holds its annual convention in Nevada, earning millions of dollars in revenue for the group and providing a platform for companies that organize trophy hunts, to meet up with trophy hunters who want to kill rare and majestic species.

Trophy hunting turns the killing of threatened and endangered species into a status competition. SCI members can enter their kills into a Record Book, provided that the trophy meets certain size requirements. A 2015 analysis of SCI's "Record Book", conducted by the Humane Society of the United States and Humane Society International, found that SCI members had killed at least 2,007 African lions, 1,888 African leopards, 791 African elephants, and 572 rhinos including 93 critically endangered black rhino. SCI also provides a platform for hunters to compete with one another for prizes for killing

elephants, lions, leopards, bears and other animals. To win the top prize, a hunter would have to kill over 300 different types of animals.

Conservation Law and Hunting Ethics

Nevada's Wildlife Trafficking Law (N.R.S. 597.905)

Effective January 1, 2018, a Nevada statute made it unlawful for any person to “purchase, sell, offer for sale or possess with intent to sell any items that is, wholly or partially, made of an animal part or byproduct derived from a shark fin, a lion of the species *Panthera leo* or any species of elephant, rhinoceros, tiger, leopard, cheetah, jaguar, pangolin, sea turtle, ray, mammoth, narwhal, walrus or hippopotamus.”

Any person who violates N.R.S. 597.905 is guilty of a gross misdemeanor for the first offense, a category E felony for a second offense, and a category D felony for a third offense, in addition to civil penalties up to \$6,500.

The State Senate, in introducing the legislation (S.B. 194), found that wildlife “trafficking results in unsustainable declines in population...Nevada has a long tradition of conservation. Senate Bill 194 will give authorities better tools to help combat the intrastate illegal wildlife trade.”¹

Canned Lion Hunts and SCI's Policy

In South Africa, between 6,000 and 8,000 lions are kept in captivity, bred and sold to be killed by trophy hunters in “canned or captive-bred” lion hunts (the practice of shooting captive-bred lions in a fenced area from which they cannot escape.)

In February 2018, SCI issued a policy² opposing hunting of captive-bred lions and claimed that it would not accept advertising from any operator of such hunts, nor allow operators to sell hunts for lions bred in captivity at the SCI annual convention.

The Dallas Safari Club adopted a similar policy³ opposing captive-bred lion hunting.

Key Findings

Between January 9 and 11, 2019 HSUS and HSI investigators visited the Reno-Sparks Convention Center where the convention was held and discovered that:

- Close to two dozen vendors were selling or offering to sell dozens of items that appear to violate Nevada's wildlife trafficking law.
- Items offered for sale included an elephant skin sofa; elephant leather boots, shoes, chaps, belts, and saddles; bracelets made from elephant hair; an entire mammoth tusk; mammoth tusk carvings; stingray skin boots, shoes, belts and purses; buckets of hippo teeth; hippo leather belts and boots; and shark skin belts.
- A knife with a handle made of narwhal tusk was offered for sale on the convention floor.
- A vendor who assured investigators that a custom-made hippo skull table was available upon request.
- Paintings using elephant ears and skins as canvases were offered for sale on the convention floor.

¹ <https://www.leg.state.nv.us/Session/79th2017/Minutes/Senate/CLE/Final/499.pdf>

² <https://www.safariclub.org/news/sci-adopts-policy-captive-bred-lions>

³ <http://dscnewscenter.org/2018/01/dsc-position-on-captive-bred-lion-hunting/>

- In addition to sales by vendors occurring on the convention floor, SCI itself conducted an auction of wildlife products both in person at the convention and on its website⁴, potentially violating the same law.
- More than a dozen vendors openly offered to sell canned lion hunts with some bragging that they breed lions for trophy hunts. (The price of a lion hunt is largely determined by the size of the animal and his mane, ranging from “budget” to “deluxe.” One vendor showed investigators photo of a two year old lion as a cheaper option.) Multiple vendors without lions on their own properties enthusiastically offered to broker canned lion hunts at other facilities.
- One tour operator described baiting lions with giraffe meat.
- One attendee bragged that he killed a lion in a canned hunt within 90 minutes.

Further Information on Wildlife Products in Potential Violation of Nevada’s Wildlife Trafficking Law

State law in Nevada strictly prohibits the sale,⁵ offer for sale, or possession with intent to sell products made from leather, skin, hair, bone, or teeth of covered species unless such products are over 100 years old and meet the definition of antique under the law.⁶ Investigators documented more than a dozen vendors offering for sale and possessing with intent to sell such items without proper documentations showing the provenance of an antique:

- Meyer Ranch Boot Makers
 - Elephant leather boots
 - Stingray leather boots
- The African Market Trophy Room Collection
 - Hippo teeth
 - Elephant leather table
- Clint Orms Silversmiths
 - Elephant leather belts
 - Sting ray leather belts
- Tag Outdoor Clothing
 - Hippo leather belts
- Hickman Saddlery
 - Elephant leather chaps
 - Elephant leather belts
 - Elephant leather saddle
- Candy Woolley Exotic Handbags
 - Stingray leather purses
- Virtually There Western Furniture
 - Elephant leather furniture
- Debra Cooper, Wildlife Artist
 - Elephant ear/leather painted art
- Legends Taxidermy



Carved hippo ivory offered for sale at the SCI Convention.
Photo Credit: HSUS

⁴ <https://www.showsci.org/auction/>; <https://auction.safariclub.org/auctionlist.aspx>

⁵ N.R.S. 597.905 § 5(b) (“Sale” or ‘sell’ means any act of selling, trading or bartering, for monetary or nonmonetary consideration, and includes any transfer of ownership that occurs in the course of a commercial transaction, but does not include a nonmonetary transfer of ownership to a legal beneficiary of a trust or to a person by way of gift, donation, inheritance or bequest.”).

⁶ N.R.S. 597.905 § 2(b) (“An antique that contains a de minimis quantity of an animal part or byproduct derived from any species listed in subsection 1, provided that the animal part or byproduct is a fixed component of the antique and the owner or seller of the antique establishes with documentation evidencing provenance of the antique that the antique is at least 100 years old.”); *id.* § 5(a) (“‘De minimis quantity’ means: (1) Less than 20 percent of an item by volume; (2) Less than 200 grams in weight when examined as a separate component; and (3) Less than 20 percent of the fair market value of an item or of the actual price paid for the item, whichever is greater.”).

- Hippo skull table
- Elephant leather belts
- African Sporting Creations
 - Elephant hair bracelets
 - Hippo leather boots
- J. B. Hill Boots
 - Elephant leather boots and shoes
 - Stingray leather boots and shoes
 - Hippo leather boots and shoes
 - Shark leather belts
- Taxidermy Arts
 - Hippo teeth, whole and carved
- Wild Designs
 - Whole mammoth tusk
 - Elephant leather sofa
- Safari Jewelry
 - Elephant hair bracelets
- Carlton R. Evans Handmade Knives
 - Mammoth tusk carvings
- Gaston
 - Narwhal handled knives (Narwhal are protected under the federal Marine Mammal Protection Act, which strictly regulates the import and interstate sale in parts or products of the species (16 U.S.C. § 1372). This company has a location in Germany, raising significant question as to the lawful provenance of these knives.⁷⁾

Further Information on Captive-Bred Lion Hunts

The following vendors offered or offered to broker trophy hunts of captive-bred lions or hunting of lions:

- De Klerk Safaris
- Mabula Pro Safaris
- Pro Safaris Africa
- Madubula Safaris
- Adventure Hunts
- Buffalo Kloof Safaris
- Intrepid Safaris Africa
- Serapa Safaris
- M & M Safaris, Paoland Lodge
- Thabazimbi Safaris

SCI convention vendor whose firearms implicated in rhino poaching

Among nearly 900 exhibitors at the SCI convention was CZ-USA, a firearms manufacturer whose guns were found in African game reserves and implicated in rhino poaching. According to the New York Times article, “the Commerce Department and the Department of Homeland Security are investigating whether CZ or its subsidiary violated American laws by exporting rifles to Mozambique and whether the company continued to sell weapons even after being warned as early as 2015 that the rifles were used by poachers to kill protected wildlife in South Africa.”⁸⁾

⁷ Nevada law prohibits the sale of knives and firearms that contain any part or byproduct of the covered animal species, unless the part or byproduct is “a fixed or integral part of the knife or firearm” that was legally imported into the U.S.; the “owner or seller of the knife or firearm, or the component thereof, establishes with documentation evidencing provenance that the knife or firearm,

or the component thereof, was legally acquired”; and the sale otherwise complies with state and federal law. N.R.S. 597.905 § 2(d).

⁸ <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/25/us/politics/rhinos-poachers-south-africa-czub.html>