



San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance

May 14, 2024

Toss the Tusk

Join us at the **San Diego Zoo** on **Tuesday, May 14, 2024, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.** as we come together to create hope for wildlife around the world. Guests will have the opportunity to help save wildlife by contributing wildlife products, including ivory, to the Association of Zoos and Aquariums' (AZA) "Toss the Tusk" campaign.

Answers to "Toss the Tusk" Frequently Asked Questions

What is Toss the Tusk?

Toss the Tusk is a series of events taking place at zoos across the United States to raise awareness and change behavior related to illegal wildlife trafficking, including the elephant ivory trade.

Organized by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums' Wildlife Trafficking Alliance (WTA) and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), Toss the Tusk encourages the public to support long-term conservation efforts by attending a local event and contributing wildlife products, such as ivory, to eliminate them from the market and reduce demand. Learn more about Toss the Tusk [here](#).

What kinds of items will be accepted?

Guests may contribute material items derived from any protected wildlife species. This includes any wildlife listed under the [CITES Appendix I, domestic and foreign Endangered Species Act species, Migratory Bird Treaty Act species, Marine Mammal Protection Act species](#) and others listed at the bottom of [this page](#).

Elephant ivory will be accepted, along with ivory from hippopotamuses, helmeted hornbills, narwhals, walruses, warthogs, and toothed whales.

If you have questions about your item, individuals at the event will be available to assist you.

How do I contribute an item?

Bring your item(s) to the main entrance of the San Diego Zoo on Tuesday, May 14th between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. Admission is not necessary to participate, and individuals will be available to assist you and ensure an easy process.

Why should I contribute my item(s)?

Illegal wildlife trafficking is the second largest threat to wildlife after habitat loss and degradation. By helping to eliminate wildlife products such as ivory from the market, you help ensure that they will not drive the demand that leads to trafficking. By contributing your items, you can help create a brighter future for some of the world's rarest species.

How does the illegal wildlife trade impact ecosystems?

The illegal wildlife trade does more than threaten the survival of endangered species. Because all species play vital roles in their ecosystems, including dispersing seeds, shaping the landscape, and distributing nutrients—they promote plant diversity, increase habitat diversity, and nourish the environment. When endangered wildlife decline, the impacts are felt by wildlife, people, and the planet we all share.

Where will the items go?

Wildlife products contributed during Toss The Tusk at the San Diego Zoo will be collected by representatives from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and safely transported to the [U.S. Fish and Wildlife National Wildlife Property Repository](#) in Colorado, where it will be stored securely. Once there, ivory can support conservation work benefiting elephants in several ways:

Education

Items often become part of education projects led by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and are loaned to other federal agencies, state agencies, accredited zoos or aquariums, museums, universities and more, inspiring learners of all ages to care about wildlife and do their part to help species around the world.

By contributing items, you support educational experiences that create powerful emotional connections with nature; encourage people to seek careers in conservation; increase awareness and understanding about complex wildlife issues; and inspire the next generation of conservation scientists.

Training

Law enforcement agencies are vital partners in successful efforts to combat illegal wildlife trafficking. Items may also be used to train law enforcement staff in identification and used as scent training for law enforcement canines, which will help agencies detect and seize illegal ivory shipments.

Research

Conservation scientists also examine wildlife products as part of their studies. These products hold important clues to questions about endangered wildlife and can even reveal information about historic or current trade practices.

Is it illegal to possess an item made from ivory?

No. It is not illegal to possess ivory if it was lawfully acquired. In 2016, a near-total ban on the commercial trade of African elephant ivory went into effect in the United States. However, the regulations do not restrict personal possession of ivory.




If you already own ivory—such as an heirloom carving that’s been passed down in your family, or a vintage musical instrument with ivory components—you can still legally own those pieces.

What if I want to participate in the future?

You may contribute items directly to the [National Wildlife Property Repository](#) at anytime. Please visit [this site](#), and scroll to the section titled “donations” to learn more. Or contact the National Wildlife Property Repository at nwpr@fws.gov, or (303) 287-2224.

What are some other ways I can help?

Even if you do not have items to contribute, you can still join us at Toss the Tusk to show your support for the world’s wildlife! As an ally, you can also help in these ways:

-  **Share** a message on social media using the hashtag #tossthetusk, alerting your friends and family about Toss the Tusk.
-  **Purchase** Save Vanishing Species semipostal stamps to support conservation efforts of African and Asian elephants and other endangered and threatened animals around the world.
-  **Learn** how to #buyinformed to ensure you are not inadvertently contributing to the illegal wildlife trade while you shop or travel.

How does San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance support conservation?

Learn more about how we're leading the way in global conservation [here](#).

How does the Association of Zoos and Aquariums support conservation?

Conservation is a top priority for AZA-accredited zoos and is a key component of their missions. As wild populations decline, AZA-accredited zoos play vital roles as stewards of part of the world's heritage, while also supporting conservation programs in the wild. Learn more [here](#).

How does the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service support conservation?

Learn more about the [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#), the [Office of Law Enforcement, the International Affairs program](#), and the [National Wildlife Property Repository](#) online.