

## Illicit ivory offered for sale across Connecticut

Undercover investigation underscores the need for  
a state law to combat trade in elephant ivory



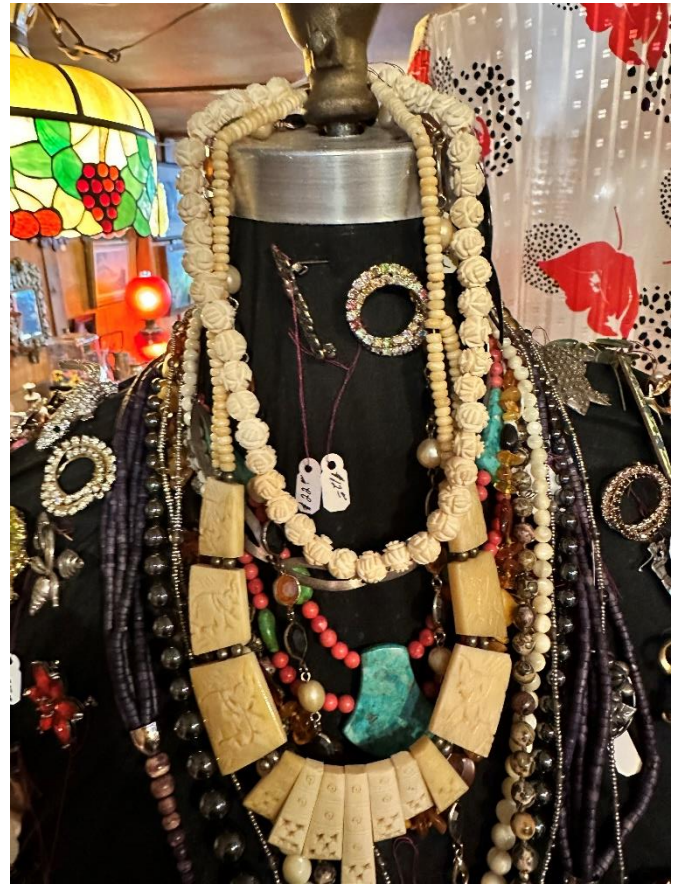
Undocumented belt charms suspected to be ivory.

An undercover investigation in November 2023 by the Humane Society of the United States and Humane Society International found over 160 items likely made from ivory—in the form of figurines, trinkets and jewelry—for sale across the state of Connecticut. The state has no law prohibiting intrastate trade in wildlife products such as elephant ivory.

Several HSUS/HSI investigators, including a wildlife biologist, found ivory products for sale at 19 Connecticut shops from Branford to Clinton, Glastonbury to Old Saybrook, and points in between.

### Main findings:

- Out of the 29 stores visited, 19 had ivory for sale.
- Of the 22 towns visited, 15 had stores that were selling ivory.
- 169 pieces of suspected ivory were identified by investigators.



Necklaces identified as ivory for sale.

### Among the items for sale were:

- ivory beaded necklace
- ivory earrings and bracelets
- ivory statues
- napkin holders
- various ivory figurines
- game boards and puzzles
- parasol handle
- page turner and letter opener

No vendor claimed to have the correct paperwork to sell ivory, nor did they present documentation during the potential sale. At some stores, some of the ivory was labeled with misleading or false information. Without proper documentation, it is impossible to know whether items were imported in violation of federal law.

Locations with stores where ivory was found:

- Branford
- Canton
- Clinton
- Colchester
- Fairfield
- Farmington
- Glastonbury
- Marlborough
- New Hartford
- Norwalk
- Oakdale
- Old Greenwich
- Old Saybrook
- Pawcatuck
- Stratford

Many sellers claimed either to not know about relevant laws or if they needed documentation to sell ivory. Others were aware that the sale of most ivory is illegal under federal law and advised the investigator to wrap items well when traveling and feign ignorance regarding its material.

Under federal law, new ivory cannot be imported, exported or sold across state lines. Antique ivory can be sold with documentation, and the burden of proof is on the seller. Without required documentation proving that the item is an antique at least 100 years old, ivory items for sale in Connecticut are potentially new ivory sourced from recently poached elephants. Federal law does not address sales within a state, which is why state laws are needed to close the loophole in local markets.

Thirteen states and Washington, D.C., have enacted laws to ban the intrastate sale of ivory.

The United States is among the world's largest markets for illegal wildlife goods, including elephant ivory and rhino horn. The illegal wildlife trade is a lucrative, multibillion-dollar enterprise, fueling transnational crime and incentivizing the cruel killing of animals for their parts.

Legal ivory marketplaces provide an opportunity for illegal ivory to flourish due to the ease of mixing the two. Enforcement efforts are often hampered by a lack of resources or the difficulty of visually distinguishing illegal ivory from legally acquired ivory.

Each year, as many as [15,000 elephants](#) are killed in Africa to supply the demand for ivory. [A recent report](#) found the population of savanna elephants has declined by 60%, and forest elephants by more than 86%, since the 1970s, placing them closer to extinction.



Figurine likely made from ivory.



Pendant, pin and earrings labeled as genuine ivory.