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## **The Ugly Truth of Wildlife Poach: Alcatraz East Temporary Exhibit Opening Soon**

*New Pigeon Forge attraction will host a special temporary exhibit on the wildlife trafficking trade*

**PIGEON FORGE, Tennessee (April 22, 2017)** – When a Minnesota-based dentist paid \$54,000 to trophy hunt in Zimbabwe in 2015 with a professional guide, he unknowingly was about to kill the beloved and iconic lion- Cecil. The images from that hunt went viral and although the dentist’s actions were not deemed illegal, the event sparked a worldwide outcry and raised awareness about the plight of wildlife, including lions, tigers, and elephants. Since that incident, the public is increasingly committed to protect wildlife and to put a stop to the trade of illegal wildlife poaching.

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the illegal wildlife trade is a multibillion-dollar business, that involves the illegal trade of live animals and objects made from their parts. Many of the animals involved are endangered, making the practice an international crisis. Poachers either capture animals to sell, or kill them for their fur, bones, shells, and other body parts to be used in everything from traditional medicines, to clothing and jewelry. Even locally, effecting the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, bears are poached for their gallbladders and bile, which are used in traditional medicines. Only thirty-four states explicitly ban the trade, and these parts can go for \$5,000 in Asia. Those interested in learning more about the wildlife trade can attend the temporary exhibit “Ivory, Tortoise Shell & Fur: The Ugly Truth of Wildlife Trafficking” at Alcatraz East Crime Museum, which will open on May 15, 2017.

“This is a heartfelt exhibit that brings awareness to illegal wildlife trade, an important issue visitors won’t want to miss,” states Janine Vaccarello, chief operating officer for

Alcatraz East, “This is a problem that is devastating to animals and the planet. The exhibit will also teach guests how to be proactive and how they can help.”

The exhibit was first displayed at the Crime Museum in Washington, DC in 2015 by the Center for Conservation Impact, in partnership with the Freeland Foundation, International Fund for Animal Welfare, INTERPOL, Kashmir World Foundation, U.S. Department of State, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, WildAid, and Wildlife Trust of India.

“There was such a positive response to the exhibit, we felt the issue is too important to not share again with new audiences,” says Vaccarello.

Many people are unaware of how critical the poaching situation has become around the world, yet the statistics are alarming. It’s estimated that 97 percent of the world’s tigers have been lost in the last century, 76 percent of elephants have been lost during the last 13 years, and over 1,200 rhinoceros were killed last year alone. These animal populations have been depleted to supply black market demand for worthless natural medicines, jewelry and other souvenirs, and are considered status symbols, as the case with shark fin soup.

International travelers normally take home souvenirs from their trips, but what they may not realize is that the materials used to make those trinkets may have been illegally harvested from endangered and protected wildlife. These include items made from ivory and tortoise shell, so when shopping for souvenirs, it is best to ask questions about what products are made of, where it came from, as it may not be legal to bring back to the U.S. This exhibit will include items confiscated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other border agencies.

“Wildlife trafficking is a serious epidemic that is plaguing our world due to Asia's sensational demand for Rhino Horn, which is made from nothing more than keratin, the same as our finger nails along with Elephant Ivory made from dentine, the same as the human tooth.” explains Katie Cleary, model, film producer and writer of “Give Me

Shelter” available on Netflix, and founder of World Animal News which brings you the latest breaking animal welfare news from around the world. “The more that we are educated about wildlife crimes and trafficking of endangered species and the ways to stop it, the better equipped we are to bring it to an end and protect these innocent species before it's too late.”

Recent news headlines show this problem is ongoing, with 18 rhino horns being seized in Mozambique in April, and news being shared about the illegal animal smuggling coming across the Mexican border, including of birds and lizards to be sold as pets in the U.S.

"The collaborators are excited Alcatraz East will feature our exhibit on the important and timely topic of illegal wildlife trafficking," says Jennifer Sevin, president of the Center for Conservation Impact, a partner in the exhibit. "From ginseng to freshwater mussels and bears, illegal wildlife trafficking is as much a local issue as it is global."

"Ivory, Tortoise Shell & Fur" begins May 15, 2017 and will run through Spring 2018. Alcatraz East officially opened December 16, 2016. The new crime museum is located at the entrance to The Island, at 2757 Parkway in Pigeon Forge, near the Margaritaville Hotel and Paula Deen's Family Kitchen.

The 25,000 square foot museum is designed with a jail façade, has a star-studded board of experts who make up the Advisory Board, including Jim Willett, a retired prison warden, Anthony Rivera, a combat veteran and Navy SEAL chief, and Judge Belvin Perry, Jr., who is best known for the Casey Anthony trial.

General admission tickets are \$14.95 for children, \$24.95 for adults. Group ticket sales are available. The museum will be open 365 days per year, from 10 am to 9 pm, with the last ticket sold 60 minutes before closing. For more information and to purchase tickets, visit: [www.alcatrazeast.com](http://www.alcatrazeast.com).

## **About Alcatraz East**

Alcatraz East is the most arresting crime museum in the United States. Guests encounter a unique journey into the history of American crime, crime solving, and our justice system. Through interactive exhibits and original artifacts, Alcatraz East is an entertaining and educational experience for all ages - so much fun it's a crime! This family attraction will be located at the entrance of The Island, located at 2757 Parkway, Pigeon Forge, TN. For more information, visit [www.alcatrazeast.com](http://www.alcatrazeast.com).

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Source:

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. *Illegal Wildlife Trade*.

<https://www.fws.gov/international/travel-and-trade/illegal-wildlife-trade.html>