

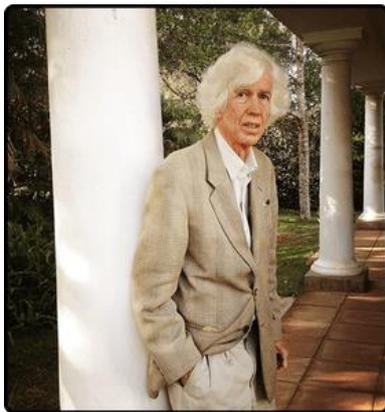
# Who killed ivory trade investigator Esmond Martin, why?

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*Survived more than 30 years of work in some of the world's most dangerous places, only to be stabbed in his bed*

**NAIROBI, Kenya**—Nairobi police homicide detectives appear to believe that renowned elephant ivory and rhino horn trafficking investigator Esmond Bradley Martin Jr., 75, was murdered on February 5, 2018 in connection with a probe of alleged mismanagement at Nairobi National Park.

“Three workers of the killed ivory trade investigator Esmond Bradley Martin were yesterday arrested by the police,” reported Kamore Maina, John Muchangi, and Ramadhan Rajab of the *Nairobi Star* on February 7, 2018. “Police sought orders from the courts to hold his gardeners and cook longer,” after initial questioning about the murder, which occurred at Martin’s home.



*Esmond Bradley Martin Jr.*  
(*EverydayAfrica/Instagram*)

## Notes “left intact”

“A source familiar with the investigations said the arrested workers were off duty when Martin was killed,” Maina, Muchangi, and Rajab wrote. “Only one of the cooks was on duty. The conservationist, who was alone in the house, was stabbed once in the neck. *The Star* spoke to close friends who revealed Martin had been compiling a report on the state of the Nairobi National Park before he died. Some of his notes regarding the park were missing after his murder. Nothing else was stolen and his other notes on ivory trade were left intact.”

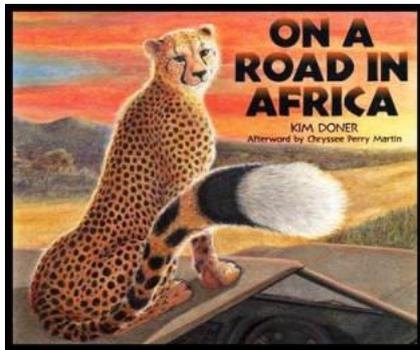
Martin had recently returned from an investigative visit to Myanmar, and was still writing about his findings.

## Property deeds?

*London Times* correspondents Harriet Salem and Jerome Starkey contradicted the *Nairobi Star* report on February 10, 2018. “Cash and property deeds were missing from an open safe,” Salem and Starkey reported. But they did not explain why anyone would want to steal property deeds, which would be useless if not matching the deeds that were officially recorded.

Meanwhile Maina, Muchangi, and Rajab of the *Nairobi Star* wrote that Martin had “unusually visited Nairobi National Park daily over the last one month,” including earlier on the day he was murdered.

That day, Maina, Muchangi, and Rajab reported, Martin “spent the entire morning at Nairobi National Park, before joining the Friends of Nairobi National Park for a barbecue at the clubhouse within the park. He left at 2.30 p.m.”



*Children's book about Chrysee MacCasler Perry Martin.*

## Wife found him

Martin's wife of nearly 50 years, Chrysee MacCasler Perry Martin, reportedly found Martin dead on his bed and called the police when she returned from a nature walk at about 4:00 p.m.

A longtime volunteer at the Kenya Wildlife Service animal orphanage, Chrysee MacCasler Perry Martin was subject of a children's book, *On a Road in Africa* (2008), by Kim Doner, a childhood friend from Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Police statements differed as to whether Esmond Martin's “extensively gated” home was securely locked or whether a back gate lock was broken.

## Botched robbery?

The Martins “resided together in the same compound, but stayed in separate houses,” wrote Fred Mukinda of *The Daily Nation*, indicating that police initially believed Martin was killed in a botched robbery attempt.

The murder in some respects resembled that of Dhirajilal Shah, 69, who was bound, strangled, and buried in a shallow grave a week earlier at his home in the Westlands, an affluent Nairobi suburb just to the east.

“Police are looking for Shah’s watchman who went missing from the home,” Mukinda wrote.

## **Or was it a hit?**

Others theorized that Martin was killed in retaliation for the arrests of illegal ivory and rhino horn traffickers. “His death comes amid an increase in killings of wildlife activists, rangers and conservationists,” observed Robyn Dixon of the *Los Angeles Times*.

In August 2017, for example, South African elephant conservationist Wayne Lotter, 51, was shot by two gunmen in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, after another vehicle blocked his taxi. Lotter had founded the PAMS Foundation in 2009, which provides logistic support to anti-poaching projects, and was credited with the 2016 arrest of Yang Feng Glan, a Chinese woman nicknamed the “Queen of Ivory.”

## **Helped to bust bad guys**

Traffickers whom Martin helped to bust reportedly included a diplomat in Lusaka, Zambia, who smuggled ivory wrapped in dog meat; a former Indonesian ambassador in Dar es Salaam, who allowed ivory to be carved in the embassy; and a North Korean official, Pak Chol-Jun, who was arrested in Mozambique in May 2015 with 4.5 kilos of rhino horn and \$100,000 in cash.

The organization Global Witness recently reported that 197 people were killed in 2017 while trying to protect natural resources, twice as many as in 2012. Earlier, the International Ranger Federation reported that 105 wildlife park rangers were killed around the world, chiefly in Africa, during fiscal year 2017.

“The war on wildlife and their activists isn’t new,” observed Margaretta Wa Gacheru of *Business Daily*, “especially in East Africa where a string of world-acclaimed conservationists have died under violent circumstances.”

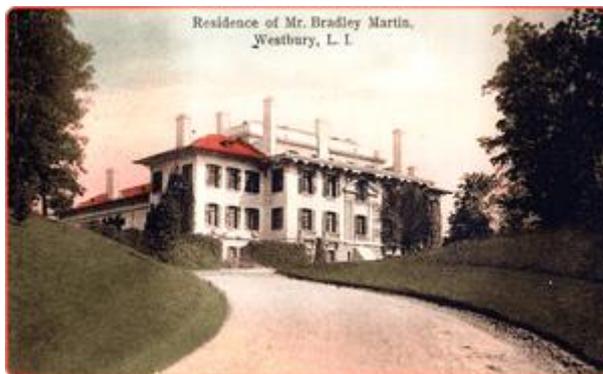
Among the murdered have been Joy and George Adamson (1980, 1989), whose story inspired the 1966 film *Born Free*; filmmaker Joan Root (2006), gorilla expert Ymke Warren (2013), and *Gorillas In The Mist* author Dian Fossey (1985).

## **Famous neighborhood**

Nairobi National Park, the adjacent Kenya Wildlife Service headquarters and animal orphanage, and the David Sheldrick Trust elephant and rhino orphanage, where Martin often visited founder Daphne Sheldrick and family, are all within a long walk of the Martin compound in Langata, located between central Nairobi and Karen, the affluent Nairobi suburb built on the former coffee plantation founded by Danish immigrant Karen Blixen, who lived there for 17 years.

Blixen left Kenya, never to return, after the coffee plantation failed in 1931, publishing her famed memoir *Out of Africa* in 1937, and going on to become much better known as the novelist Isak Dinesen.

Redeveloped as upscale housing, the plantation site became the hub of an expatriate community initially favored by visiting trophy hunters, apparently including Martin's father, Esmond Bradley Martin Sr.



*Esmond Martin Jr.'s boyhood home.*

## **Father was trophy hunter**

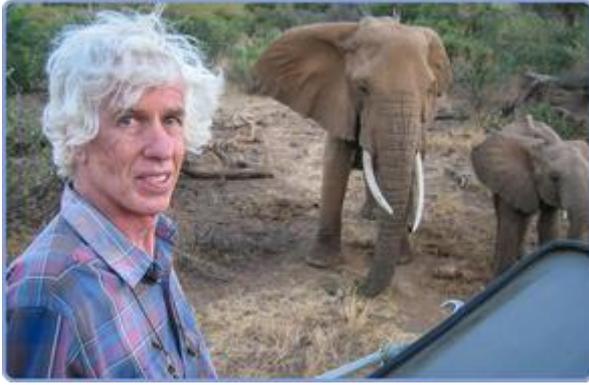
Esmond Bradley Martin Sr. (1915-2002) was grandson of 19th century steel magnate Henry Phipps, boyhood friend and business partner of philanthropist Andrew Carnegie.

“With his wife Edwina and three children, he occupies a beautiful ivy-trellised French Provincial mansion on a Long Island estate. He collects guns, breeds orchids, rides, plays tennis, and has a \$15,000,000 trust fund,” a 1961 *Family Weekly* profile recounted. “At Princeton (Class of 1938), he roomed with his twin brother Alastair,” who was elected in 1973 to the Tennis Hall of Fame, “and enjoyed few friendships. To bolster his self-confidence, he went hunting in Africa and bagged five big beasts in four days.”

Esmond Bradley Martin Sr. “excelled in many of his personal financial affairs, successfully wildcatting in gas and oil and other varied investments,” according to his *New York Times* obituary, and was also “a brilliant chess player, having been selected as a backup to Samuel Reshevsky [1911-1992, considered one of the all-time chess greats] in an international tournament. He was a discerning philatelist [stamp collector], as well as a collector of fine pocket watches, books and English antique furniture.

“His magnificently restored estate and elegant gardens appeared in many feature films over the years,” the obituary continued. “He was a very talented amateur lawn and court tennis player, having beaten the likes of Pierre Etchebaster, the then-reigning 20 year world champion in court tennis, and even chalking up a 6-0 victory over Pancho Gonzales during a challenge match in the course of Gonzales’ 8-year reign as world champion.

“For many years,” the obituary added, Esmond Bradley Martin Sr. “was the world’s fly-fishing record holder for Atlantic salmon,” having landed the 53-pound record fish on the Cascapedia River on the Gaspé peninsula of Quebec in 1939.



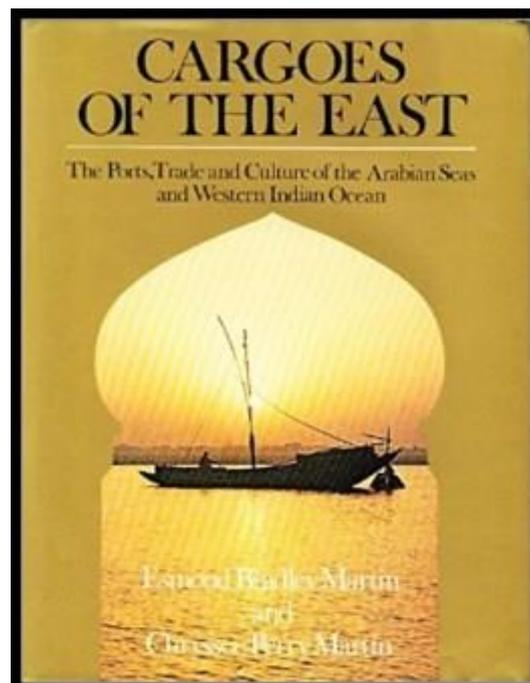
*Esmond Bradley Martin Jr. & friend.  
(Save The Elephants photo)*

## **Son chose a different direction**

Born on April 17, 1941 in New York City, Esmond Bradley Martin Jr. chose not to follow in his father's footsteps as investor and playboy.

Instead, Martin earned a bachelor of science degree in geography from the University of Arizona in 1964, followed by a Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Liverpool in 1970.

Settling in Kenya, Martin and his wife Chryssee produced a variety of books and scholarly papers together, including a historical guide to the Lamu archipelago off the Kenyan coast, *Quest for the Past* (1969); *Cargoes of the East: the Ports, Trade, & Culture of the Arabian Seas and Western Indian Ocean* (1978); and *Run Rhino Run* (1983), written to draw attention to the decline of all species of rhino due to trophy hunting, poaching, and habitat loss.



## Studied slave trade

*Cargoes of the East* grew in part out of research Martin and T.C.Y. Ryan did earlier to produce a study, “A Quantitative Assessment of the Arab Slave Trade of East Africa,” published by the *Kenya Historical Review* in 1977.

Authoring two more historical works, *Zanzibar: Tradition & Revolution* and *Oman: A Seafaring Nation*, both published in 1979, Martin discovered his true calling later in the year when asked by the World Wildlife Fund and the International Union for Conservation of Nature & Natural Resources if he could help them quantify the traffic in elephant ivory. His first investigation of the ivory trade appeared in December 1979.

But Martin remained focused on other projects for several more years. 1982, for example, included publication of his monograph “The Present Day Dhow Trade of India,” and an exhibition of “French & Italian Master Drawings from the Collection of Esmond Bradley Martin, Jr.” at the Denver Art Museum.



### Hid in plain view

Along the way, Martin developed an easily recognizable persona, which ivory and rhino horn traders worldwide imagined was that of an affluent dilettant. Instead of going undercover, Martin worked in plain sight, among thugs who seldom took him seriously.

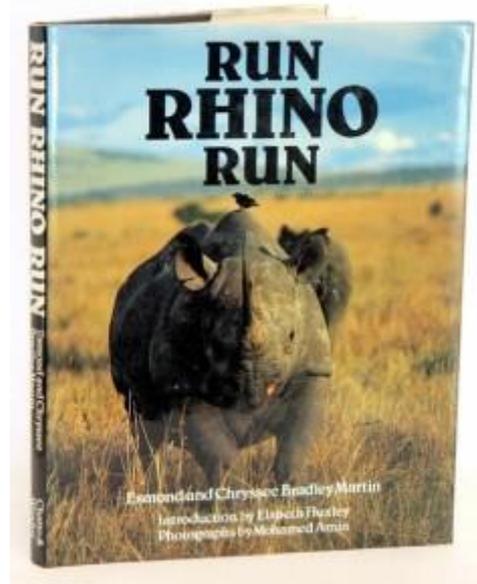
“A flash of snow-white hair and a sharp suit, often adorned with a colorful handkerchief hanging from the top pocket, would accompany his slightly awkward stride into a room,” recalled BBC News Africa correspondent Alastair Leithead.

Often Martin carried a glass with a drink in one hand, which seemed to be mostly used as a prop or a pointer, put down at frequent intervals while he took notes or snapshots.

His investigative mode was “shopper,” not “detective,” informed by his extensive knowledge of art and antiques as much as by the actual answers he received to questions which were typically not closely pointed.

Martin liked to encourage his sources to talk, not doing much talking himself.

“The only people who have the information I want are traders,” Martin said. “I make a special effort to meet them and to socialize with them. I have been attacked for spending time with people when they are crooks, but where else do I get the information?”



## Rhino questions

*Run Rhino Run* marked a turning point in Martin’s career, chiefly because the research that went into writing it raised further questions for him. A year later he produced *Rhino Exploitation* (1983).

“In Kenya, there were around 20,000 rhinos in 1970, but by the 1990s, most of the rhinos had been eliminated. The puzzle was: why were all these rhinos being killed, and where was the horn going?” Martin recalled in 2017 to *Nomad* magazine.

Not satisfied with the quick-and-easy conventional answers, Martin dug deeper. As a United Nations special envoy for rhino conservation, Martin was credited with “helping persuade China to shut down its legal rhino horn trade in 1993 and ivory trade last year,” Maina and Muchangi recalled.

## Corruption

But Martin was quick to point out that Chinese demand for rhino horn and elephant ivory was not the whole problem.

“With the end of the legal ivory trade in China, the survival chances for elephants have distinctly improved,” Martin told Maina and Muchangi. “We must give credit to China for doing the right thing.”

Explained Martin to the BBC in 2016, “corruption is probably the single biggest cause of the increase in elephant poaching. Corruption is at all levels.”

Much of the money involved in the corruption comes from Chinese criminal syndicates, Martin acknowledged, but much of the Chinese ivory trade amounts to brokerage to satisfy demand from elsewhere in the world.

## Chinese buy—and sell

“What has happened over the last few years,” Martin said, “is that there are probably about a million or more expatriate Chinese now working in Africa. We have these large, open, illegal ivory markets in places like Angola, Nigeria, Egypt, Sudan—and Mozambique, I think—and most of that ivory is being bought by the Chinese.”

But “If you asked about elephant ivory, most would say it is going to China, and being used for carvings,” he told *Nomad*. “But do you know where most of it is going? Forty percent ends up in Japan, where it is used for making name seals, called hankos. About 20% goes to Europe,” where Martin found that Britain had the ninth largest ivory traffic in the world, with 8,325 ivory products offered by more than 700 dealers, “and 10-15 percent to the United States. The point is, if you want to save these animals, you have to know where the market is and how to combat it.”



*Daniel Stiles & Esmond Bradley Martin Jr.*  
(Facebook photo)

## “It almost killed me”

Partnering for 18 years with Save The Elephants, a Kenya-based conservation society founded by Iain Douglas Hamilton, a friend for 45 years, Martin and his wife, with fellow investigators Daniel Stiles and Lucy Vigne, produced a series of 10 in-depth investigative reports on the commercial side of the ivory trade.

Stiles, a California-born, U.C. Berkeley-educated anthropologist turned Kenyan farmer who had previously done sociological research among hunter/gatherer communities, joined the team in 1999.

“It almost killed me – I was lucky to survive,” Stiles remembered to media. “He was incredible—he just kept going. I’d never done anything like it before, and it changed the course of my life. He started quantifying statistics on the ivory and rhino horn trade. People before hadn’t really done that.

“With the numbers and the prices,” which Martin and Stiles meticulously collected from thousands of dealers and locations, “it is possible to get a sense of what’s going on with the markets and spot trends,” Stiles explained.

## Turning point

Among the most influential of the Martin and Stiles collaborations were two of the first, *The Japanese Ivory Industry* (1985), and *The Ivory Markets of Africa* (2000).

Both spotlighted aspects of a trade which had long been out of control.

From 1985 to May 2017, when Japan finally introduced registration of elephant ivory products and penalties for illegally selling ivory products, took 32 years.

By 2002, however, when Martin and Stiles produced *The South & South East Asian Ivory Markets*, they were optimistic that internationally, anyhow, “because [ivory] craftsmen do not see much of a future for their profession, they are not encouraging younger members of their families to learn the art.



*Esmond Bradley Martin Jr.*  
(Facebook photo)

## “None of the governments has control”

“In Nepal,” Martin and Stiles found, “the few remaining ivory craftsmen doubt that any market will remain for their pieces in another ten years. In Vietnam, many craftsmen have already given up, and in Sri Lanka, where the government has cracked down, ivory carving definitely seems to be a dying profession. In Thailand some of the craftsmen are worried about obtaining adequate supplies of tusks in the future. Only in Myanmar, where there is currently a healthy ivory market and active government support to ivory crafting, is there any optimism about the future of the ivory industry.”

Offsetting their optimism, however, Martin and Stiles added that “none of the governments for the countries surveyed has control over the ivory trade.”

“It is much more economical, Martin and Stiles concluded, “to control the marketing side of the ivory industry than to prevent the illegal killing of elephants.”

## **Speculation—by tourists**

In a 2003 follow-up, *The Ivory Markets of East Asia*, Martin and Stiles pointed out that a “The primary demand for ivory is not for use in producing consumer goods. Rather, ivory is purchased primarily in speculation.

“Ivory acquisition at all levels,” Martin and Stiles found, “appears to be motivated less by desire for ivory goods than by desire to possess contraband which at some future date may gain value precisely because it is inaccessible—either because it is contraband or because wild elephants are extinct.”

“I found 35,000 pieces of ivory for sale in Hong Kong,” at least 80% of it from poached elephants, Martin summarized to Julianna Kettlewell of the BBC News Online science staff.

“But it wasn’t in the back street markets. It was in all the major tourist areas, the expensive hotels.”

Martin found similar in Sudan in 2005: 11,000 ivory products on display at 50 shops in Khartoum, the Sudanese capital, and in the twin city of Omdurman. There Martin also visited 150 ivory craftsmen making new products, mostly jewelry for the tourist trade.

## **Ivory Markets in the USA**

More shocking was *Ivory Markets in the USA* (2008), chiefly because the U.S. has long considered itself to be a global exemplar for wildlife conservation.

Under the African Elephant Conservation Act, passed by Congress in 1988, legal ivory imports into the U.S. were, and are, limited to items made more than 100 years ago; trophy tusks from the few African nations where elephants are not considered endangered; and tusks collected before the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species was ratified in July 1975.

Nonetheless, Martin and Stiles found 24,004 ivory items available at 657 outlets in 16 U.S. cities. New York City had by far the most ivory for sale, with 11,376 items, followed by San Francisco (2,777) and Los Angeles (2,605).

Among the most characteristic U.S. uses of ivory were in making knife and pistol handles. This, together with trophy hunters’ interest in importing elephant tusks, has made the gun lobby an adamant opponent of any effort to tighten the U.S. ivory trade restrictions.



*Lucy Vigne (left) and Esmond Bradley Martin Jr. (right).  
(Save The Elephants photo)*

## **From China to Southeast Asia**

Despite Martin and Stiles' earlier hope that the ivory trade was dying, Martin and Vigne reported in *The Ivory Dynasty* (2011) that the volume of ivory sold in the cities of Guangzhou and Fuzhou, China, had approximately doubled since 2004, and that nearly two-thirds of the ivory items were sold without the required certification that the ivory was of legal origin.

Furor over *The Ivory Dynasty* led to wildlife charities being temporarily excluded from CITES sessions in 2011 concerning elephant conservation, the ivory trade, and Chinese involvement.

The last of Martin's investigative reports on ivory trafficking completed during his lifetime, *Decline in the Legal Ivory Trade in China in Anticipation of a Ban*, co-authored by Vigne, appeared from Save The Elephants in 2017.

That investigation found that while China has moved to end the ivory traffic, the industry has relocated to Vietnam, Cambodia, Myanmar, and especially Laos.

## **No Man's Land**

Explained Save The Elephants chief executive Frank Pope to Robyn Dixon of the *Los Angeles Times*, "In Laos there are these strange no man's lands where Chinese businessmen have bought up sections of jungle and have turned them into little enclaves that are run on Beijing time, on Chinese currency, and are dens of iniquity for the kind of visitors from China who want to indulge in things they are not allowed to do back home—drugs, prostitution, gambling and wildlife trade."

"Last year," related Dixon, "Martin and Vigne traveled the jungles of northern Laos, where they spotted a gold Mercedes-Benz gliding up to a casino at a sprawling resort called

Kings Romans on the banks of the Mekong River. Martin and Vigne, the only Westerners in sight, stuck out like sore thumbs, he said.”

Agreed Pope, “That’s the only time I’ve ever heard Esmond say that he felt very threatened. They had people watching them, they had people following them. He’d found that the ivory was going right to the border of China.”

## **“Great unsung hero”**

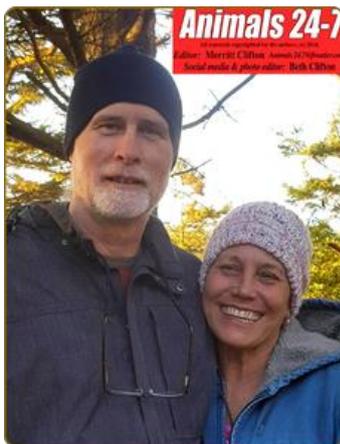
Concluded Iain Douglas Hamilton, “Esmond was one of conservation’s great unsung heroes. His meticulous work into ivory and rhino horn markets was conducted often in some of the world’s most remote and dangerous places, against intensely busy schedules that would have exhausted a man half his age.”

Martin’s murder is “a very big loss for conservation,” agreed Wildlife Direct chief executive Paula Kahumbu, a longtime friend from Nairobi.

“Esmond was a wonderful fighter for Africa’s wildlife,” posted International Primate Protection League founder Shirley McGreal. “He was a delightful person.”

## **“Likeable, knowledgeable & unassuming”**

Recalled Josaphat Ngunyo, who founded both Youth for Conservation (1999) and the Africa Network for Animal Welfare (2005), “I have known Edmond Bradley Martin for 27 years. His sudden death is a profound shock to me. He was a dedicated, passionate and single minded conservationist, whose ivory and rhino horn trade investigation and research work immeasurably contributed to addressing wildlife crimes, conservation and protection of elephants and rhinos. He was likeable, knowledgeable and unassuming, making him easily approachable and friendly to interact with. The conservation world has lost a champion whose place will be difficult to fill.”



*Merritt & Beth Clifton*