

University recovers stolen black rhino horn

March 13 2018, by Lisa Rathke



Retired University of Vermont professor Bill Kilpatrick, left, and UVM police chief Tim Bilodeau show a recovered a black rhinoceros horn that was stolen from a locked storage room on campus last year, on on Tuesday, March 13, 2018 in Burlington, Vt. Police said Tuesday they had received a tip that led to an investigation that brought them to Ridgefield, Connecticut, where someone turned over the artifact in exchange for immunity. Police would not say where, who had it or if that person was a student. (AP Photo/Lisa Rathke)

The University of Vermont has recovered a black rhinoceros horn with a potential street value of more than \$100,000 that was stolen from a locked storage room on campus last year, the school announced Tuesday.

Police received a local tip that eventually led them to Ridgefield, Connecticut, where someone turned over the artifact in exchange for immunity, said UVM Police Chief Tim Bilodeau. Police would not say where, who had it or if that person was a student—only that the investigation is continuing and it's possible someone could be charged.

"Our priority was getting the property back even above prosecution," Bilodeau said shortly after the [horn](#) was returned to campus Tuesday morning.

Staff members in the biology department discovered the theft last April at the university's Torrey Hall in Burlington, where the horn had been hanging for decades.

A drill had been used to disable a lock on the door.

The horn is 2 feet long and 8 inches wide at its base.

Rhino horns are used in some Asian medicines and viewed as aphrodisiacs. The population of [black rhinos](#) in the wild has dropped from about 65,000 in 1970 to an estimated 5,000, according the International Rhino Foundation.

UVM acquired the horn in the early 1900s, but the paperwork about its origin was lost when the school's museum gave the piece to the zoology department sometime around the middle of the century, the school said.



Retired University of Vermont Bill Kilpatrick holds a recovered black rhinoceros horn that was stolen from a locked storage room on campus last year, on Tuesday, March 13, 2018 in Burlington, Vt. Police said Tuesday they had received a tip that led to an investigation that brought them to Ridgefield, Connecticut, where someone turned over the artifact in exchange for immunity. Police would not say where, who had it or if that person was a student. (AP Photo/Lisa Rathke)

The horn will be stored in a locked case with other valuable artifacts for now. The hope is to move it back to Torrey Hall, a historic building that is being rebuilt following a fire late last year.

Bill Kilpatrick, a retired biology professor who curated the collection that housed the horn, was amazed to learn of its return.

"I didn't think we'd ever see it again," he said. "I really didn't."

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