

Forefront Q1 - Periodic Digest of Freeland's Frontline Efforts

1 message

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Tue, Apr 9, 2024 at 1:09 PM

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Freeland has been busy as usual, with lots of updates from early 2024 to share. Keep reading for what's new, what's working, and what's upcoming!

Freeland is a global organization operating in 35+ countries, 4 continents with a mission to protect vulnerable people and wildlife from trafficking, organized crime and corruption, while revitalizing ecosystems and communities. Freeland's comprehensive approach involves Protecting People, Plants and Animals from Trafficking; Educating the Public How to Help Stop Trafficking; and Rewarding Protectors of our Planet and People.

PROTECTING

WE BUILD CAPACITY OF FRONTLINE LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS TO REDUCE AND PREVENT CRIMINAL EXPLOITATION OF VULNERABLE PEOPLE, WILDLIFE AND ECOSYSTEMS

PLUGGING TRAFFICKING HOTSPOTS:

Building Border Tasks Forces in

Southeast Asia: For decades, syndicates, including a notorious one called Hydra, routinely trafficked endangered species from Asia and Africa through the borders of Malaysia, Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam. Between 2014-2021, Freeland and Thai financial investigators teamed up to find and seize \$50 million worth of property from Hydra, while 6 of its mid-level members were arrested. The Thai Supreme Court recently followed suit by sentencing one of its top members to 5 years in prison.



But syndicates can rebound, or others can take their place.

So now, Freeland and the Southeast Asian Police network called “ASEANAPOL”) are helping police and other agencies form border task forces to put remaining major wildlife criminals in this region out of business. There's a lot of work to do, given how entrenched traffickers are here. Thanks to a grant from the US State Department Bureau of International and Narcotics Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), we will be training and networking these task forces. More news to come about this project that is called “TRIPOD-2”.



Roundtable at Nakhon Phanom, Thailand on 15th January



Roundtable at Hat Yai, Malaysia on 29th January



Roundtable at Thakhek, Laos on 20-21st March

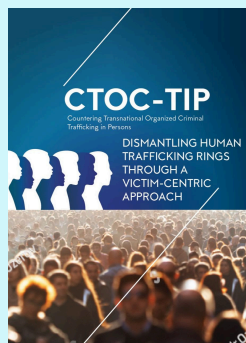


Collaboration with ASEANAPOL: Freeland and ASEANAPOL are teaming up to form, train and network task forces in Southeast Asia and eventually with Africa and enforcers from other parts of the world. ASEANAPOL is essentially the Interpol of Southeast Asia, led by police chiefs of 10 countries. It has a mandate to “make the region safe” from organized crime. Freeland’s Chairman and ASEANAPOL’s Executive Director met at their headquarters in Kuala Lumpur in late January to plan collaboration. Freeland’s partners, Global Environmental Institute (GEI) and David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation are supporting this collaboration.

Operation Akpe - A joint operation between South America, Asia, Africa: Freeland, EAGLE, and Liberia Chimpanzee Rescue and Protection (LCRP) collaborated with one another, and with government agencies from 5 countries. Now that the traffickers have been caught and the animals repatriated, these groups reveal the challenges and opportunities for **mitigating major international wildlife trafficking operations**.



Context: In mid-February, a boat stalled off the coast of Togo (West Africa) while traffickers attempted to use a lifeboat to move the animals to shore. Their suspicious behavior ashore triggered their arrest. They were smuggling: Lear's Macaws (12), Golden Lion Tamarins (19). These animals can fetch very high prices on the international exotic pet market. [READ MORE](#)



New Counter-Human Trafficking Training Program

Freeland was recently selected by ASEAN-Act (**ASEAN-Australia** Counter Trafficking), to help the Thai Government produce a new counter-human trafficking curriculum, in partnership with the organizations IJM (International Justice Mission) and Mekong Club.



Law Enforcement Information Exchange in Germany to counter international reptile trafficking:

Freeland facilitated the in-person law enforcement and CITES focal points exchange meeting in March at Bonn (Germany). The event included several discussions on reptile trade and trafficking, fairs and how they are inspected, OSINT research, identification of gaps, a field trip to one of the largest reptile fairs in Europe, among others. There were a total of 29 participants from several countries - Argentina, Brazil, Germany, Netherlands, Paraguay, Portugal, Spain, Suriname, United Kingdom, INTERPOL and EUROPOL.

Surviving Together: Backing Protectors of Nature at the Forest-Level

The Surviving Together program takes a holistic approach to preserving biodiversity. It's been purpose-built by working closely with protected area managers, rangers, and the surrounding communities to address the root causes of environmental degradation and bolster conservation efforts where they are needed most.



On 22nd January 2024 more than 60 law enforcement and local government officials joined rangers from three protected areas at Ta Phraya National Park in Thailand. The meeting allowed a free flow of ideas to **tackle the snaring issue** which is increasing as migrant and local poachers seek to exploit the abundant wildlife of Thailand's premier national parks. Initiatives will be implemented over the coming months to **protect tigers** and their prey.



Wilderness First Aid Training was organised on 24th January 2024 for 17 officials from Western Thailand's Protected Area Regional Office 3 (Ban Pong) Protection Division. These officials conducted special enforcement operations both outside and deep inside protected areas. Some are also members of the King of Tigers Rapid Response Unit, so the skills learned during the workshop can be taught to park rangers during enforcement ranger training courses.



Protected Area Monitoring Systems (SMART) patrol meetings - Under SMART, rangers come together to share and analyze data on what they are encountering during anti-poaching patrols. Then, led by their supervisors, they plan on how to improve each patrol to prevent poaching. Freeland conducted **3 SMART Patrol meetings** in Q1, where threat factors found during patrols were discussed. On 7 March 2024 at Dong Yai Wildlife Sanctuary, Thailand, **Freeland provided water filters** to Thai rangers for their use during patrols.



New Radio System Improves Anti-Poaching Deep in Forests - With financial support from a special grant from David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation, Freeland installed a new VHF radio and repeater system at Dong Yai Wildlife Sanctuary. 39 rangers were trained on correct use and radio discipline. As an ongoing activity, Freeland will thoroughly test the system and support rangers to patrol deep into the sanctuary to check radio reception range and quality. This is the 4th in a series of VHF radio systems Freeland has helped install in Thai protected areas over the last year as **these greatly increase the rangers safety and effectiveness during anti-poaching patrols.**

Support Rangers in Field

EDUCATING

WE FOSTER GOOD BEHAVIOR TOWARD VULNERABLE PEOPLE, WILDLIFE AND ECOSYSTEMS THROUGH STORYTELLING

Educating the youth and working with communities via Surviving Together



In the first quarter of 2024, Freeland visited **7 groups of young students, totaling 477 children**, who were equally split boys and girls. Our outreach team used music, animal costumes and storytelling in interactive sessions with the kids to focus on the global importance of the biodiversity that they live in and next to.



Human Wildlife Conflict Mitigation - One major threat to both people and wildlife is the conflict between the two over diminishing habitat. So Freeland runs a “Human-wildlife conflict (HWC) mitigation” program, consisting of monthly stakeholder discussions and plans. This is being piloted in Thailand, with lessons being packaged to share with other countries. We team up with other NGOs and government agencies. One **outcome** has been the formation of an “Elephant Surveillance Network” that shares info and acts quickly to prevent villagers from killing elephants that raid their crops.



In the first quarter of 2024, **Freeland facilitated 8 HWC mitigation meetings and patrols, and reached over 200 community members.** Freeland attended 2 networking HWC mitigation meetings to improve cross-agency collaboration with WWF, DSWF and other local NGOs.



“Mushie-Mushie”: Collaboration on sustainable communities with mushroom farming



Alternative Livelihoods - Empowering poachers and other local community members to switch to environmental-friendly and sustainable livelihoods

On 30th March, a student group called “Mushie Mushie” from NIST International School in Bangkok surveyed mushroom farms at Wang Mee to help them and Freeland market their organic mushrooms. This business provides income to former poachers, reducing their need on hunting and tree felling.

Help us conduct more community outreach events

EarthTeam: It Takes a Team to Protect the Planet

Freeland recognizes that no one organization or person can protect the planet on our own. That's why we helped create EarthTeam, a global alliance of organizations and individuals, united in our efforts to protect the planet from pandemics, species loss, climate change, and habitat destruction.



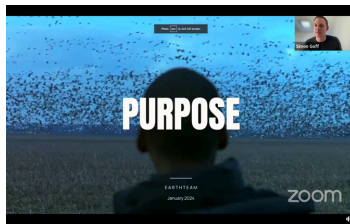
EARTHTEAM
Protecting the Planet

Instead of working in silos, we recognize the need to collaborate because all of these threats to our planet share the same drivers, and point to the same solutions: **Protecting Wildlife, Protecting Natural Habitats, Reform Agriculture**

These 3 pillars to support what we call the “Planetary Health” approach, which overlaps with the “One Health” approach, but adds more specific action. So, what do we do?

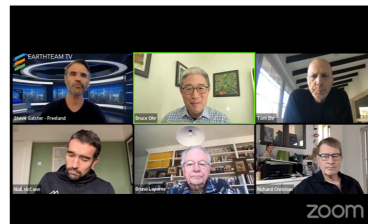
We network and we support frontline models - Join Us and be a part of EarthTeam

Through monthly Townhall meetings and working groups, practitioners in wildlife protection, habitat protection, regenerative farming, emerging infectious diseases, communications and more regularly convene under EarthTeam to share lessons learned, and to improve and merge our solutions. Every month we feature promising solutions –ranging from small to multi-dimensional- in our townhall meetings, social media, while aiming to secure funding for them too.



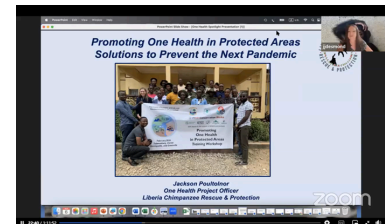
EarthTeam town hall on 10th January, Navigating Complex Communications to Build Trust.

View FB Live recording:
https://fb.watch/rbNikZer_8/



EarthTeam town hall on 7th February, Challenges in Dismantling Transnational Wildlife Trafficking Networks: a Prosecutor's View.

View FB Live recording:
<https://fb.watch/rbOlaBhuHt/>



EarthTeam town hall on 6th March, Building One Health and First Responder Capacity with Frontline Law Enforcement in Liberia. FB Live recording:
<https://fb.watch/rbOMPmVrRj/>

Educating through Media - Freeland continues to harness the power of media to reach and raise awareness among large, targeted audiences around the world.

Television: Watch Freeland featured in THE GREAT RHINO ROBBERY TV Series: Freeland helped produce and stars in a new BBC/Sky TV documentary series that takes aim at the global trafficking of rhino horn, the number one cause of rhino poaching. The series focuses on the hunt for a trafficking kingpin whose syndicate operates globally. Criminal gangs are even recorded breaking into British museums to steal horns from display cases. The series is now available in the United Kingdom on Sky Documentaries and will air in the United States, Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America later in 2024. Stay tuned. Here is the series promotional teaser:
<https://fb.watch/rbNw8IMeEu/>



Radio: BBC World: On 28 Feb, Freeland founder Steve Galster was invited by BBC Newsday to talk about the alarmingly rising cases of rhino poaching in 2024, and how Freeland is prepared to tackle it while working alongside law enforcement agencies across the globe.

[WATCH INTERVIEW.](#)

[READ MORE](#)

REWARDING

WE REWARD THOSE WHO MAKE EFFORTS TO PROTECT PLANET AND PEOPLE BY SPOTLIGHTING AND PROMOTING THEM AS CHAMPIONS

EarthTeam Awards - EarthTeam Alliance acknowledges the work of our partners and arranges quarterly awards for its partners and members via a consensus voting system during coordination meetings.



Awards for the first quarter of 2024 were given to Molly Ferrill for exceptional teamwork and Liberia Chimpanzee Rescue and Protection (LCRP) for their global impact in the field of wildlife protection. With the help of support from awards, together they will **work on a new campaign for saving the Chimpanzees in Liberia.**



Freeland, a Local Nonprofit in Green Lake USA Fights Human Trafficking: As a small, frontline organization that punches above our weight, Freeland is proud of our small town base and bank Fortifi (Wisconsin, USA), and celebrates our joint fight against global trafficking, with determination and compassion.

Read More: <https://www.fortifibank.com/local-nonprofit-in-green.../> Watch Campaign: https://fb.watch/rbO_8kFT_O/

Support our grassroots campaigns

"Freeland is thankful to B.Grimm and Kian Gwan House for Supporting Us"



Help us in bringing the FREELAND FILM FESTIVAL back to Green Lake USA in 2025



We plan to re-brand the event the "Green Lake Film Festival", brought to you by Freeland and main sponsors (to be determined). We have raised \$30,000 toward our goal of \$90,000. We will work hard to raise another \$30,000 in grants and ticket sales.

Can you help us reach our remaining goal of \$30,000 by May 15th?

Support us here: <https://www.freeland.org/freeland-film-festival.html>

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