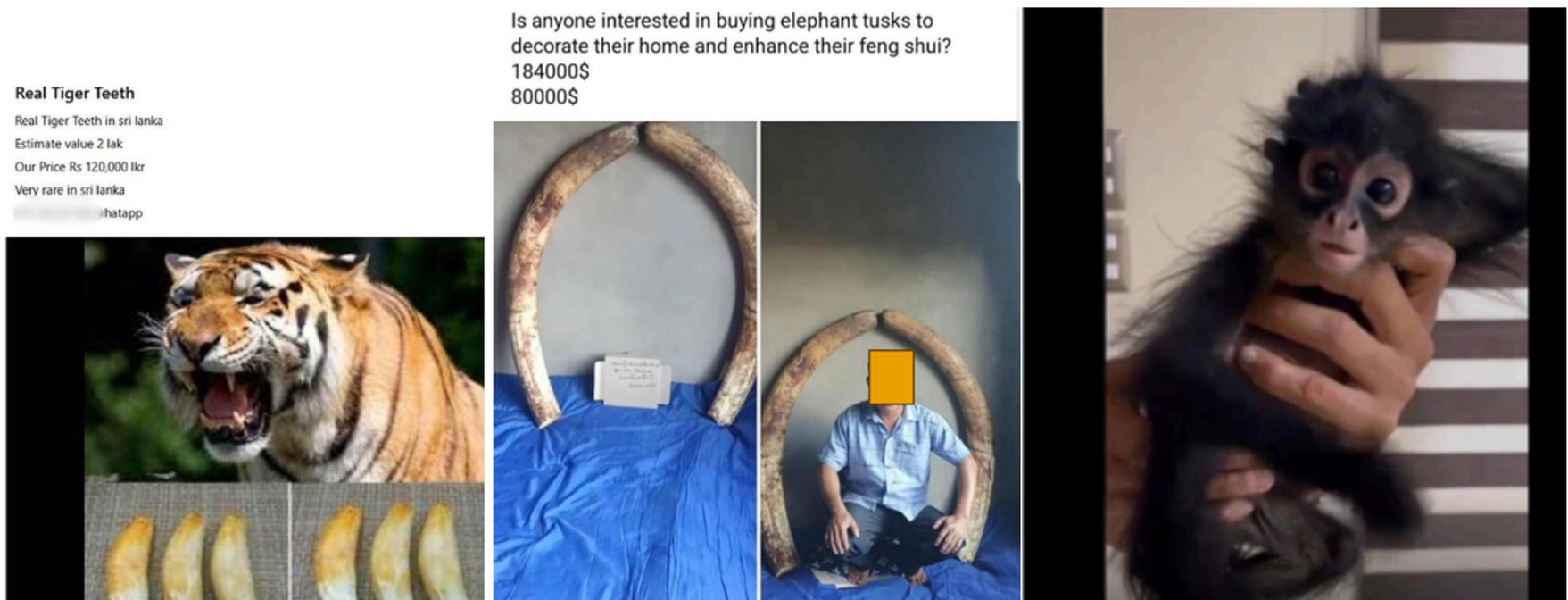


March 11, 2026

Wildlife Conservationists Call on Meta: Stop Hosting Wildlife Traffickers

Facebook and IG Emerging as World's Largest and Most Active Wildlife Trade Market



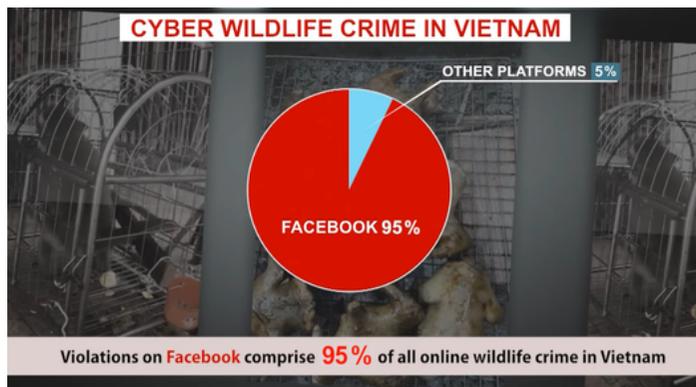
A select few of thousands of profiles trading wildlife on Meta

(Nairobi)-- Three wildlife conservation groups today publicly call on Meta to throw wildlife traffickers off its social media platform, where trade in rare and endangered animals has grown to constitute the biggest wildlife trade market known in the world today. On multiple occasions, the groups have reported to Meta on the enormous, brutal and illegal acts against wild animals taking place on its platform's channels, but have decided to now go public due to the lack of response from Meta following more than a year of trying.

Freeland, ENV-Vietnam, and International Wildlife Trust (IWT) are the non-profit organizations that are making the call for action. These organizations run programs to raise awareness and build capacity to stop wildlife trafficking in Southeast Asia, Africa and the Americas. They are also reaching out to other groups.

Earlier this year, following multiple attempts to get Meta's attention, ENV-Vietnam created a video called "[Wake Up Facebook](#)," calling on Meta to "wake up" to the burgeoning illegal trade taking place on Facebook. Since 2017, ENV has documented 11,712 individual violators and over 2.3 million animals or animal body parts being sold on Facebook in Vietnam only.

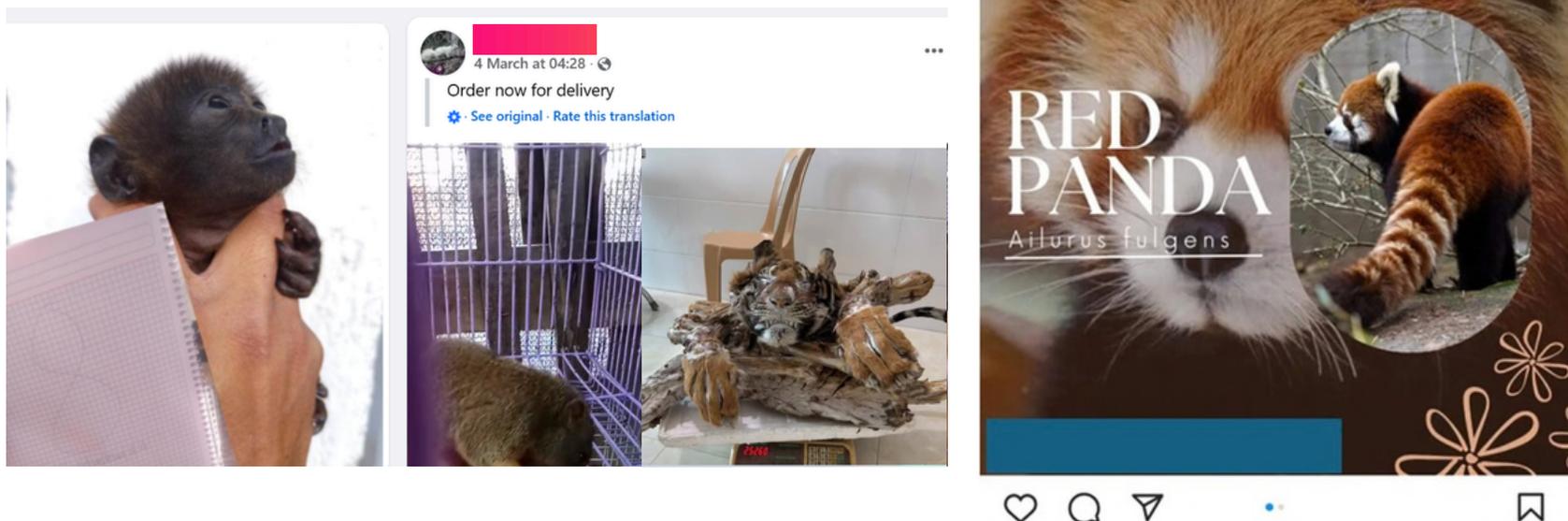
Freeland and IWT have documented hundreds of profiles of traders in Southeast Asia marketing protected species, such as tigers, pangolins and elephant ivory. Freeland has also documented a growing number of Middle East, Latin American, and African Facebook profiles marketing protected species. Blatant, open marketing of protected species include, for example, Congolese traffickers selling hundreds of Uganda's State bird, the Crested crane; or protected jaguars being marketed for hunts in South America. The list of violations, in the thousands, is growing with more research. The partner organizations note that Facebook used to respond to such posts by removing them, but this has changed in the past two years as Meta cut the staff who monitor the platform and now use bots more instead.



From ENV-Vietnam's video, Wake Up Facebook



In all, the organizations believe there are tens of thousands of profiles marketing illegal and inappropriate items and acts, such as selling tiger skeletons and skins, scales of pangolins (the most highly trafficked mammal in the world), lion cubs, baby gorillas, highly endangered birds and primates from the Amazon, as well as videos showing poachers brutally snaring and torturing wild animals inside forests.



Instagram and Facebook accounts selling exotic species and wildlife parts

The trade in rare and endangered wild animals, including live animals and body parts, has grown so large and quickly on Facebook, Instagram, Messenger and Whatsapp groups, that Freeland has developed a special training course for law enforcers to help them investigate wildlife traffickers operating on Meta.

“We used to keep our concern about traffickers’ use of Meta quiet as we investigated these targets, plus we just assumed Meta needed time to respond to our reports,” said Steven Galster, Founder of Freeland. “While some of our own online investigations led to arrests, we’ve only seen the trade on this platform grow, so we can no longer keep this situation quiet while we watch more traders exploiting Meta’s huge market place to make money on criminal animal trading and abuse. Shutting down this growing market will do more for wildlife than catching some of the people using it to trade and show off.”

One growing and disturbing factor is the use of Instagram and Facebook by influencers, and wanna-be-influencers who are showing off their ownership of rare, endangered, and exotic pets, such as gorillas, chimpanzees, leopards, lions, African parrots and Amazon macaws, and so on. Such marketing leads directly and indirectly to more people buying their own exotic pets. The organizations are compiling all of their mounting evidence in hopes that Meta will agree this time to review and act on it.

“We’ve heard the argument that asking an online platform like Meta to ban such illegality and abuse is like asking the phone company to ban illegal acts that occur on its line,” added Galster. “But it’s more like allowing criminals and abusers to be advertised in your yellow pages directory. They shouldn’t be there.” The groups point out that even the bots are supposed to be programmed to pick up on criminal and abusive use of the platform and to freeze or delete such profiles.



For more information or to add your own information about wildlife trafficking on Meta: info@freeland.org

Freeland: Traffickers target people, plants and animals across our planet, ruining lives and ecosystems for billions of dollars in criminal profits every year. Freeland's team of law enforcement and technical experts find and stop traffickers, while helping governments, companies and the public develop recovery and prevention programs. We form, train and network task forces. We engage civil society and raise awareness.

For more information: www.freeland.org

ENV-Vietnam: Education for Nature – Vietnam (ENV) was established in 2000 as Vietnam’s first not-for-profit organization focused on wildlife conservation. ENV has spearheaded efforts to end Vietnam’s illegal wildlife trade by employing out-of-the-box strategies that strengthen wildlife protection legislation and its application, provide support to law enforcement in addressing wildlife crime, and engage the public to reduce consumer demand and mobilize public action to protect wildlife. ENV is committed to securing a better future for wildlife, both in Vietnam and globally.

International Wildlife Trust (IWT): IWT is committed to combatting both the causes and effects of illegal wildlife trafficking by focusing on transnational organized crime groups who have escaped the consequences of their criminal activities to date. IWT tackles the complex nature of trans-border crime and international investigations—complexity that all too often benefits organized crime and their global enterprises.

