CHRIS PALMER

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Chris Palmer is a professor, speaker, author, and environmental/wildlife film producer. He has swum with dolphins and whales, come face-to-face with sharks and Kodiak bears, camped with wolf packs, and waded hip-deep through Everglade swamps.

Over the past thirty years, he has spearheaded the production of more than 300 hours of original programming for prime time television and the giant screen IMAX film industry. His films have been broadcast on numerous channels, including the Disney Channel, TBS, Animal Planet, and PBS. His IMAX films include Whales, Wolves, Dolphins, Bears, Coral Reef Adventure, and Grand Canyon Adventure. He has worked with many celebrities, including Robert Redford, Paul Newman, Jane Fonda, Ted Turner, and Ted Danson.

Chris’s career as a film producer began in 1983 when he founded the nonprofit organization National Audubon Society Productions, where he served as president and CEO for eleven years. In 1994, he founded another nonprofit film production company, National Wildlife Productions (part of the National Wildlife Federation, the largest conservation organization in the United States), which he led as president and CEO for ten years.

Chris is currently president of One World One Ocean Foundation and the MacGillivray Freeman Films Educational Foundation, both of which produce and fund IMAX films on conservation. MacGillivray Freeman Films is the world’s largest and most successful producer and distributor of IMAX films.

In 2004, Chris joined American University’s full-time faculty as Distinguished Film Producer in Residence at the School of Communication. There he founded, and currently directs, the Center for Environmental Filmmaking, whose mission is to inspire a new generation of filmmakers and media experts whose commitment to environmental stewardship drives them to produce creative work that is informative, ethically sound, entertaining—and makes a positive difference.

His book, Shooting in the Wild: An Insider’s Account of Making Movies in the Animal Kingdom, was published in 2010 by Sierra Club Books. Jane Goodall called it “a very important and much-needed book.” Now in its second printing, Shooting in the Wild (along with its film version for PBS with Alexandra Cousteau) pulls back the curtain on the dark side of wildlife filmmaking, revealing an industry undermined by sensationalism, fabrication, and sometimes even animal abuse. His next book, Confessions of a Wildlife Filmmaker, will be published in March 2015.

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Profiles about Chris have appeared in many publications, including the Wall Street Journal and The Washington Post. He has been interviewed on the Today Show, ABC Nightline, NPR, the Fox News Channel, and other networks. He publishes articles regularly (including a bimonthly column on “best practices” for Realscreen Magazine) and currently serves on the board of fourteen nonprofits.

Chris is a frequent keynote speaker at conferences and film festivals, and regularly gives workshops on a variety of topics, including how to radically improve one’s success and productivity, how to raise money, how to give effective presentations, how to network effectively, and how to motivate and engage students.

Chris and his colleagues have won numerous awards, including two Emmys and an Oscar nomination. Chris has also been honored with the Frank G. Wells Award from the Environmental Media Association, and the Lifetime Achievement Award for Media at the 2009 International Wildlife Film Festival. In 2010 he was honored at the Green Globe Awards in Los Angeles with the award for Environmental Film Educator of the Decade. In 2011 he received the IWFF Wildlife Hero of the Year Award for his “determined campaign to reform the wildlife filmmaking industry,” and in 2012 he was named the recipient of the Ronald B. Tobias Award for Achievement in Science and Natural History Filmmaking Education. He received the 2014 University Faculty Award for Outstanding Teaching.

In his twenty years before becoming a film producer, Chris was a high school boxing champion, an officer in the Royal Navy, an engineer, a business consultant, an energy analyst, an environmental activist, chief energy advisor to a senior U.S. senator, and a political appointee in the Environmental Protection Agency under President Jimmy Carter. He has jumped out of helicopters and worked on an Israeli kibbutz.

Chris holds a B.S. with First Class Honors in Mechanical Engineering, an M.S. in Ocean Engineering and Naval Architecture from University College London, and a master’s degree in Public Administration from Harvard University where he was a Kennedy Scholar and received a Harkness Fellowship.

Born in Hong Kong, Chris grew up in England and immigrated to the United States in 1972. He is married to Gail Shearer and is the father of three grown daughters (Kim, Christina and Jenny). For five years he was a stand-up comedian and performed regularly in DC comedy clubs. He is currently writing a book about a different kind of wild life—his three daughters—and how to be an effective father. He and Gail have installed 31 solar panels on the roof of their home in Bethesda, and they recently endowed a scholarship for environmental film students at AU to honor Chris’s parents.