Chris Palmer is an environmental and wildlife film producer who has swum with dolphins and whales, confronted sharks, come face-to-face with Kodiak bears, camped with wolf packs, and waded hip-deep through an Everglades swamp. In 2009, he received the Lifetime Achievement Award for Media at the International Wildlife Film Festival, and recently he received the Environmental Film Educator of the Decade Award at the Green Globe Film Awards in LA.

His book, Shooting in the Wild: An Insider’s Account of Making Movies in the Animal Kingdom, was published in May by Sierra Club Books and has been widely praised. Jane Goodall called it “a very important and much-needed book.”

Chris has spent 25 years producing more than 300 hours of original programming for prime time television and the giant screen (IMAX) film industry. His films have been broadcast on the Disney Channel, TBS Superstation, Animal Planet, Home and Garden Television, The Travel Channel, The Outdoor Life Network, the Public Broadcasting System, and in the global system of IMAX theaters. His IMAX films include Whales, Wolves, Dolphins, Bears, India: Kingdom of the Tiger, Coral Reef Adventure, and Grand Canyon Adventure.

He joined the full-time faculty at American University in August 2004 as Distinguished Film Producer in Residence and founded the Center for Environmental Filmmaking at the School of Communication, which he now directs. Chris continues to produce films, give keynote speeches, and conduct workshops across the country. He is currently writing a book about a different kind of wild life—his three daughters and how to be an effective father.

At American University, Chris created three groundbreaking classes: Producing Environmental and Wildlife Films, which teaches students the keys to being a successful film producer; Classroom in the Wild, which takes students to wilderness areas in Florida and Alaska to learn the basics of natural history filmmaking; and Environmental and Wildlife Production, which gives students the opportunity to produce environmental films for network television.

Environmental and wildlife films and new media are powerful and important tools in the struggle to protect the environment. It is this belief that drives the Center for Environmental Filmmaking. The Center has four signature initiatives: creating partnerships with blue-chip organizations that will give students the opportunity to produce professional films; bringing to the AU campus world-class filmmakers to mentor students; providing innovative educational programs and classes; and advocating for the ethical treatment of wildlife and the environment.

Chris is also president of the MacGillivray Freeman Films Educational Foundation, which produces and funds IMAX films as well as companion educational outreach materials and programs. MacGillivray Freeman Films is the world’s largest and most successful producer and distributor of IMAX films. The foundation launched a program last year to help disadvantaged and underserved students in different parts of the country.
Chris also serves as chief executive officer of VideoTakes, Inc., a film production company in Arlington, Va, where he produces environmental films, videos, DVDs, and new media. Recent films have focused on rain forests, coral reefs, the impact of war on the environment, peace parks, water conservation, the Chesapeake Bay, and prairie restoration.

In 1983, Chris founded the nonprofit National Audubon Society Productions, serving as president and CEO for 11 years. In 1994, he founded the nonprofit National Wildlife Productions (part of the National Wildlife Federation, the largest conservation organization in the United States) which he managed as president and CEO for 10 years, directing NWF’s launch into broadcast, cable, syndication, home video, new media, IMAX, and international markets.

Chris and his colleagues have won numerous awards, including two Emmys and an Oscar nomination. His movies, music videos, documentaries and computer software all focus on documenting threatened species and habitats and exposing damaging commercial enterprises and practices while celebrating environmental success stories. In 1994, Chris was honored with the Frank G. Wells Award from the Environmental Media Association for “contributing to environmental protection year after year.” He has worked with many celebrities in his films, including Robert Redford, Paul Newman, Jane Fonda, Ted Turner and Ted Danson.

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, the Fox News Channel, and other networks. He publishes articles regularly, the most recent being a critique of Shark Week in the Huffington Post.

Chris is a frequent speaker at conferences and film festivals. He also gives workshops on how to live a fulfilling life, how to raise money, how to give effective presentations, how to network effectively, how to motivate students, and how to triple one’s success and productivity. For five years he was a stand-up comedian and performed regularly in DC comedy clubs. He has jumped out of helicopters, worked on an Israeli kibbutz, and was a high school boxing champion. He hosts the student-produced television show EcoViews for Maryland Public Television.

Chris serves on the boards of thirteen nonprofit organizations: International Wildlife Media Center and Film Festival, Environmental Media Fund, MacGillivray Freeman Films Educational Foundation, Media Group, BearTrek, Environmental Film Festival in DC, Population Media Center, Philanthropy Network, Imaging Foundation, Green Planet Films, ecology.com, International Film Academy of Jackson Hole, and Blue Ocean Film Festival.

In the 20 years before becoming a film producer, he was a naval officer, an engineer, a business consultant, an energy analyst, chief energy advisor to a senior U.S. senator, a political appointee in President Jimmy Carter’s EPA, and an environmental activist.

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

Born in Hong Kong, Chris grew up in England and immigrated to the United States in 1972. He is married to Gail Shearer and the father of three grown daughters (Kim, Christina and Jenny).