National Geographic Live: I Bought a Rainforest
With Charlie Hamilton James

TUE, APR 30, 2019 | 7:30 PM | CAPITOL THEATER

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Charlie Hamilton James is a photojournalist who specializes in wildlife and conservation. His work requires specialized equipment, much of which he makes. Hamilton James has a particular interest in exposing “the brilliance of nature” in order to better document, understand, and save it. He has been obsessed with kingfishers—brightly plumed ambush hunters—since he was six, and with otters since he was ten. He has since become an authority on both, photographing kingfishers for *National Geographic* in 2009 and river otters in 2013.

Fiercely motivated to protect the rainforest habitat of Peru’s Manu National Park, a place where he has worked for the past 20 years, Hamilton James purchased a 100-acre plot of land adjoining the park, only to learn he had acquired an illegal coca plantation along with it. The BBC chronicled his misadventures in a three-part series, *I Bought a Rainforest*. In the series, Hamilton James went on a journey to discover the real Amazon—living with illegal loggers, working in a gold mine, taking mind-altering drugs with shaman, hunting the Machiguenga indians, and photographing uncontacted tribes. The result was dramatic and powerful—described by The Guardian as, “Survivor meets The Mosquito Coast meets Apocalypse Now meets Breaking Bad.” He has since returned to Manu National Park to cover its wildlife and people for *National Geographic*.

When not in the field photographing, Hamilton James shoots natural history films for clients including the BBC, and others, through his production company Halcyon Media LTD, which he runs with his wife Philippa Forrester. He also does on-air work as a TV presenter for various BBC programs, including Halcyon River Diaries, which documented the year he and his family spent living on the river outside their house. Hamilton James has been nominated for Emmy awards and twice won the Royal Television Society award for photography.

Recently, Hamilton James has taken up residence in Yellowstone, the world’s first national park, founded in 1872. Yellowstone is home to a wide variety of fish, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and 67 species of mammals, including some of our most embattled predators. For a *National Geographic* story celebrating the National Park Service centennial in 2016, Hamilton James went beyond the park’s boundaries from Wyoming into Idaho and Montana, to create a portrait of the one of the largest temperate-zone ecosystems on Earth.
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