Announcing a new urban conservation program in Charm City

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is thrilled to announce that, thanks to a recent grant from the Baltimore-based France-Merrick Foundation, we are launching an urban conservation program in Baltimore, with the goal of weaving our mission into the fabric of this vibrant community.

Baltimore is one of the most densely populated coastal cities in America. Residents’ lives are heavily impacted by heat waves and flooding, both of which are exacerbated by climate change. TNC’s conservation focus in Baltimore will be centered around making the city more resilient and adapted to the climate impacts that are already being felt with each heat wave, each high tide and each storm.

As we embark on this journey, it’s important that we understand the injustices that exist today and the history of systemic racism, segregation, and discriminatory housing and urban planning practices that led to them. In the 1930s, the federal Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC)—a government-sponsored corporation created as part of the New Deal—surveyed and mapped neighborhoods in 239 U.S. cities. The HOLC maps color-coded neighborhoods by race, with majority Black communities marked in red and designated as “hazardous.” As a result, these “redlined” neighborhoods were locked out of economic opportunities, which set the stage for the country’s persistent racial wealth gap that is still growing today.

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Orchids
Protecting one of Maryland’s most incredible flowers in a changing climate

Orchids are among the most popular and coveted flowers in the world, often because of their rarity. Many of these extraordinary plants evolved in places with unique ecological conditions, which are the same types of places The Nature Conservancy has long worked to protect.

As TNC works in Maryland to make our lands more resilient to climate change, some of our local rare orchids are returning. White and yellow-fringed orchids reappeared for the first time in many years since we brought fire back to the landscape at our Nassawango Creek preserve on the Eastern Shore. By managing the landscape with controlled burns, we’re not only restoring a vital natural process on which plants like orchids rely, we’re also creating a healthier ecosystem better suited to cope with change.

In Western Maryland, we’re working to create connected corridors of healthy, protected forests that will allow species to migrate to new places as temperatures rise and weather patterns evolve. The diverse topography and geology of Western Maryland’s mountains have made them the perfect habitat for rare plants like the white lady’s slipper orchid, which is found on a TNC preserve in just one Maryland county. The rarity of these orchids can unfortunately also make them valuable targets for poaching, which is why their exact locations need to be kept secret.

Turn to page 34 to learn more about these amazing plants and how TNC is working to protect them in Maryland and beyond.