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Profile of a Conservationist

Isaac Hametz

Baltimore Program Director

Isaac Hametz is a designer, strategist, educator and activist trained in agricultural science, landscape architecture and social entrepreneurship. A passionate, thoughtful leader, Isaac has managed innovative and authentic conservation projects internationally and in the United States for 15 years. As the Baltimore Program Director, Isaac is guiding TNC's portfolio of projects in the city, aiming to address critical and connected Chesapeake Bay conservation issues including climate adaptation, sediment management and equitable access to nature. Before joining TNC in 2021, Isaac was a partner and principal at Mahan Rykiel Associates, a landscape architecture and urban design firm based in Baltimore. In his role there, Isaac established and guided the firm's design research studio leveraging strategic partnerships with non-profits, academic institutions, government and the private sector to advance applied design research solutions for climate adaptation and community resiliency in Baltimore and the Chesapeake Bay.

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To The Jungles That Be



Artwork from *To The Jungles That Be*, a poem written and spoken by Baltimore Poet Kondwani Fidel © Saba Hamidi

"I grew up in what many people call the jungle. But how so if we've never had trees?"

"How is nature vital to the world but we're deprived of it?"

These thought-provoking lines in "*To The Jungles That Be*"—a poem written and spoken by poet, essayist, and Baltimore native Kondwani Fidel—serve as a candid reminder that people experience nature differently depending on where they grow up and whether they have access to healthy, natural environments.

In 2023, The Nature Conservancy's Maryland/DC Chapter partnered with Fidel and Baltimore-based artist Saba Hamidi on an arts-based engagement initiative that aims to enhance urban forestry participation and outcomes in Baltimore. The project is intended to spark conversations with people in urban and underserved communities to

better understand their relationship to nature and their interest in expanding tree canopy in their neighborhoods.

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Baltimore Orioles (*Icterus galbula*) depend on environmentally healthy communities. Look for new species trading cards in future magazine editions.



Baltimore Oriole

Icterus galbula

TNC thinks these conversations are a critical starting point in the implementation of Maryland's Tree Solutions Now Act, which aims to plant 5 million trees in the state by 2031, including 500,000 in urban and underserved communities.

The traditional thinking in the conservation community is that people—no matter their background or lived experience—will understand and appreciate the value of trees and nature in general. However, research by the U.S. Forest Service and others highlights the important role that representation has on environmental participation, which is why TNC embarked on this project to connect with and understand the lived experience of our community-based partners and to disrupt entrenched urban forestry models and mindsets. To achieve success on the frontlines of urban forestry, we must reimagine the rules of the game.

To participate in the To The Jungles That Be project, visit www.tothejungles.com

Baltimore Oriole

The Baltimore Oriole is a striking songbird known for its vibrant orange and black plumage. Found primarily in North America, these birds are often seen flitting through deciduous forests and suburban areas.

Orioles are known for their beautiful, flute-like songs and their intricate, hanging nests woven from plant fibers. They primarily feed on insects, fruit, and nectar, making them a delightful visitor to backyard feeders.

© Laurie Painter/TNC Photo Contest 2019



Crisfield residents admire a local mural detailing the history and importance of the seafood industry in the town. © Jay Fleming

Crisfield Flood Resilience Work On Display at the Ocean City Film Festival

The community of Crisfield, Maryland, is the self-proclaimed “Seafood Capital of the World.” Crisfield is the bedrock of what is celebrated as Chesapeake culture. Its history and roots are deeply intertwined with the waters of the Chesapeake Bay and its bounty. But Crisfield’s relationship with the water is changing, and those impacts are felt in every corner of the community. Over the past few years, The Nature Conservancy has been working with the City of Crisfield and members of its community to address their flooding challenges through social science. TNC’s primary goal for the project is to create new collaborations between community leaders, residents and outside partners to increase local capacity to advance flood adaptation projects that benefit a range of community needs and goals.

One component of this work was to document the challenges that Crisfield is facing and the solutions that Crisfield

is exploring to incorporate storytelling and narrative as one piece of the broader adaptation strategies. Stories can help make anthropological insights more accessible and engaging to a wider audience, so TNC partnered with Modulation Studios, a Crisfield-based video production company, to produce the documentary film *On Water’s Edge*. The film premiered in the spring of 2024 at the Crisfield Public Library as a community event that was planned and organized by TNC. In the spring of 2025, *On Water’s Edge* made a more public debut at the Ocean City Film Festival. Our goal is to get Crisfield’s story out to a more regional audience to help raise awareness and interest in Crisfield as a model coastal community where innovative, community-led flood adaptation strategies are being codigned by scientists, city planners, government agencies, and members of the community.

Watch the full documentary film at bit.ly/onwatersedge



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