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The Tennessee Aquarium Conservation Institute (TNACI) is located along the banks of the Tennessee River in Chattanooga, Tennessee and is the research branch of the Tennessee Aquarium (Aquarium). TNACI compliments the Aquarium's work to educate and inspire wonder of the natural world and to fulfill the Aquarium's mission to connect people with nature and empower them to make informed decisions about water and wildlife. TNACI staff coordinate and conduct scientific studies, work with landowners and farmers to restore the region's natural ecosystems, and do the hands-on conservation work that the Aquarium can't do on its own. TNACI works in aquatic habitats ranging from large rivers to headwater streams as well as springs and caves. Current efforts include captive propagation of Lake Sturgeon, Southern Appalachian Brook Trout, and maintaining an Ark population of the federally endangered Laurel Dace. Studies also include status surveys, microhabitat assessment, and population genetics of imperiled fishes. Staff maintain a Freshwater Information Network (FIN), an online database of over 400 species of Southeastern freshwater fishes. In partnership with other non-profits, state, and federal agencies, TNACI staff work collaboratively to recover and prevent the extinction of the Laurel Dace and freshwater mollusks through a Regional Conservation Partnership Program through the Department of Agriculture. Additionally, TNACI scientists inspire the next generation of conservation leaders through experiential learning opportunities and fellowships.
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