



Meet the Scientist!



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Dr. Greenberg is a trained professional. The animal pictured was not injured and was released back into the wild. Never handle or approach wild animals.

As a research ecologist, I study the effects of forest management and natural disturbances on plants and animals.

Dr. Cathryn H. Greenberg
Research Ecologist
Ph.D., University of Florida
USDA Forest Service scientist

Important Scientist Characteristics:

The most important skills an ecologist can have are a love of nature, curiosity, willingness to be in the woods (even if it's hot, buggy, or the mountains are steep), and the ability to stick with a study until it is complete.

Example of a simple research question I have tried to answer: What happens to bird communities after a low-intensity fire that doesn't kill very many trees, versus a fire that kills many trees and changes the forest structure? How do fire, timber harvesting, or high winds from hurricanes affect animals, or animal food sources such as acorns and berries?

Technology or equipment used in research:

I use different kinds of traps to catch animals. For reptiles and amphibians, I use buckets buried in the ground, with the opening at the ground surface. The animals fall into the buckets. For mice, I use traps that snap shut when the mouse goes in to get bait, like peanut butter and oats. These traps do not hurt the animals, and they enable me to compare how many animals are in different kinds of habitats.

Most Exciting Discovery

One thing I have learned is that prescribed burning, timber harvesting, and other disturbances change the forest structure. Those changes to the forest may not be great for some animal species, but other species benefit from those different kinds of habitats.

When did you know you wanted to be a scientist?

I have always loved nature. As a young adult, I volunteered for the National Park Service helping the biologists. It was then that I figured out that I could actually get a job studying plants and animals.

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