



Dr. Schelhas is pictured in the middle while in the field conducting research.

Meet the Scientist!

A forester/anthropologist studies the diversity of ways that people talk about, value, and use trees and forests.

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<http://www.naturalinquirer.org>

Important Scientist Characteristics

I think science requires a combination of curiosity, wanting to know what people are thinking, and a willingness to try to understand things from their point of view rather than wanting them to see things the way I do.

Example of a simple research question I have tried to answer:

Why do people own forested land? For example, do they own forests because they want to make money by selling trees for lumber, because they want to hunt, because they enjoy nature, or for some other reason? Do these different reasons lead people to manage their forests differently?

Technology or equipment used in research:

Often times we talk to people, taking notes with pen and pencil or using a digital recorder so we can capture the responses. But we also use other computer tools for mapping, photos, and analyzing what people say in our interviews.

Most Exciting Discovery

Working in an area of Costa Rica where most of the forest had been cut down to create cattle pasture, I realized by interviewing people that they cared a lot about forests. I also learned that there were some things we could do to help them keep forests on their land.

When did you know you wanted to be a scientist?

I have loved trees as long as I can remember. I can remember going around my neighborhood when I was about 8 years old trying to identify all the trees. When I was in high school, I learned that you could get a job studying trees.

<http://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/staff/scientists/738>