



Meet the Scientist!



An entomologist studies the biology, natural history and control of insects. I am interested in how tree-feeding insects use microbes to help them digest wood.

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<http://www.naturalinquirer.org>

Important Scientist Characteristics

My two most useful talents are curiosity and stubbornness. Curiosity—because it is easy to find a project when everything is interesting. Stubbornness—because I won't quit until I get an answer.

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

How can we identify the larvae of many species of wood-boring wasps that all look the same? I was able to identify the wasps by DNA fingerprinting.

Technology or equipment used in research:

I use many pieces of equipment, but the one item I use most is a PCR machine. It is about the size of a basketball. I can program it to change the temperature inside it any way I want. It is used to amplify a region of DNA so that I have enough copies to read the sequence.

Most Exciting Discovery

I have found many species of insects that are new to science, which is always exciting. However, I think my favorite discovery was that I could identify wild colonies of honey bees that were descendants of Egyptian bees brought to the United States in the 1860s.

When did you know you wanted to be a scientist?

I always planned on going to medical school. However, when I was a sophomore in college I took a course in paleontology (the study of fossils) and the professor had such an interesting life that I decided to become a biologist. I chose to be an entomologist in my senior year.