



Meet the Scientist!



<http://www.naturalinquirer.org>



An ecologist studies the relationships between living organisms and their environment.

Dr. Paulette Ford
Research Ecologist
Ph.D., University of Arizona
USDA Forest Service scientist

Important Scientist Characteristics

- ★ Being really excited about research
- ★ Paying attention to details
- ★ Ability to see patterns and the big picture

Example of a simple research question I have tried to answer: How does fire change grassland plant, arthropod, and small mammal communities?

Technology or equipment used in research:

To study the effect of fire on small mammals, I use Sherman traps to sample small mammal populations before and after fire. Sherman traps enable me to catch a wide variety of small mammals, including grasshopper mice and ground squirrels, and safely release them after taking important body measurements.

Most Exciting Discovery

My most exciting discovery is that the time of year that fire occurs in an ecosystem is one of the most important factors in determining how the ecosystem will respond to fire.

When did you know you wanted to be a scientist?

I knew I wanted to be a scientist when I was a kid. I loved to play outside and to read encyclopedias. I also loved to watch adventure movies like Jules Verne's Journey to the Center of the Earth. I always wanted to be the explorer!

<http://www.fs.fed.us/rm/albuq/> • <http://www.fs.fed.us/rm/grassland-shrubland-desert/>