

Welcome to the *Natural Inquirer* Monographs!

Scientists report their research in a variety of special books. These books enable scientists to share information with one another. A monograph is a book about research that focuses on a single science project. This monograph of a *Natural Inquirer* article was created to give scientists the opportunity to share their research with you and other middle school students. The monograph presents scientific research conducted by scientists in the Forest Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). If you want to learn more about the Forest Service, you can read about it on the inside back cover of this monograph, or you can visit the *Natural Inquirer* Web site at <http://www.naturalinquirer.org>.

All of the research in this *Natural Inquirer* monograph is concerned with the natural environment, such as trees, forests, animals, insects, outdoor activities, and water. To introduce you to this monograph, you will first “meet the scientists” who conducted the research. Then you will read about one of the many interesting aspects of science and about the natural environment. You will also read about a specific research project. (The research article in this monograph is written in the format that scientists use when they publish research in scientific journals.) Then YOU become the scientist as you go through the FACTivity **associated** with the article. The

glossary and the special sections highlighted in the article give you extra information that is educational and interesting.

At the end of each section of the article, you will find a few questions to help you think about what you have read. These questions will help you think like a scientist. They will help you think about how research is conducted. Your teacher may use these questions in a class discussion, or you may discuss these questions in a small group.

Each *Natural Inquirer* monograph will help you explore the exciting world of science and prepare you to become a young scientist. You will learn about the scientific process, how to conduct scientific research, and how to share your own research with others.

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