

# Note to Educators

As teachers of science, you want your students to acquire abilities that will enable them to conduct scientific inquiry, and you want them to gain an understanding of the scientific inquiry process. Scientific inquiry can best be taught by integrating minds-on and hands-on experiences. Over time, such experiences encourage students to independently formulate and seek answers to questions about the world we live in. As educators, you are constantly faced with engaging your students in scientific inquiry in new and different ways. In an age of abundant technology, standard teaching strategies can become monotonous to today's learners. The *Natural Inquirer* provides a fresh approach to science and a view of the outside world that is larger than the classroom and can still be used while in the school setting.

The *Natural Inquirer* is a science education resource journal to be used with learners from Grade 5 and up. The *Natural Inquirer* contains articles describing environmental and natural resource research conducted by the United States Department

of Agriculture (USDA), Forest Service scientists and their cooperators. These are scientific journal articles that have been reformatted to meet the needs of middle school students. The articles are easy to understand, aesthetically pleasing to the eye, contain glossaries, and include hands-on activities. The goal of the *Natural Inquirer* is to stimulate critical reading and thinking about scientific inquiry and investigation while learning about ecology, the natural environment, and natural resources.

A *Natural Inquirer* journal contains six to seven articles, rewritten from the original published scientific paper. This *Natural Inquirer* monograph contains just one article. When you use this monograph in your classroom, you may take advantage of the educational resources available in the monograph and on the Web site. The monograph stands alone as a classroom resource. The following sections will provide everything you need to use this monograph in your classroom:

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**Meet the Scientists:** Introduces the scientists whose research is presented. This section can be used to discuss careers in science.

**Glossary:** Introduces potentially new terms used in the monograph.

**Thinking About Science:** Provides one idea about the nature of scientific inquiry.

**Thinking About the Environment:** Provides background information to introduce the topic studied by the scientists.

**Introduction:** Introduces the problem or question the scientists addressed.

**Method:** Presents the method used by the scientists to collect and analyze their data.

**Findings:** Presents the results of the research.

**Discussion:** Places the findings into the context of the original problem or question.

**Reflection Sections:** These questions are not a test! They are placed after the Introduction, Method, Findings, and Discussion sections to help students critically think about what they have read. They can also be used to informally assess student comprehension.

**FACTivity:** Presents an activity that can be done in the classroom and out-of-doors.

**Citation:** Gives the original article citation.

**Lesson Plan:** Presents a lesson plan for using the *Natural Inquirer* monograph in the classroom.