



Meet the Scientist!



Entomologists study insects. I mostly study how insects interact with plants, especially insects that feed on plants.

Dr. Justin Runyon Entomologist

Ph.D., Penn State University
USDA Forest Service scientist



<http://www.naturalinquirer.org>

<http://www.scienceinvestigator.org>

Important Scientist Characteristics

★ Aside from a passion for nature, I'd say curiosity is the driving force behind my research. Curiosity pushes me to come up with big ideas or questions and formulate ways to tackle them.

Example of a simple research question I have tried

to answer: How does insect feeding change plant chemistry? How do these changes affect the success of insects and plants?

Technology or equipment used in research:

I use a gas chromatograph-mass spectrometer (GC-MS) for my research. This equipment allows me to separate, measure, and identify the chemical compounds found in insects and plants.

Most Exciting Discovery

I discovered that parasitic plants (*Cuscuta*) find other plants to feed on by smelling them. These plants grow toward odors from nearby plants and even choose between good and bad hosts based on how they smell.

When did you know you wanted to be a scientist?

I knew I wanted to be scientist before I was 10 years old. I grew up close to nature in rural Virginia and spent many childhood hours exploring the woodlands near my home and developed a lifelong interest in the natural world.