



# Meet the Scientist!



A forest ecologist studies the structure, composition, and processes that interact in a forest to provide different habitats for plants and animals.

## Dr. Malcolm North

Forest Ecologist  
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<http://www.naturalinquirer.org>

<http://www.scienceinvestigator.org>

### Important Scientist Characteristics

★ Curiosity fuels my interest and critical thinking makes sure I don't jump to the wrong conclusion.

**Example of a simple research question I have tried to answer:** What type of fire is best for restoring fire-dependent forests? Many western forests used to depend on frequent low-intensity wildfire to clear them out and keep them healthy. Most wildfires now, however, are put out. We've found that light forest thinning followed by a prescribed fire is best for restoring these fire-dependent forests.

### Technology or equipment used in research:

We use a surveyor's total station that uses a laser, compass and tilt measurement to precisely map tree locations on the earth's surface to within two inches. The precise measurements let us understand what tree arrangement is important to wildlife.

### Most Exciting Discovery

I found that truffles (underground mushrooms) are much more abundant in old forests. The flying squirrel eats truffles and in turn the spotted owl eats the squirrels. This may be one of the reasons why this rare owl is mostly found in old-growth forests.

### When did you know you wanted to be a scientist?

I was hiking in a burned forest and was fascinated by why some trees were killed and others were thriving.

<http://www.plantsciences.ucdavis.edu/affiliates/north/Malcolm.html>