When did you know you wanted to be a scientist?

I always planned on going to medical school. However, when I was a sophomore in college I took a course in paleontology (the study of fossils) and the professor had such an interesting life that I decided to become a biologist. I chose to be an entomologist in my senior year.

Important Scientist Characteristics

★ My two most useful talents are curiosity and stubbornness. Curiosity—because it is easy to find a project when everything is interesting. Stubbornness—because I won’t quit until I get an answer.

Example of a simple research question I have tried to answer: How can we identify the larvae of many species of wood-boring wasps that all look the same? I was able to identify the wasps by DNA fingerprinting.

Technology or equipment used in research:
I use many pieces of equipment but the one I use most is a PCR machine. It is about the size of a basketball. I can program it to change the temperature inside it any way I want. It is used to amplify a region of DNA so that I have enough copies to read the sequence.

Most Exciting Discovery
I have found many species of insects that are new to science which is always exciting but I think my favorite discovery was that I could identify wild colonies of honey bees that were descendants of Egyptian bees brought to the United States in the 1860’s.

When did you know you wanted to be a scientist?
I always planned on going to medical school. However, when I was a sophomore in college I took a course in paleontology (the study of fossils) and the professor had such an interesting life that I decided to become a biologist. I chose to be an entomologist in my senior year.

http://www.naturalinquirer.org
http://www.scienceinvestigator.org

Meet the Scientist!

Dr. Nathan Schiff
Entomologist
Ph.D., University of Illinois
USDA Forest Service scientist

An entomologist studies the biology, natural history and control of insects. I am interested in how tree-feeding insects use microbes to help them digest wood.