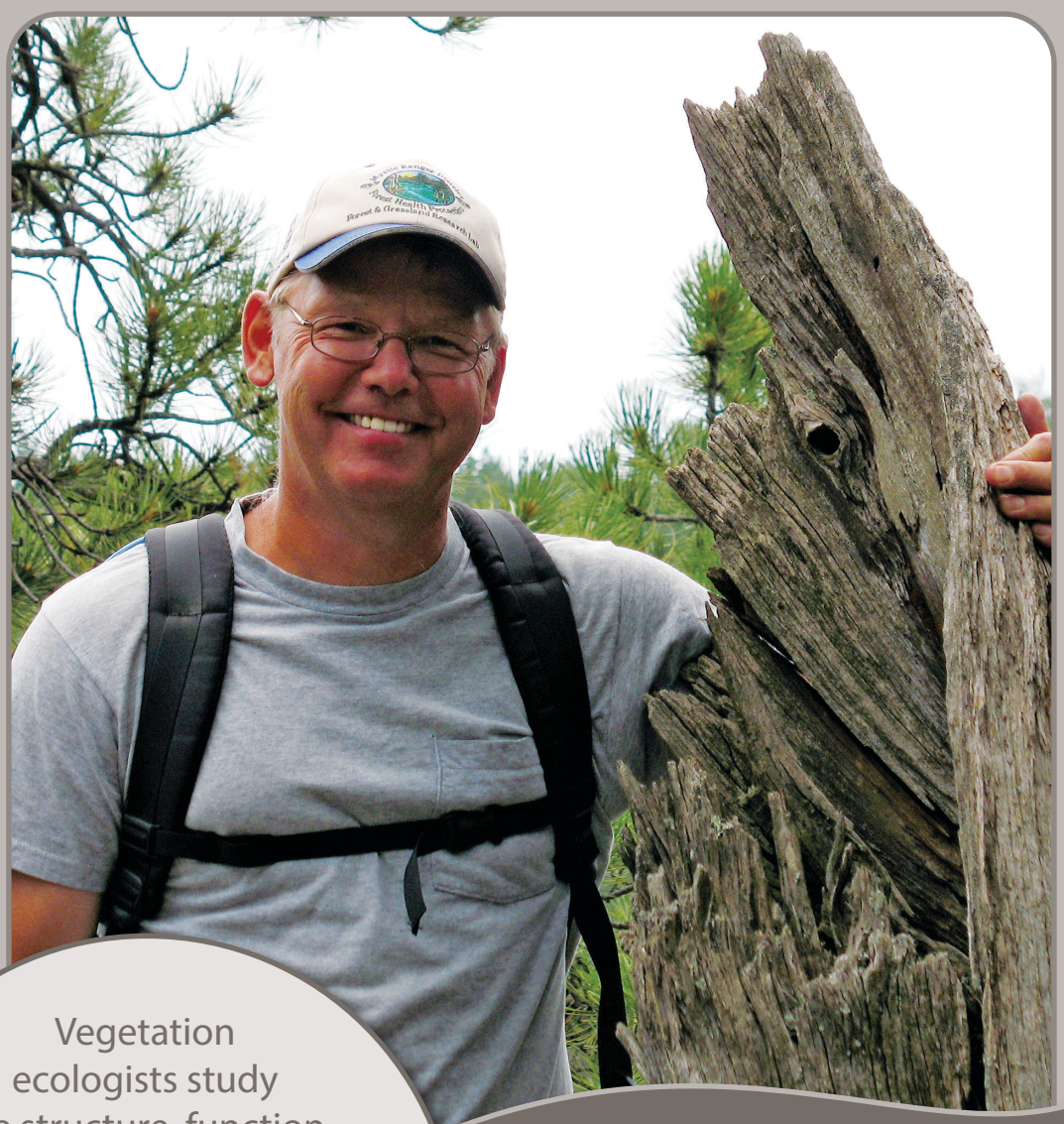

Meet the Scientist!

Vegetation ecologists study the structure, function, and dynamics of plants and plant communities. I also look at how the characteristics of plant communities might be influenced by natural and human-caused disturbances.

Dr. Jack Butler

Vegetation Ecologist

Ph.D., Texas A&M University
USDA Forest Service scientist

http://www.naturalinquirer.org

Important Scientist Characteristics:

I have always been curious about how things are put together and work. I think I have a talent for looking at landscapes and seeing patterns where others only see green stuff.

Example of a simple research question I have tried to answer:

Native plants are plants that originally grew in an area. Invasive plants are plants that are not originally from an area and can threaten the survival of native plants and animals. What can we do to control invasive plants? How does invasive plant control affect native plant and animal species? I study how invasive plants impact native species and populations and how plant communities respond after invasive species are controlled.

Technology or equipment used in research:

Most of the equipment I use to collect data in the field is simple technology. I often use sampling frames made from plastic pipes to record species and estimate their abundance in a study area. I use complex technology such as computers and computer software to process, analyze, and interpret the data I collect.

Most Exciting Discovery

I discovered that invasive plants have a large impact on native plants and animals. I documented the successful control of an aggressive invasive plant. Later, I found that the native plants responded differently than what might be predicted. In some cases, different invasive plants replaced the invasive plant which was controlled.

When did you know you wanted to be a scientist?

Early in my career, I wanted to teach biology. The questions from students that I could not answer really generated my interest in becoming a scientist. I think biology is fascinating.

http://www.fs.fed.us/rmrs/people/jackbutler