



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. My research focuses on improving our understanding of changes in forest conditions.

Dr. Sean Healey Forest Ecologist

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<http://www.naturalinquirer.org>

Important Scientist Characteristics:

A scientist has to have an open mind. Some of what we think we know is simply wrong. A single insight can change everything. That insight might come from anyone or anywhere as long as we are open to it.

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

How does forest disturbance, like fire, insects, and disease, affect a forest's ability to remove carbon from the air? I developed a system that helps national forest managers understand these processes.

Technology or equipment used in research:

I am on the Science Team for the new Global Ecosystem Dynamics Investigation (GEDI) mission. This mission is organized by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). GEDI will put an instrument on the International Space Station. Once in space, GEDI will tell us both how tall forests are around the planet and how much carbon forests store.

Most Exciting Discovery

Many scientists use imagery from space to map how and where forests are changing. I co-lead a team that discovered a way to combine whole groups of maps so that we can see forest losses faster and more accurately than ever before.

When did you know you wanted to be a scientist?

I worked for the Peace Corps for two years in a small village in the African country of Cameroon. Every day, I saw trucks carrying huge logs away from the forest. I eventually began to wonder what humans were doing to forests.

<https://youtu.be/OQwP8tz7JyQ>