



# Meet the Scientist!



<http://www.naturalinquirer.org>

I am a mountain scientist,  
and I study the effects of past  
and present climates  
on mountain  
ecosystems.

## Dr. Connie Millar

Evolutionary Geneticist/ Mountain  
Scientist

Ph.D., University of California, Berkeley  
USDA Forest Service scientist

### Important Scientist Characteristics

I am able to unleash my passion and deep personal interests in my work, and career. When people are able to do what they love in their work, that is an ideal life. I also have the fortune to work with like-minded people who share profound mutual respect and affection for one another.

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

How have historic changes in climate affected plant and animal ecosystems in mountains of western North America (specifically the Sierra Nevada and mountains of the Great Basin)? How are ongoing and future climate changes likely to affect these same ecosystems?

### Technology or equipment used in research:

I use an increment borer, which is a simple tool that extracts a thin strip of wood from tree stems and enables me to measure annual ring widths. From this I can assess how climate has affected growth in a particular year.

### Most Exciting Discovery

I have contributed to new understanding that American pikas, relatives of the rabbit. They are thought to be at risk of extinction from changing climates, and are most likely able to adapt to the change.

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

From the time I was very young I knew I wanted to be a naturalist (someone who studies plants and animals in their native habitats). That didn't translate into wanting to be a scientist or studying science until much later, when I realized I had to do this to be accepted as a naturalist.

<http://www.fs.fed.us/psw/programs/efh/staff/millar/>