
Note to Educators

The Forest Service’s mission is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation’s forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. For more than 100 years, our motto has been “Caring for the land and serving people.” The Forest Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), recognizes its responsibility to be engaged in efforts to connect youth to nature and to promote the development of science-based conservation education programs and materials nationwide.

The *Natural Inquirer* is a science education journal to be used by students in grade 5 and up. The *Natural Inquirer* contains articles describing environmental and natural resource research conducted by Forest Service scientists and their cooperators. These scientific journal articles have been reformatted to meet the needs of middle-school students. The articles are easy to understand, are aesthetically pleasing to the eye, contain glossaries, and include hands-on activities. The goal of the *Natural Inquirer* is to stimulate critical reading and thinking about scientific inquiry and investigation while teaching about ecology, the natural environment, and natural resources.

A *Natural Inquirer* journal contains six to seven articles, rewritten from the original published scientific paper. This *Natural Inquirer* monograph contains just one article. When you use this monograph in your classroom, you may take advantage of the educational resources available in the monograph and on the Web site. The monograph stands alone as a classroom resource. The following sections will provide everything you need to use this monograph in your classroom.

The Format of a *Natural Inquirer* Article

Each *Natural Inquirer* article follows the same format. *Natural Inquirer* articles are written directly from a published science article, and all have been reviewed by the scientists for accuracy. Each article contains the following sections, which you may introduce to your students as they read:

Meet the Scientists: Introduces students to the scientists who did the research. This section may be used in a discussion about careers in science.

Thinking About Science: Introduces something new about the scientific process, such as a scientific habit of mind or procedures used in scientific studies.

Thinking About the Environment: Introduces the environmental topic the research addresses.

Introduction: Introduces the problem or question the research addresses.

Method: Describes the method used by the scientists to collect and analyze their data.

Findings: Describes the results of the analysis.

Discussion: Discusses the findings and places them into the context of the original problem or question.

Reflection Section: Presents questions aimed at stimulating critical thinking about what has been read or predicting what might be presented in the next section. These sections appear at the end of each of the main article sections.

Number Crunches: Presents an easy math problem related to the research.

Glossary: Defines potentially new scientific or other terms to students. The first occurrence of a glossary word is **bold** in the text.

Citation: Gives the original article citation with a Web link to the original article.

FACTivity: Presents a hands-on activity that emphasizes something presented in the article.

Lesson Plan: Presents a lesson plan for using the *Natural Inquirer* monograph in the classroom.

Please let us know what you think!

On page 28, you will find a list that identifies the National Science Education Standards that the article addresses. On the *Natural Inquirer* Web site, you will find educator and student evaluation forms. We welcome any feedback, so please visit <http://www.naturalinquirer.org> and complete the online evaluation forms. In addition, you may contact Dr. Barbara McDonald at the address below with any comments you have.

Dr. Barbara (Babs) McDonald
Forest Service
320 Green St.
Athens, GA 30602-2044
706.559.4224
bmcdonald@fs.fed.us
(Please put “Educator Feedback” in the subject line)

Visit the *Natural Inquirer* Web site at
<http://www.naturalinquirer.org>.

From this site, you can order more editions and read and download lesson plans, word games, and other resources to help you use the *Natural Inquirer* in your classroom. You can also view and download a yearlong lesson plan aimed at helping your students learn about the scientific process.