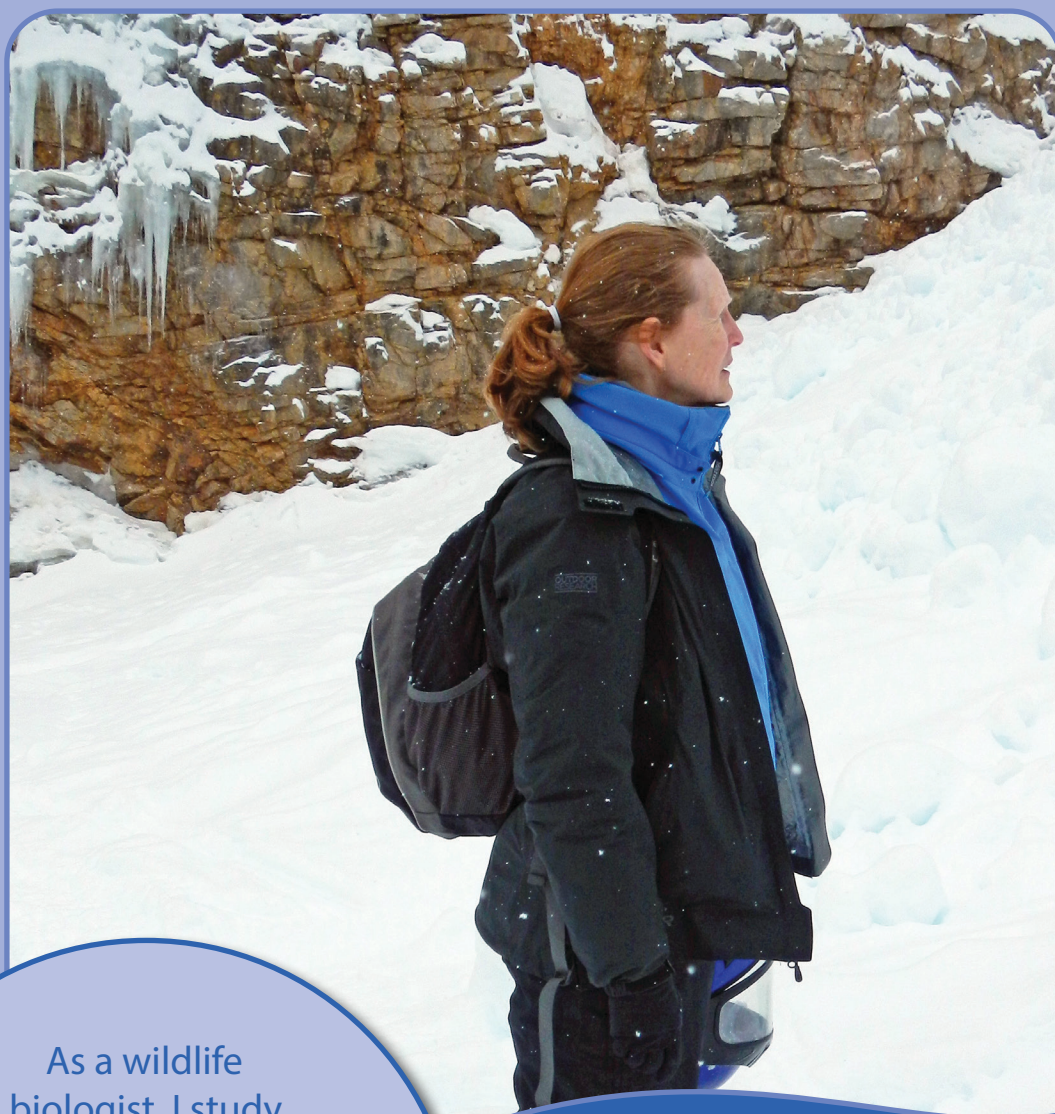




Meet the Scientist!



As a wildlife biologist, I study birds and mammals in forest ecosystems. I study these animals to understand how they interact with their environment, as well as what these animals need to survive.

Cathy Raley
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USDA Forest Service scientist



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Important Scientist Characteristics:

Curiosity about nature, good observation skills, creativity to figure out how things work, and perseverance are all important skills. It frequently takes years to collect the data needed to answer wildlife research questions. Working in the woods in all types of weather and conditions has been both a challenging and exciting aspect of my job.

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

What types of trees do pileated woodpeckers need for roosting? Pileated woodpeckers are the largest woodpecker in North America. At night they roost, or rest, in tree cavities for protection. To answer our research question, we live-captured birds and outfitted the birds with small radio-transmitters and tracked them to their roosting sites.

Technology or equipment used in research:

In the rugged North Cascades of Washington, we live-captured wolverines and outfitted them with satellite telemetry collars. The collars transmit signals to a satellite which then calculates the locations of the wolverines. This technology enabled us to monitor wolverines no matter where they traveled.

Most Exciting Discovery

Fishers are a rare carnivore in Western United States forests. Fishers need tree cavities for reproduction. We discovered that fishers frequently used cavities excavated by pileated woodpeckers as the location to give birth to their young, called kits. Their ecological link with pileated woodpeckers was an exciting and significant discovery

When did you know you wanted to be a scientist?

As a kid, I was fascinated by wild animals, and family camping trips gave me a huge appreciation for the outdoors and wilderness. In school, I was most interested in science and biology classes, but I didn't know I wanted to become a wildlife biologist until I was in college.

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