



Entomologists study insects. I mostly study how insects interact with plants, especially insects that feed on plants.

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Dr. Justin Runyon



Important Scientist Characteristics

Aside from a passion for nature, I'd say curiosity is the driving force behind my research. Curiosity pushes me to come up with big ideas or questions and formulate ways to tackle them.

Example of a simple research question I have tried to answer: How does insect feeding change plant chemistry? How do these changes affect the success of insects and plants?

Technology or equipment used in research:

I use a gas chromatograph-mass spectrometer (GC-MS) for my research. This equipment enables me to separate, measure, and identify the chemical compounds found in insects and plants.

: Most Exciting Discovery

- : I discovered that parasitic plants
- : (*Cuscuta*) find other plants
- : to feed on by smelling them.
- : These plants grow toward odors
- : from nearby plants and even
- : choose between good and bad
- : hosts based on how they smell.

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

- : I knew I wanted to be a scientist
- : before I was 10 years old.
- : I grew up close to nature in
- : rural Virginia. I spent many
- : childhood hours exploring the
- : woodlands near my home and
- : developed a lifelong interest in
- : the natural world.

<https://www.fs.fed.us/rmrs/people/jrunyon>