



# Meet the Scientist!



A conservation geneticist examines the DNA found in cells of every species to learn many secretive facts about these species.

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<http://www.naturalinquirer.org>

### Important Scientist Characteristics:

I have many, many gaps in my skill set. Fortunately, I was raised in an environment where critical thinking and creativity were valued. You couldn't survive a family dinner without being able to think critically, state your point of view in the face of adversaries, and creatively organize facts. These skills have been invaluable in my scientific career.

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

How do endangered fishers, sage grouse, lynx, and wolverine populations genetically connect to one another?

### Technology or equipment used in research:

A conservation geneticist gets to use cutting-edge genetics equipment. This includes Polymerase Chain Reaction machines, which allow us to take a single hair or cell from a species and make many copies for analysis. We also use DNA sequencers, which provide the sequence of a species' genetic code.

### Most Exciting Discovery

Finding that fishers (a rare species like a wolverine or marten) did not go extinct in the Rocky Mountains in the 1920s, but survived in the Bitterroot Mountains. These fishers' unique genetic signature can still be seen in today's fishers, which are a combination of native fishers and fishers brought in by foresters in the 1950s and 1960s.

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

I wanted to become a naturalist since I was a little kid taking walks and fishing with my grandfather. This desire was reinforced through watching 1970 and 1980-era National Geographic specials featuring scientists studying wildlife in remote locations. In college, I came to science as a way to understand the natural world.

<http://www.fs.fed.us/rm/wildlife-terrestrial/genetics/>