



# Meet the Scientist!



As a geneticist, I use DNA and RNA to reveal the secret life of trees. DNA and RNA are found in the cells of living things. They contain the information to help organisms develop and function.

## Dr. Keith Woeste Geneticist

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USDA Forest Service scientist



<http://www.naturalinquirer.org>

### Important Scientist Characteristics:

Creativity and joy are at the heart of science, but the skill that most often contributes to my research is writing. Good writing is essential to good science.

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

Where did certain logs come from originally? Conservation officers found several large logs headed for a sawmill that they believed were stolen from a forest. I removed DNA from the tree stumps and from the logs. I was able to show that the logs were in fact from the stolen trees.

### Technology or equipment used in research:

After we remove DNA from our samples in the lab, we use equipment to read the DNA sequence. The DNA sequence is an extremely long and complicated coded message. We then use computers and special software to decode the message and organize it in ways we can understand.

### Most Exciting Discovery

Working together with a team in Europe, we discovered that forests of wild walnut trees growing in Asia had actually been planted by humans, perhaps thousands of years ago. Ancient human cultures were interested in making new forests, too.

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

I didn't know I wanted to be a scientist until I was 31 years old! I loved many different subjects in school, including science.

<https://www.nrs.fs.fed.us/people/Woeste>