

Note to Educators

As a teacher of science, you want your students to acquire abilities that will enable them to conduct scientific inquiry, and you want them to gain an understanding of the scientific inquiry process. Scientific inquiry can best be taught by integrating minds-on and hands-on experiences. Over time, such experiences encourage students to independently formulate and seek answers to questions about the world we live in. As an educator, you are constantly faced with engaging your students in scientific inquiry in new and different ways. In an age of abundant technology, standard teaching strategies can become monotonous to today's learners. The *Natural Inquirer* provides a fresh approach to science and a view of the outside world that is larger than the classroom and can still be used while in the school setting.

The *Natural Inquirer* is a science education resource journal to be used with learners from grade 5 and up. The *Natural Inquirer* contains articles describing environmental and natural resource research conducted by U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service scientists and their cooperators. These are scientific journal articles that 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 learning about ecology, the natural environment, and natural resources.

Science Education Standards and Evaluations

In the back of the journal, you will find a matrix that enables you to identify articles by the national science education standards that they address. You will also find evaluation forms in the back of the journal. Please make copies of these evaluation forms and have your students complete them after they complete each article. Also, please complete the evaluation form for teachers. Send the evaluation forms to the address listed below. The address is also listed at the bottom of the evaluation forms. You and your students may also complete the evaluation forms online by visiting <http://www.naturalinquirer.usda.gov>.

This journal is created by Environmental and Science Education, a science application program of the USDA Forest Service. If you have any questions or comments, please contact:

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Educator Resources

Visit the updated *Natural Inquirer* Web site at <http://www.naturalinquirer.usda.gov/educators.cfm>. From this site, you can 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.

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<http://www.naturalinquirer.usda.gov>