



A forest ecologist studies forest changes to understand what it means for forest values like clean air and water, wood products, wildlife habitat, and recreation.

**Dr. Steve Norman**  
Forest Ecologist  
Ph.D., Penn State University  
USDA Forest Service scientist

<http://www.naturalinquirer.org>



## Dr. Steve Norman



### **Important Scientist Characteristics:**

A good scientist is observant and deeply curious. I pay attention to detail, and I'm always wondering if we've got something wrong. I'm not just looking for answers, but I'm looking for better questions to ask.

### **Example of a simple research question I have tried**

**to answer:** When do leaves emerge in spring? Is there a pattern across the landscape for when leaves emerge? The calendar tells us that spring starts on March 21, but signs of spring can be earlier or later by days or even weeks. To understand why, I've tracked when leaves emerge in spring. Weather plays a big role, as do the species involved and the topography, such as mountains and valleys.

### **Technology or equipment used in research:**

I use information from satellites to track forest changes across seasons and over big areas. When we see a change that happens because of a disturbance, satellites let us know where and how important it is. Then, we can use those same satellites to track how the forest recovers.

### **• Most Exciting Discovery**

- I am continually surprised by
- how much we don't know.
- Many important questions are
- still unanswered.

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

- When I was in third grade, my
- school was building a new
- classroom. On the dirt pile, I
- found a beautiful fossil which
- showed animals from the sea
- floor that used to be there
- 360 million years ago! It was
- one of those things that many
- people walk past without
- looking twice, but I was
- observant and curious like a
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# Meet the Scientist!



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