

NATURALLY CURIOUS

Many people recognized that the real wealth obtained on expeditions came not in the form of gold but, rather, in the knowledge gathered about new plants and animals.

Charles Darwin

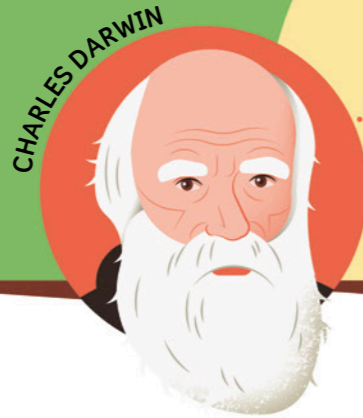
These new explorers wanted to discover nature and find out more about all the plants and animals they found in these previously unknown lands. In the process of studying them, they changed our understanding of the natural world. British naturalist Charles Darwin made an astounding discovery on the Galapagos Islands.



Darwin had so many birds ...

He observed that species had changed over the course of time and adapted to their environment. These observations inspired his theory of evolution, which explains how animals and plants had changed throughout time to become what we know now.

1831–1836



Over the course of his travels, Darwin collected thousands of samples, filled 15 notebooks with his observations, and produced about 300 illustrations.

If I find a new animal that no one knows about yet, I'll call it Emmaria Helouis!

The closely related species of Darwin's finches all share a common ancestor but, over time, developed different beaks.

Alfred Wallace

Another British naturalist, Alfred Wallace, explored South America in the mid-nineteenth century. Unfortunately he lost everything he had collected on his return journey to England due to a fire on his ship. He did not allow this to discourage him, however, and later put together another collection in East Asia. Independently of Darwin, he also developed a theory of evolution.

Wallace primarily observed birds and was the first to document many of them, including the standardwing bird-of-paradise.

1848–1862



Alexander von Humboldt

Both Darwin and Wallace were inspired to set out on their journeys by Alexander von Humboldt, a German explorer and naturalist who had a very strong influence on the development of the natural sciences. Von Humboldt also catalogued thousands of animal and plant species in South America with the assistance of the French botanist Aimé Bonpland. In addition, he studied rocks, traversed the rain forest, climbed volcanoes, and followed rivers to their sources. Nature and its study were his life's passions.

1799–1804

