



# Charles Darwin

Charles Robert Darwin (12 February 1809 – 19 April 1882) was an English scientist. He is famous for his work on the theory of evolution by natural selection.

Darwin was born in Shrewsbury, Shropshire into a wealthy and well-connected family. Darwin originally planned to become a doctor but he was always more interested in nature.

In 1831, he joined a five year scientific expedition on the survey ship HMS Beagle. The boat was to travel to South America, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. Darwin's job was to collect specimens of animals and plants and study them.

The Galapagos Islands fascinated Darwin and he noticed that the islands had many different types of animals and plants, some that were not found anywhere else. Darwin noticed that each island supported its own form of finch which were closely related but differed in important ways.

Darwin returned to England in 1836 and spent the next 20 years trying to explain how these finches could be related. He wanted to find out how new species could have evolved. He also carried out many experiments at his home, Down House in Kent.

Darwin came up with his theory of "natural selection". The animals (or plants) best suited to their environment are more likely to survive and reproduce, passing on the characteristics which helped them survive to their offspring. Gradually, the species changes over time. Darwin used the term "survival of the fittest".

Darwin worked on his theory for 20 years. In 1859 Darwin published his ideas in a book called 'On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection'. This book was controversial, because it went against the teaching of the church that God had made every living thing. It also suggested that Human beings were just another animal, and related to the apes. This upset a lot of people.

Darwin died on 19 April 1882 and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

