



# SCIENCE EXPLORATIONS

**Animals, Adaptation, and the Galápagos Islands**  
**Discover with Darwin**

## Introduction

Charles Darwin grew up in 19th century England. From a young age, he was intensely curious about nature and at 22 began a five-year voyage around the world on a ship named the *Beagle*. To remember his experiences, Darwin took notes about everything he observed... every kind of animal, plant, and rock.

In 1835, the *Beagle* arrived at the Galápagos Islands, located in the Pacific Ocean near Ecuador. Darwin was dazzled by the many unusual plants and animals he found. Today we call this rich variety of life “biodiversity.” “Bio” means “life,” and “diversity” means variety. Darwin searched the islands for patterns in hopes of unlocking the mysteries of nature.

Meet Niles Eldredge. His hero is Charles Darwin. And like Darwin, Niles loves to explore interesting questions about nature. Niles is a paleontologist at the American Museum of Natural History. He studies fossils. His goal is to understand how life on Earth has evolved — or changed — over long periods of time.

Niles: Hi, my name is Niles Eldredge and I'm a paleontologist and an expert on Charles Darwin. I'll be your host as you explore the Galápagos Islands just like Darwin did over a hundred and fifty years ago.

Now it's YOUR turn to follow in Darwin's footsteps...