

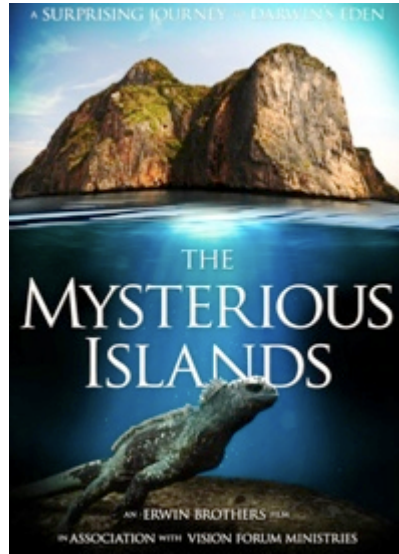


Written by [Dinah Seppi](#) on December 2, 2009

## “The Mysterious Islands” Challenges Darwin

A recently released documentary challenges Charles Darwin on “Ground Zero” of evolution: the Galapagos Islands. Led by Vision Forum founder Doug Phillips, the expedition covers the territory and animals Darwin visited and studied nearly 200 years ago, but comes to a very different conclusion.

Majestically filmed by award-winning Jon and Andy Erwin of [Erwin Brothers Motion Pictures](#), the 90-minute documentary is told through the eyes of 16-year old Joshua Phillips, exploring with his father the world Charles Darwin wrote about.



*The Mysterious Islands* feature a lavish display of exotic animals in their native habitat including 150-year-old tortoises, flightless Cormorants, Blue Footed Boobies, and an albino whale shark, all seemingly without a normal fear of man. The tour guide related that he hadn't seen such a rich display of animal life in 25 years.

“It's the defining issue at the defining moment,” explained producer Doug Phillips, who planned the expedition in 2009 because of two key anniversary dates that occurred during the year — the 200th anniversary of Darwin's birth on February 12 and 150th anniversary of the original publication of his *Origin of Species* on November 24. “I said ‘we've got to go to ground zero.’ We've got to go to basically the Jerusalem of the evolutionary worldview.”

### Darwin

The film shows the little-known origin of Darwin's beliefs: his grandfather, Erasmus Darwin. At a young age, Charles read his grandfather's book; *Zoonomia*, which argued that life evolved over millions of years from lower life forms. Erasmus “gave the Darwins a new family motto,” Phillips explained, “*E Chanchis Amnia*,” meaning, “Everything from shells.”

In seminary, Darwin studied for the clergy. Producer Doug Phillips quotes the future controversial scientific theorist: “Natural theologians taught the Bible had good moral principles, but that it could not be trusted in matters of science.” Darwin also learned, according to Phillips, “the confusing idea of the ‘fixity of species’ — the idea that God created animals in their present appearance and location and they have never changed.”

Thus, when Darwin landed on the Galapagos at age 26, he “had been taught [by his grandfather and in the seminary] that the Bible had to be wrong concerning science and that the world was millions of years old. His interpretations and ideas were shaped by a set of assumptions.”

*The Mysterious Islands* team holds to a very different set of assumptions. Lead scientist Dr. John



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Morris, a geologist, is president of Institute of Creation Research. The institute, started by Morris's father, Dr. Henry Morris, holds to a young earth, as described in the Biblical account of creation and the Genesis flood.

Phillips asserts that, "there is no contradiction between the Truth of scripture and the observations of science and to depart from this, is to render science incoherent."

### **Natural Selection vs. Mediated Design**

Darwin may not have been first to argue for evolution, "but he was the first to provide the western world with a unified theory of origins to replace the Biblical account." He called this natural selection; where the strongest survive and bear young with their attributes. Phillips notes: "But then Darwin takes a great leap of faith." Phillips says, to believe that one kind of animal can evolve into another.

Dr. Morris shares the skepticism, "I would like, as a scientist, to see some evidence that it really did happen. We can talk about it happening, we can talk about a fish growing legs and coming out of the sea and yet where is the evidence that it happened? We need evidence for any basic kind of animal turning into something else."

The Bible describes "kinds" instead of species. "There is a lot of room in the dog kind." Dr. Morris explains; Great Danes, cocker spaniels and poodles are diverse, but they are all dogs. "The fossil record is constantly emphasizing there is nothing in between those kinds. There is not a half cat, half dog."

Instead of evolution, the documentary posits the idea of "Mediated Design," that animals were created with genetic potential to adapt for survival. Where Darwin believed species developed from one animal into a different type, Mediated Design says that animals were created with the genetic potential to change. A salt-spitting iguana, remarkably similar to those in South America, developed its salt spitting potential when there was little food on land and the lizards had to feed in the sea and eliminate the salt from their bodies.

"Darwin concludes that small changes within a kind, something we can observe, are proof of something that has never been observed: evolution, or the transformation of one kind into another," Doug Phillips explained. "We don't oppose the idea that animals change, we do oppose the idea that they change into new kinds of animals."

Darwin held to the Lamarkian theory — that animals gained information by use or disuse. A giraffe, LaMarkians thought, would grow a longer neck because it kept stretching up for food and would pass this longer neck down to its offspring. "This theory, an essential building block of Evolution, has been discredited," observes Phillips, who cites *National Geographic Magazine* that modern genetics "...turns the spotlight on his biggest mistakes. Darwin's own ideas on the mechanism of inheritance were a mess — and wrong."

### **Implications of Evolution**

The Mysterious Islands touches on the direct influence of Darwin on the 20th century through his



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followers, some of whom carried Darwin's beliefs to a new level. If certain animals were less evolved than others, then some "races" of people must be more evolved than others, they reasoned. The logical next step was to help the process toward a super race.

"If evolution is true, man's life is not valuable," notes Phillips, asserting that Darwin's "ideas have contributed to the rise of Nazism, the proliferation of racism, Marxism, the horrors of [eugenics](#)."

Darwin argued in the *Decent of Man* that some men are more evolved than others. He wrote: "At some future period, not very distant as measured by centuries, the civilized races of man will almost certainly exterminate, and replace, the savage races throughout the world."

"This is an evil philosophy!" Phillips says, "He taught that Caucasians were more evolved than Aborigines, for example, more evolved than natives from Africa."

This idea, Phillips states, was picked up by Darwin's friends and followers: Thomas Huxley, science fiction writer, H.G. Wells and Margaret Sanger, founder of Planned Parenthood, America's largest abortion provider. A virulent racist, Sanger wrote in a 1939 letter to Dr. Clarence Gamble, "We don't want the word to get out that we want to exterminate the Negro population"

"These were Darwin's disciples and they took his teaching seriously. Using Darwin's thesis they would usher in the most violent century in recorded history," observed producer Phillips.

## **Generational Impact**

Generational legacy is a driving theme in the film; Darwin learned from his grandfather and passed on his beliefs to his children and followers.

Bishop Samuel Wilberforce, son of William, whose lifelong battle in parliament ended the slave trade in Great Britain, was the primary opponent of evolution in 1860, when he debated Thomas Huxley, "Darwin's Bulldog," in a public forum.

*The Mysterious Islands* is told through the eyes of 16-year-old Joshua Phillips on an adventure with his father. "The ideas and the vision of one generation will help shape the next, for good, or for evil. It was true in Darwin's day, and it will be in mine as well," Joshua says.

His father, Doug Phillips ends with, "We need to take our children to the field. We must take them to where the battle rages. The compromises of past generations have left a painful legacy for them to overcome, but by God's grace they will overcome."

To view the trailer, [click here](#).



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