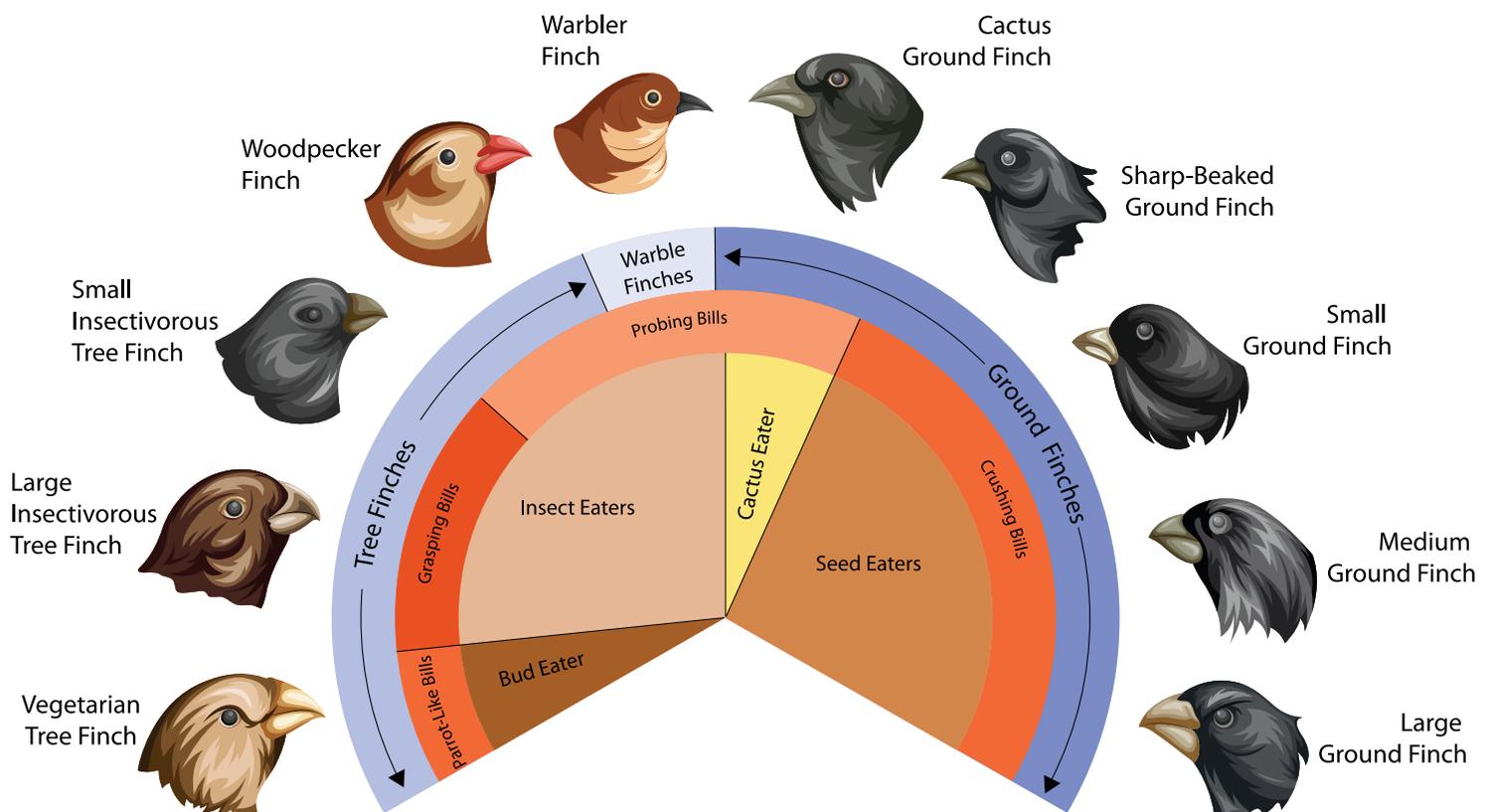


A Finch Solution

When Darwin returned from his journey on HMS Beagle, he had an abundance of information to work through. Some of this was in the form of sketches; others were samples of animals and plants. Unfortunately, his note keeping was less than perfect and it took many years to sort out all of the mess.

One of the things he had made notes on was the variety of small birds called finches found on different islands. He didn't take notes on which island they were found on, and this took even longer to sort out.

When the information was finally sorted out, Darwin's friend (John Gould) recognised at once that each of the different finches had a beak designed for a different purpose.



It was this that led Darwin towards the realisation that some species of animals had developed differently, depending on the challenges they faced.

Eventually, Darwin wrote a 230-page explanation of his findings. For an unknown reason, he then put this away and started work on a years-long investigation into barnacles. In the end, he declared, "I hate a barnacle as no man ever did before."

When Darwin eventually published his theory, the different designs of the beaks was a key element. It proved that different birds had developed different shaped beaks to tackle different food sources. Some had broad beaks suitable for eating seeds whilst others had beaks more suited to grasping insects.

INFERENCE FOCUS

1. How do you think Darwin's feelings towards barnacles changed during his life? Why?
2. List two finches that you think would be best suited for eating insects.
3. How does the author feel about Darwin's organisation? How do you know this?
4. What do you think makes a medium ground finch a suitable seed eater?
5. What impact did the discovery of the finches' beaks have on Darwin's theory?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

R

How many types of ground finch are listed?

V

Find a word or phrase that tells you Darwin collected a lot of information.

S

Why did it take a long time to work through Darwin's collection?

E

What has the author included the quote from Darwin about barnacles?

S

What did Darwin do after he finished writing his explanation?