

**"Sandwich Islands** -- These are an extensive group of islands, larger than any we have hitherto considered -- the largest of the group being about the size of Devonshire. The entire archipelago is volcanic, with mountains rising to a height of nearly 14,000 feet. The group is situated in the middle of the North Pacific, at a distance of considerably over 2,000 miles from any other land, and surrounded by enormous ocean depths. The only terrestrial vertebrates are two lizards, one of which constitutes a peculiar genus. There are 24 aquatic birds, five of which are peculiar; four birds of prey, two of which are peculiar; and 16 land-birds, all of which are peculiar. Moreover, these 16 land-birds constitute no less than 10 peculiar genera, and even one peculiar family of five genera. This is an amount of peculiarity far exceeding that of any other islands, and, of course, corresponds with the great isolation of this archipelago. The only other animals which have here been carefully studied are the landshells, and these tell the same story as the birds. For there are no less than 400 species which are all, without any exception, peculiar; while about three-quarters of them go to constitute peculiar genera. Again, of the plants, 620 species are believed to be endemic; and of these 377 are peculiar, yielding no less than 39 peculiar genera.

"in the comparatively limited -- but in itself extensive -- class of facts thus presented, we have a particularly fair and cogent test as between the alternative theories of evolution and creation. For where we meet with a volcanic island, hundreds of miles from any other land, and rising abruptly from an ocean of enormous depth, we may be quite sure that such an island can never have formed part of a now submerged continent. In other words, we may be quite sure that it always has been what it now is -- an oceanic peak, separated from all other land by hundreds of miles of sea, and therefore an area supplied by nature for the purpose, as it were, of testing the rival theories of creation and evolution. For, let us ask, upon these tiny insular specks of land what kind of life should we expect to find? To this question the theories of special creation and of gradual evolution would agree in giving the same answer up to a certain point. For both theories would agree in supposing that these islands would, at all events in large part, derive their inhabitants from accidental or occasional arrivals of wind-blown or water-floated organisms from other countries == especially, of course, from the countries least remote. But, after agreeing upon this point, the two theories must part company in their anticipations. The special-creation theory can have no reason to suppose that a small volcanic island in the midst of a great ocean should be chosen as the theatre of any extraordinary creative activity, or for any particularly rich manufacture of peculiar species to be found nowhere else in the world. On the other hand, the evolution theory would expect to find that such habitats are stocked with more or less peculiar species. For it would expect that when any organisms chanced to reach a wholly isolated refuge of this kind, their descendants should forthwith have started upon an independent course of evolutionary history. Protected from inter-crossing with any members of their parent species elsewhere, and exposed to considerable changes in their conditions of life, it would indeed be fatal to the general theory of evolution if these descendants, during the course of many generations, were not to undergo appreciable change."

-- George John Romanes, *Darwin and After Darwin* (The Open Court Publishing Company, 1892), "The Fauna of Oceanic Islands."