



## World fisheries expert opens BRLSI's major 2009 exhibition on Darwin's 200th birthday.

**Thursday 12th February 2009:** To mark Charles Darwin's 200th birthday Dr Daniel Pauly, Professor of Fisheries at the University of British Columbia and a world expert on fish conservation, opened *Darwin's Fishes*, the major exhibition of the BRLSI's 2009 *Darwin and Beyond* programme. After cutting a fish-shaped cake made specially for the evening by three local artists, Prof Pauly gave a lecture entitled *From Darwin's Fishes to Jenyns' Fishes—Ichthyology and the Voyage of the Beagle*, describing the marine aspects of Charles Darwin's voyage around the world. Among the audience were the Mayor of Bath and a relative of the Rev Leonard Jenyns, Darwin's friend and collaborator who left his library and collections to the BRLSI.



The *Mr Darwin's Fishes* exhibition traces the story of Darwin's marine specimens from South America to Cambridge and the library of the BRLSI. It includes a film specially made at the Natural History Museum, and is open 10am-4pm Monday to Saturday until 25th July.

Prof Pauly told the audience how Darwin had been determined to collect specimens of new fish species in order to give British taxonomists a chance to catch up with the French, who dominated the field. However concentrating on previously unexplored areas of South America and the Indo-Pacific brought its own problems, not least getting the specimens back before they rotted.

On board the *Beagle* Darwin performed 'Baconian' experiments based on practical observation. These included opening up a marine iguana to settle a longstanding dispute on whether they fed on underwater vegetation or fish, and allowing himself to be bitten by the benchuca beetle in Chile (a notorious carrier of Chagas disease) and observing it for several months as it digested his blood. In Dr Pauly's view Darwin's later recurrent ill-health may have stemmed from Chagas or a similar infection.

Following his voyage on the *Beagle*, Charles Darwin commissioned five naturalists to compile volumes for *The Zoology of the Voyage of H.M.S. Beagle*, a catalogue of the species he had found. For volume IV, *Fish*, he chose Leonard Jenyns, an East Anglian clergyman who later moved to Bath, where he became a key figure in the city's Royal Literary and Scientific Institution.

The *Darwin's Fishes* exhibition traces the story of Darwin's marine specimens from South America to Cambridge and the library of the BRLSI. As well as exhibits from the BRLSI collection it includes a film specially made at the Natural History Museum in London which shows some of Darwin's original fish specimens, now too fragile and valuable to travel.

*Darwin's Fishes* runs until July 25th, and is open from 10am to 4pm, Mondays to Saturdays. Admission is free. •



Dr Daniel Pauly, Professor of Fisheries at the University of British Columbia, speaking at the BRLSI.



Dr Pauly cuts the special fish-themed Darwin Birthday Cake, made by Bath-based artist group [Eak-Art](http://Eak-Art).

**Mr Darwin's FISHES**

An exhibition telling the story of Charles Darwin's fish, from a collecting net in South America to a 'fishy problem' in Cambridge. Through pickling jars, letters and clergymen-naturalists, we trace the link from the 'Beagle' to Bath.

**BATH ROYAL LITERARY & SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTION**

16 Queen Square  
Bath BA1 2HN  
01225 312084  
12 February–25 July  
Mon–Sat 10.00–16.00  
Free admission

Details about the *Darwin and Beyond* programme: [www.brlsi.org](http://www.brlsi.org)

