Finch Extinction?

Earthwatch volunteers studied how Darwin’s finches continue to evolve in relation to another **immigrant species** to the Galapagos: the*Philornis downsi*fly. This species probably came to the Galapagos on cargo ships in the 1960s. As an adult, the fly eats fruit. But it lays its eggs in finch nests, and once they hatch, the **larvae** feed on the blood and tissue of the **nestlings**. Since 2000, researchers have observed **alarmingly** high nestling **mortality**, with anywhere from 30 to 98 percent of chicks dying each year. The research focused on two related issues: how best to control the *Philornis*parasite, and how physical changes due to *Philornis* are shaping evolutionary change in Darwin’s finches.

Word Bank  
**Immigrant species** = introduced, exotic, or non-native species  
**larvae** = young or juvenile stage of an insect (think “baby insect”)  
**nestlings** = birds that are too young to leave the next  
**alarmingly** = a sudden fear caused by the realization of danger  
**mortality** = rate of death (high mortality = large numbers of organisms dying)

**Question:** Are immigrant species putting Darwin’s finches at risk of extinction?

Directions: Using the graphic organizer provided, make a claim to answer this question (remember, “yes” is not a claim!). Next, find three pieces of evidence to support your argument, and explain the reasoning behind the evidence. Then find a rebuttal to refute your own claim to show you understand the other side. Finally, put all your information together to write a position paragraph that answers the above question.