

**Level B****Sharp-Beaked Finch**

The Galapagos Islands are home to many unusual bird species. One of these is a very strange bird called the sharp-beaked finch. This small bird lands on the backs of larger birds and pecks at them until they bleed. Then it drinks the blood. Scientists think this behavior probably began with the removal of parasites or small bugs from the body of larger birds. But over time, the helpful habit became a direct attack on the larger bird itself. This robin-size bird, also known as the “vampire finch,” is aggressive in other ways as well. For example, it will fly into the nests of other birds and push their eggs out, breaking them open, so it can feed on the contents.

## Level B

### **New Guinea Bowerbirds**

The male bowerbird of New Guinea must work hard to attract a mate. He first makes a foundation for a “bower” out of a thick pad of plant material. Then he builds a wall with sticks and often ties on to it all kinds of shiny and colored objects. The bird will use berries, various leaves, stones, and even pieces of glass or buttons. The walls are sometimes “painted” with a mixture of saliva, charcoal, and vegetable pulp. Sometimes a particularly aggressive bird will steal decorations from another male’s bower. When finished, the male sits above it and sings to attract a female. She will inspect his work and mate with him only if the structure is solid and beautiful. If his bower is not good enough, she will leave and search for another male, one with a better bower.