

UNUSUAL PARTNERS

*Symbiosis in
the Living World*

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McGRAW-HILL BOOK COMPANY

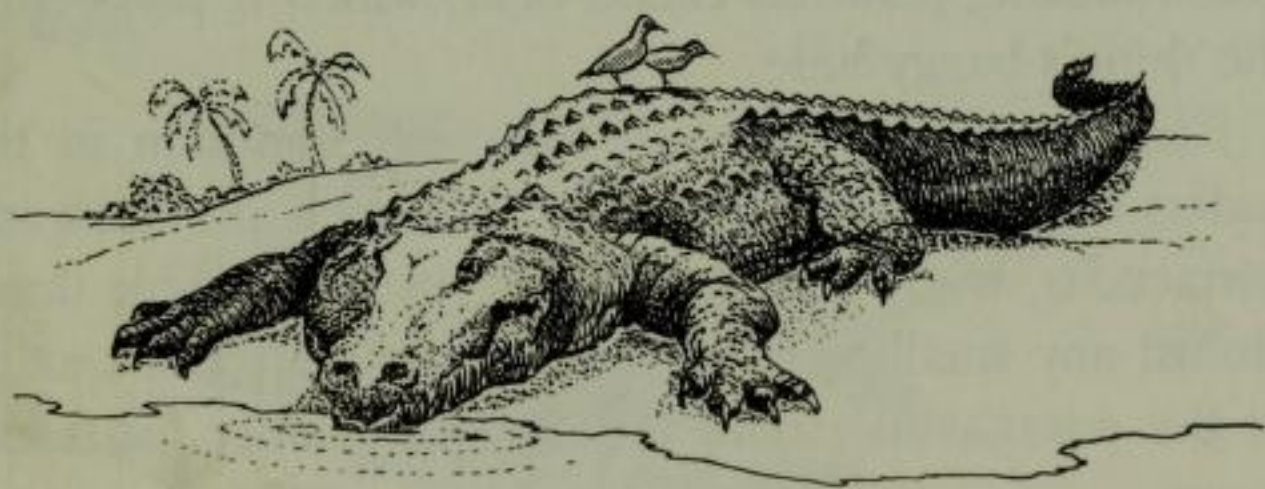
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odiles do not like these leeches, but they cannot shake them free, and they have no way to pick them off. The plovers *do* like the leeches—they like to eat them.

So the mighty crocodile and the tiny plover form an unusual partnership. The crocodile opens its enormous mouth wide, and plovers flutter right into it. There within the gaping jaws they safely hop about, pulling off leeches and gobbling them down. They are not afraid of the crocodile's wicked-looking teeth. For the crocodile will wait patiently until they are finished before it again closes its powerful jaws.

The plovers help the crocodiles in another way too. They often perch nearby and with their sharp eyes keep a watch for enemies. If one approaches, they give a warning cry, and the crocodiles can dive to safety.

Another small bird, the tickbird, rides about on the broad back of the African rhinoceros, and chirps a warning if danger is near. This is a great help to the rhino, for it cannot see nearly as well as its sharp-eyed little partner.



Their meal complete, the plovers keep guard.



Tickbirds find plentiful food on the hide of the rhinoceros.

The tickbird gains from the partnership too. Perched high up on the rhino's back, it is safe from most enemies. It gets its meals there too, feeding very well on small blood-sucking parasites called ticks, which it picks from the rhino's baggy hide.

Cleaning partnerships are also very common in the waters of the world. Ferocious fish, such as sharks and barracudas, with razor-sharp teeth, usually gobble down almost any small fish they meet. But they rest quietly in the water while some very special smaller fish clean them.

There are many different kinds of these little cleaner fish. But they are all brightly colored and easy to see