



# Biological Psychology NewsLink

To accompany *Biological Psychology, Fifth Edition*  
BREEDLOVE • ROSENZWEIG • WATSON

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### Links by Chapter:

1. Scope and Outlook
2. Neuroanatomy
3. Neurophysiology
4. Chemical Bases of Behavior
5. Hormones and the Brain
6. Evolution of Brain and Behavior
7. Life-Span Development
8. Sensory Processing, Touch, Pain
9. Hearing, Vestibular, Taste, Smell
10. Vision
11. Motor Control and Plasticity
12. Biopsychological Bases of Sex
13. Homeostasis
14. Biological Rhythms, Sleep
15. Emotions, Aggression, Stress
16. Psychopathology
- 17.-18. Learning and Memory
19. Language and Cognition



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## Links containing search words: "Philip Low"

Hide Summaries



Links 1 - 1 of 1

### Secret sleep of birds revealed in brain scans

Linda Geddes Birds may not be as "bird-brained" as we thought. Zebra finches show many features of sleep, which had previously been assumed to be the sole preserve of mammals. The finding raises new questions about the complexity of the bird brain and about the evolution of sleep as we know it. Mammalian sleep is characterised by distinct stages: slow wave sleep (SWS), intermediate sleep (IS) and rapid-eye-movement (REM) sleep, with a progression towards more REM sleep. EEG recordings of the brain's electrical activity also show specific landmarks called "K-complexes" and "spindles" during SWS. Since K-complexes had only ever been observed in mammals, neuroscientists assumed that a neocortex – an area of the brain involved in higher functions such as conscious thought and language – was needed to generate them. Philip Low at the Salk Institute for Biological Sciences in La Jolla, California, US, and his colleagues monitored five zebra finches during the night, tracking eye and body movements, and brain activity. © Copyright Reed Business Information Ltd.

**See also:** [Chapter 14: Biological Rhythms, Sleep, and Dreaming](#)

**Keyword:** Sleep; Evolution

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