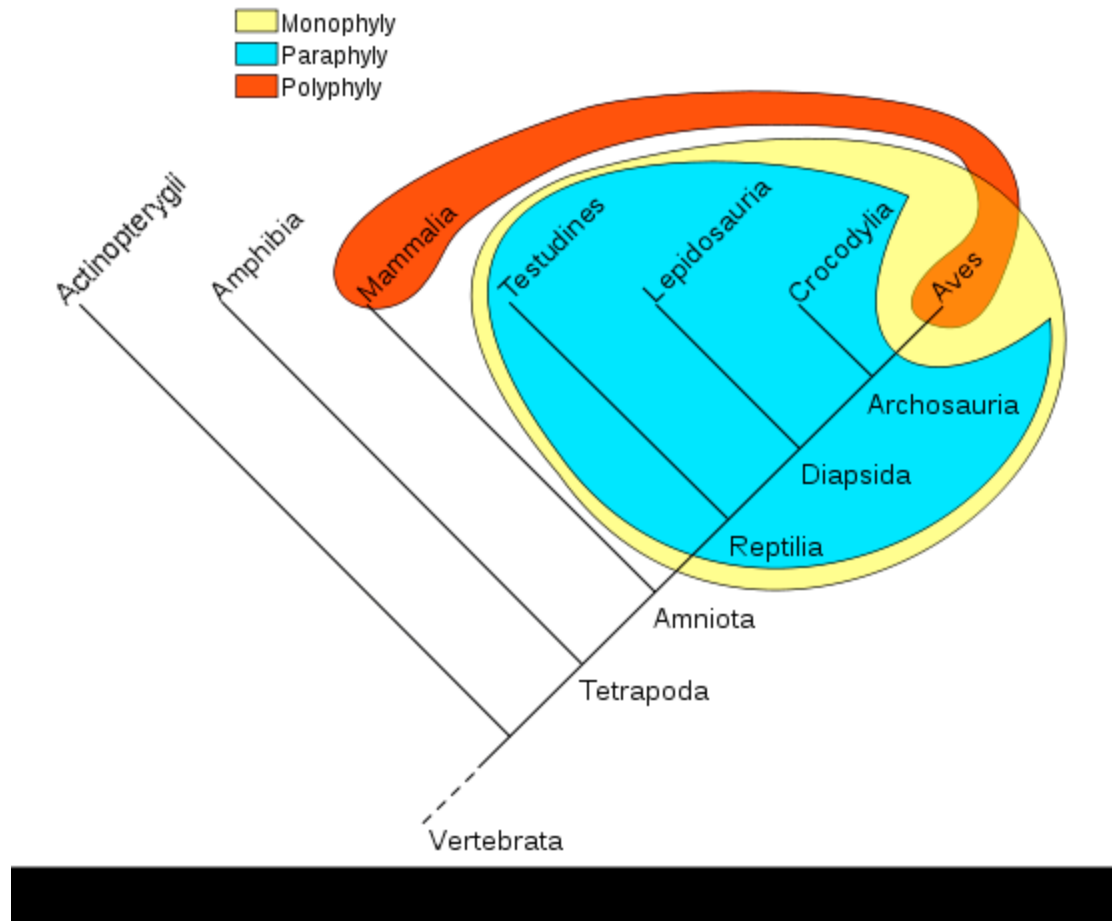


Some cladistic terminology

The unclear status of the White Wagtail and Black-backed Wagtail were discussed in class and lovely terms like monophyletic, polyphyletic and paraphyletic were mentioned.

The following is taken from Wikipedia:



A **monophyletic** group is a taxon (group of organisms) which forms a clade, meaning that it contains all the descendants of the possibly hypothetical closest common ancestor of the members of the group

A **polyphyletic** group is one whose members' last common ancestor is not a member of the group.

For example, the group consisting of warm-blooded animals is polyphyletic, because it contains both mammals and birds, but the most recent common ancestor of mammals and birds was cold-blooded. Warm-bloodedness evolved separately in the ancestors of mammals and the ancestors of birds, so it is not a true phylogenetic grouping.

A group of taxa is said to be **paraphyletic** if the group consists of all the descendants of a hypothetical closest common ancestor minus one or more monophyletic groups of descendants (typically one such group).

I recommend the full Wikipedia articles.

