ORIGIN and EVOLUTION of Birds

The evolution of birds is thought to have begun in the Jurassic Period with the earliest birds derived from theropod dinosaurs. Birds are categorised as a biological class, Aves. The earliest known species of class Aves is Archeopteryx lithographica, from the late Jurassic period, though Archeopteryx is most commonly considered to have been a true bird. Modern phylogenies place birds in the dinosaur clade Theropoda. According to current consensus, Aves and ~~crocodilia~~ order crocodilia, together are the sole living members of an unranked "reptile" clade, the Archosauria.

Phylogenetically, Aves is usually defined as all descendants of the most recent common ancestor of a specific modern bird species (such as the pas Passer domesticus) and all either Archeopteryx, or some prehistoric species closer to neornithes, and in latter classification is case in a larger group called Avialae.

The basal bird Archeopteryx, from the Jurassic, is well known as one of the first "Missing links" to be found in support of evolution in the late 19th century though it is not considered a direct ancestor of modern birds. Confuciusornis is another early bird it lived in the Early Cretaceous. Both may be predated by Protoavis texensis, though the fragmentary nature of this fossil leaves it open to considerable doubt if this was a bird ancestor. Other Mesozoic birds include the Confuciusornis the Enantiornithes Yanornis, Ichthyornis, Gansus and Hesperornithiformes Hesperornithiformes. A group of flightless birds