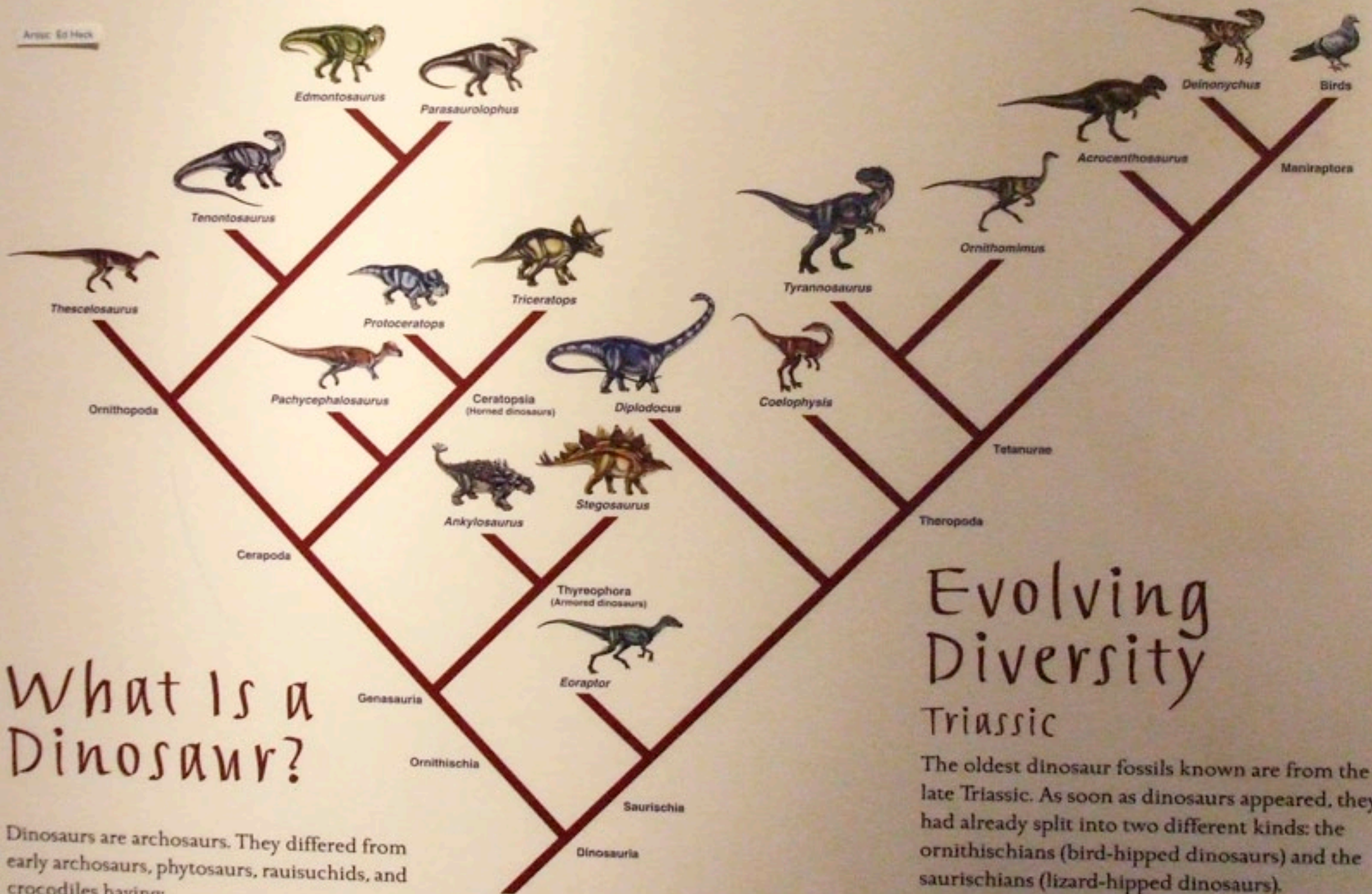


# Dinosaur Diversity

Dinosaurs grew in diversity during their 165 million year reign. From fossil evidence, we know of about 350 kinds of dinosaurs. It is estimated that these 350 represent less than 10 percent of the number of dinosaurs that ever lived. Evidence for the other 90 percent is yet to be discovered.

Artist: Ed Heck



## What Is a Dinosaur?

Dinosaurs are archosaurs. They differed from early archosaurs, phytosaurs, rauisuchids, and crocodiles having:

- Hinged ankles
- Stronger pelvises
- Upright limbs
- Three or more sacral (hip) vertebrae
- Fewer fingers and toes

## Evolving Diversity

### Triassic

The oldest dinosaur fossils known are from the late Triassic. As soon as dinosaurs appeared, they had already split into two different kinds: the ornithischians (bird-hipped dinosaurs) and the saurischians (lizard-hipped dinosaurs).

### Jurassic

Dinosaurs diversified greatly through the Jurassic.

### Cretaceous

Dinosaurs were most diverse during the last 15 million years of the Cretaceous. In fact, more than half of all known dinosaur species appeared in the final 20 million years of the Age of Dinosaurs. On average they became smaller and more specialized. Dinosaurs abruptly became extinct at the end of the Cretaceous.