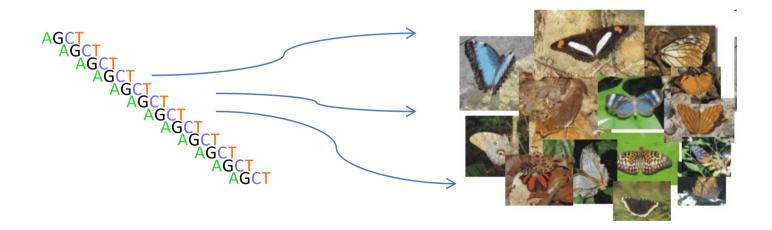
# BIOR90 Evolutionary Biology - Methods and Applications 2025

Teachers Jadranka Rota, Niklas Wahlberg, Etka Yapar, Sridhar Halali

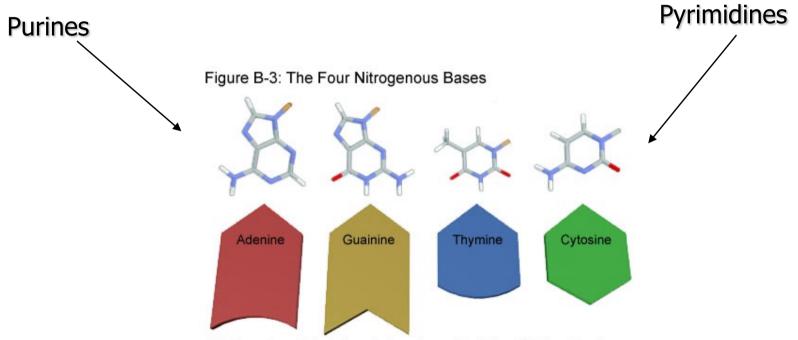
## Recap: Why *molecular* systematics?

- Ease of data generation for large numbers of taxa
- Ease of generating a large number of independent data sets for given taxa
- Molecular characters behind the morphological characters we see



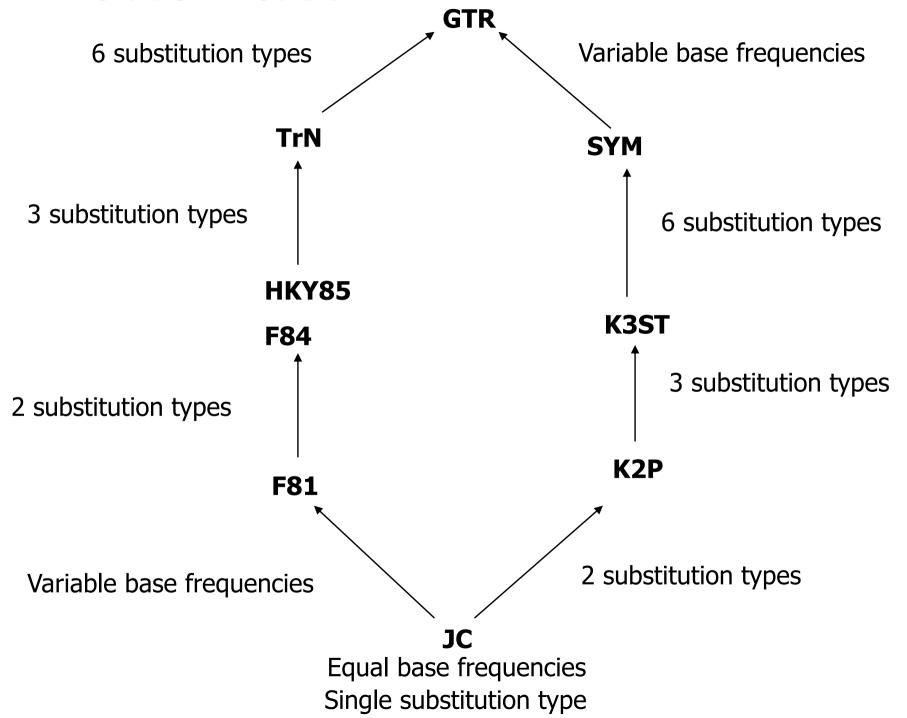
#### DNA as a source of information

#### DNA has four characters



Each base has a distinct shape that can be used to distinguish it form the others. 3D representations of the four bases are shown, with the corresponding chemical structures drawn above.

#### **DNA Evolution Models**



#### Model-based approaches:

#### Maximum Likelihood

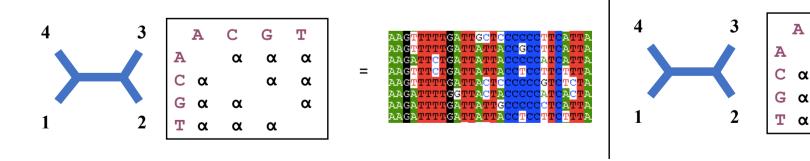
For reconstructing phylogenies

#### Model

**Data** 

• which tree topology ( $\tau$ ), branch lengths, and parameters of DNA evolution model ( $\theta$ ) (e.g. transition/transversion ratio, base frequencies, ...) are maximizing the probability of observing the sequences at hand?

$$L(\tau,\theta) = Pr(Data \mid \tau,\theta)$$



### ML analysis in short

- Tree topology is obtained
- Branch lengths and parameters of the DNA substitution model are optimized
- Different topologies (with branch lengths and DNA substitution model parameters optimized) are compared based on their likelihood as the optimality criterion
- The topology with the highest likelihood needs to be found

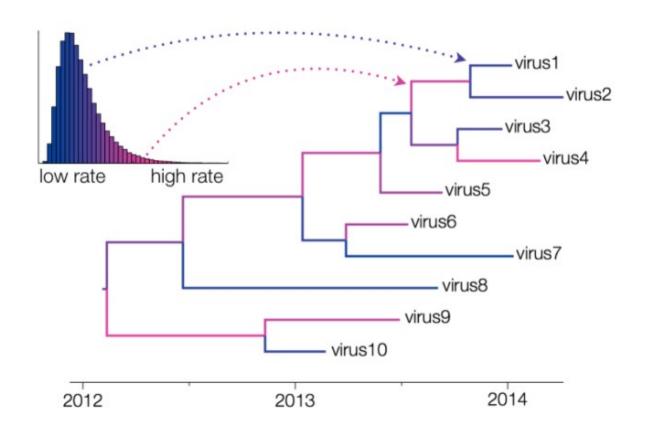
#### A Bayesian approach compared to ML

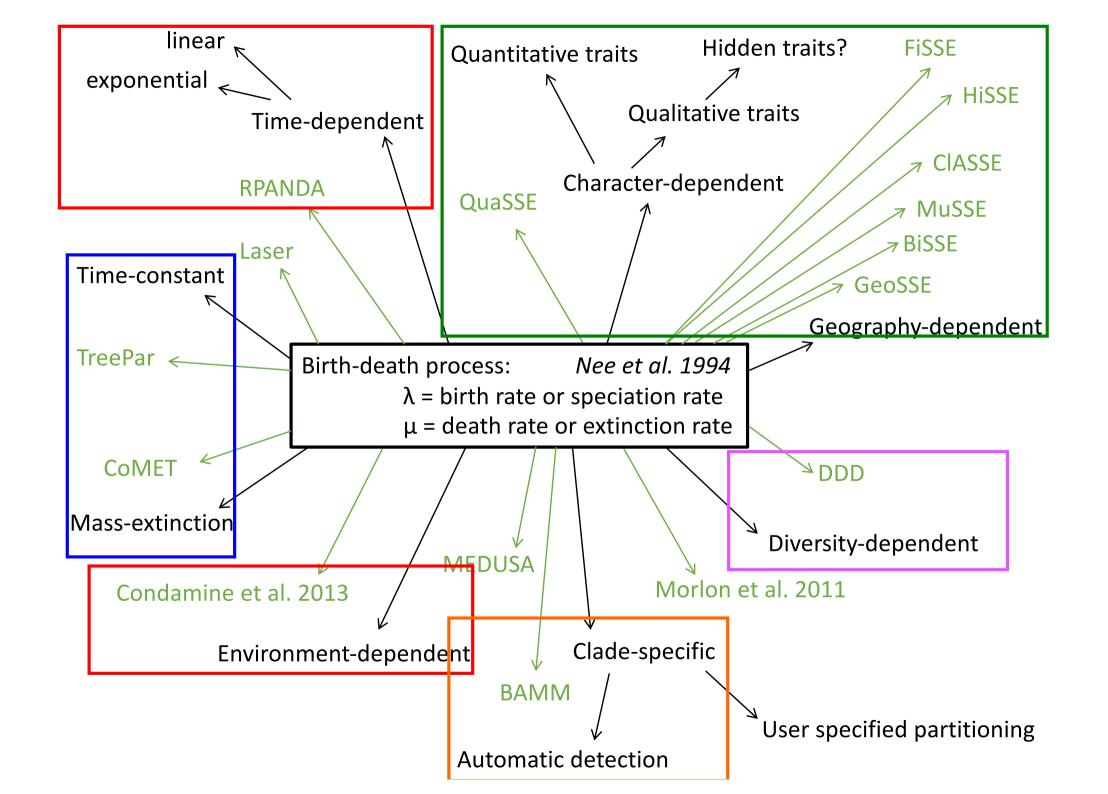
- The likelihood is the probability of observing the data given a hypothesis
  - L = Pr (D  $| \theta$ ).
- **In ML** we search for the parameter values of the model that maximize the likelihood function

- In a Bayesian analysis, we get the probability of a hypothesis given the data (probability of the tree given the sequences)
  - We combine the likelihood of a given hypothesis with a prior expectation for this hypothesis to obtain a posterior probability of the hypothesis

#### Uncorrelated relaxed clocks

- Models available in BEAST
  - Lognormal distribution
     Most rates cluster around the mean
  - Exponential distribution
     Most rates are quite low



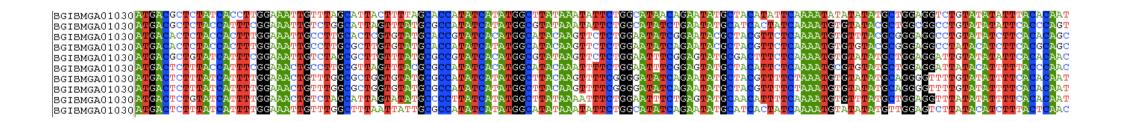


# This week in BIOR90 – how to analyse data

Hours\Days	Tue Apr 29	Mon May 5	Tue May 6	Wed May 7
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Tutorials on: https://github.com/NymphalidNiklas/EB2\_2025

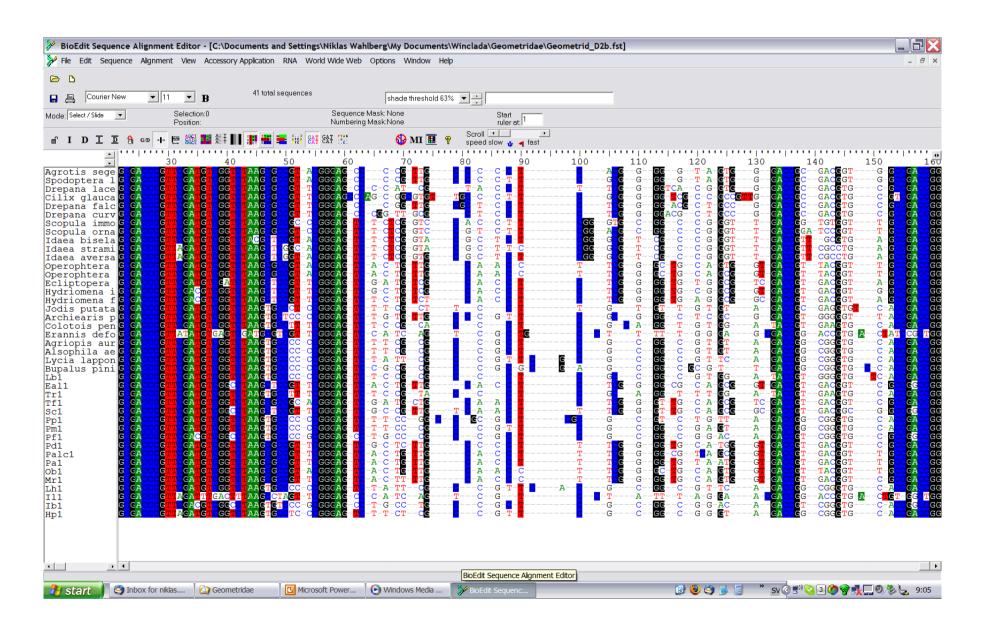
# Multiple Sequence Alignment



# Alignment can be easy...

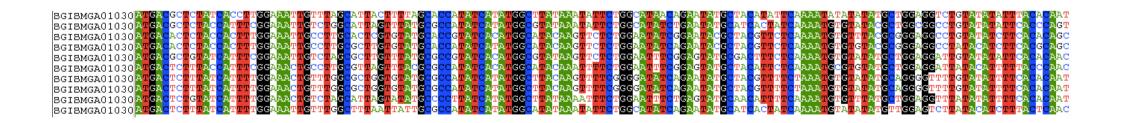


#### ...or difficult



### Homology: Definition

- Homology: similarity that is the result of inheritance from a common ancestor - identification and analysis of homologies is central to phylogenetic systematics
- An alignment is a hypothesis of positional homology between bases/amino acids



# Multiple sequence alignment- goals

- To generate a concise, information-rich summary of sequence data
- Alignments can be treated as models that can be used to test hypotheses
- Does this model of events accurately reflect known biological evidence?



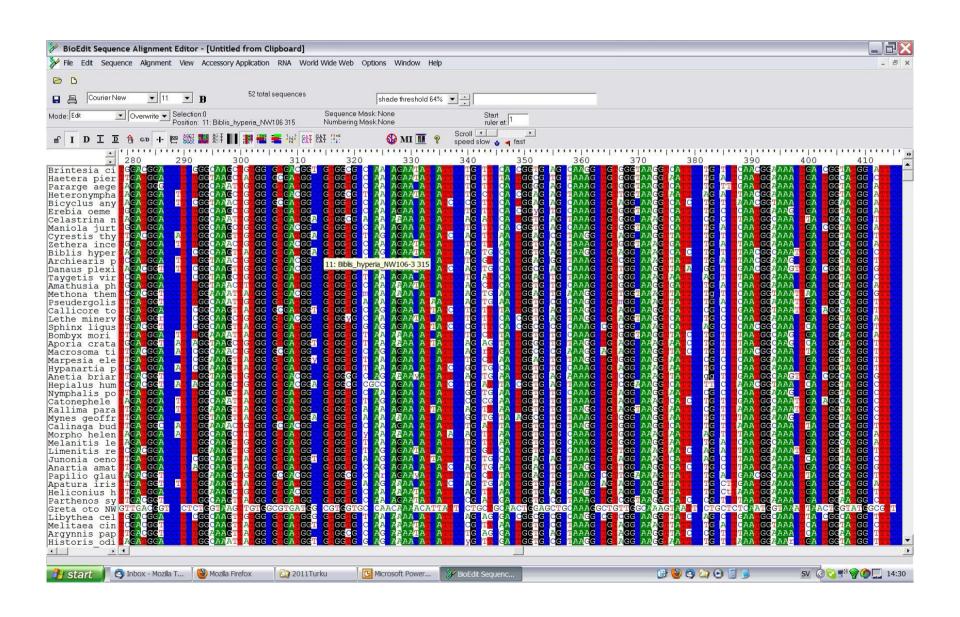
# Multiple sequence alignment

- Manual
- Dynamic programming
- Heuristic methods
  - Progressive alignment
  - Consistency-based scoring
  - Iterative refinement methods

#### Manual alignment - reasons

- Might be carried out because:
- Alignment is easy
- There is some extraneous information (structural)
- Automated alignment methods have encountered a local minimum problem
- An automated alignment method can be "improved"

#### Protein-coding genes can often be manually aligned



# How to align these sequences:

AGGGCTTTAA
AGGCTA
AATGGCTCTAA
GGAGCCCTAA

#### How to align these sequences:

A-GGGCTTTAA
A-GGCT--AAATGGCTCTAA
GGAG-CCCTAA

### How to align these sequences:

- -AGGGCTTTAA
- -A-GGC--TA-
- **AATGGCTCTAA**
- -GGAGCCCTAA

### Multiple sequence alignment

- Is not easy! How to be objective?
- Dynamic programming
  - Works only for a very small number of sequences
  - Doesn't use phylogeny and doesn't incorporate an evolutionary model
- Heuristic methods
  - Progressive alignment
    - E.g. Clustal
  - Consistency-based scoring
    - Used in e.g. T-Coffee
  - Iterative refinement methods
    - Used in Mafft

## Heuristics: Progressive alignment

- Devised by Feng and Doolittle in 1987
- A heuristic method and as such is not guaranteed to find the 'optimal' alignment
- Most successful implementation is Clustal
  - ClustalW
  - ClustalX

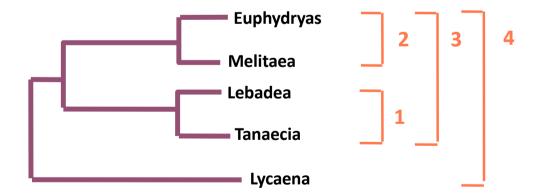
# Clustal - pairwise alignments

- First perform all possible pairwise alignments between each pair of sequences
- Calculate the 'distance' between each pair of sequences based on these isolated pairwise alignments
- Generate a distance matrix

Taxon	Euphydryas	Melitaea	Lebadea	Tanaecia	Lycaena
Euphydryas	-				
Melitaea	0.17	-			
Lebadea	0.59	0.60	-		
Tanaecia	0.59	0.59	0.13	-	
Lycaena	0.77	0.77	0.75	0.75	-

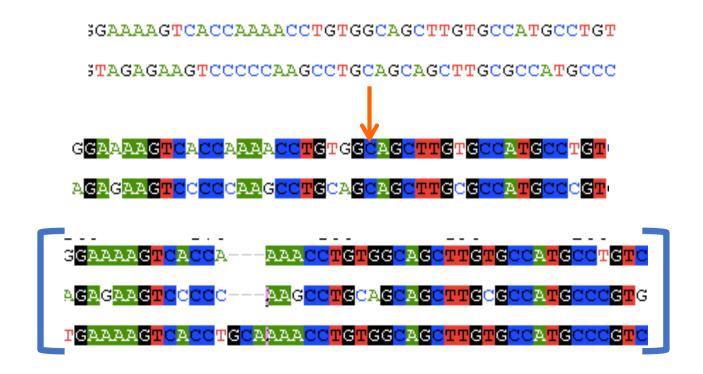
# Clustal - guide tree

- Generate a Neighbour-Joining 'guide tree' from these pairwise distances
- This guide tree gives the order in which the progressive alignment will be carried out



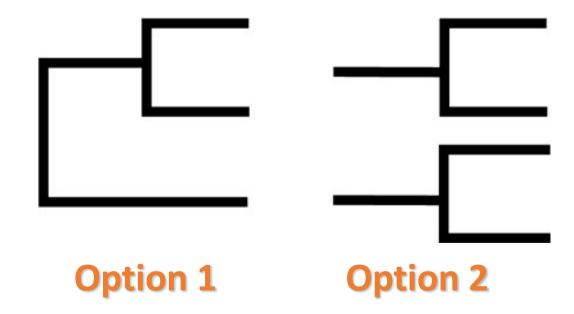
# Multiple alignment- first pair

- Align the two most closely-related sequences first
- This alignment is then 'fixed' and will never change
- If a gap is to be introduced subsequently, then it will be introduced in the same place in both sequences, but their relative alignment remains unchanged



#### Clustal - decision time

- Consult the guide tree to see what alignment is performed next.
  - Align a third sequence to the first two
     Or
  - Align two entirely different sequences to each other.



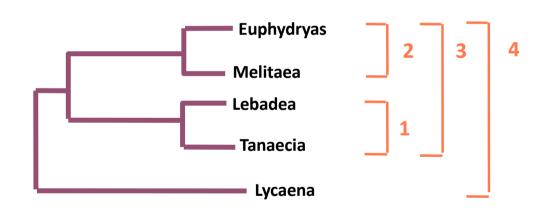
#### Clustal - progression

 The alignment is progressively built up in this way, with each step being treated as a pairwise alignment, sometimes with each member of a 'pair' having more than one sequence

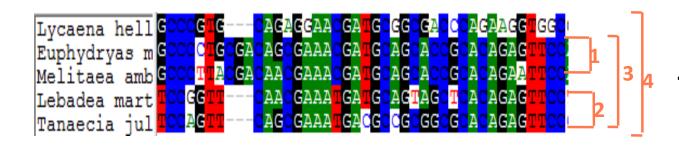
#### Overview of Clustal procedure

Taxon	Euphydryas	Melitaea	Lebadea	Tanaecia	Lycaena
Euphydryas	-				
Melitaea	0.17	-			
Lebadea	0.59	0.60	-		
Tanaecia	0.59	0.59	0.13	-	
Lycaena	0.77	0.77	0.75	0.75	-

# Quick pairwise alignment: calculate distance matrix



Neighbour-joining tree (guide tree)



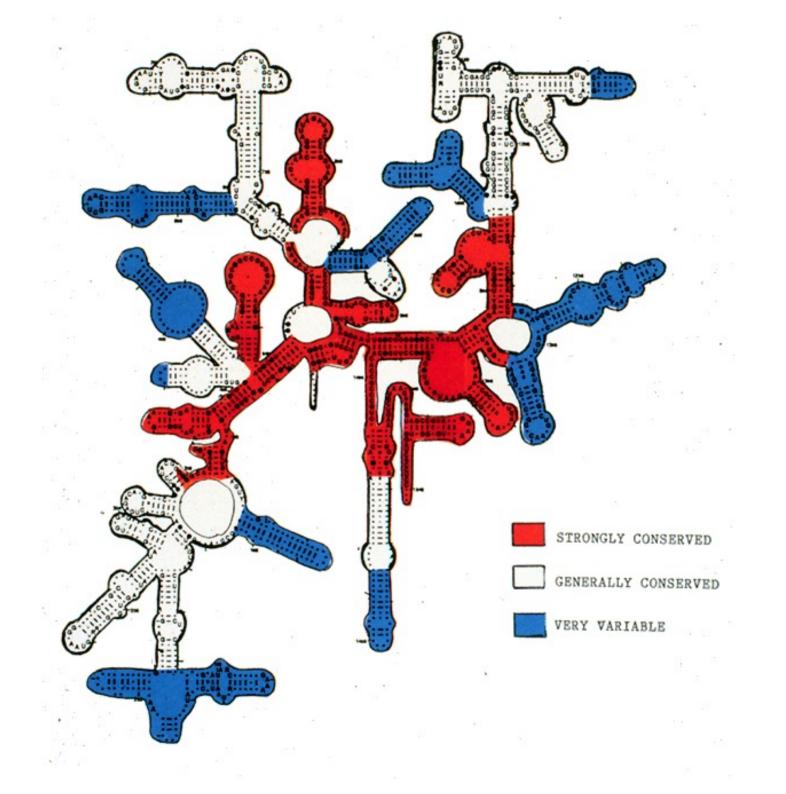
Progressive alignment following guide tree

### Clustal - good points/bad points

- Advantages:
  - Speed
- Disadvantages:
  - Hierarchic structure introduced that is not necessarily phylogenetic
  - No way of quantifying whether or not the alignment is good
  - No way of knowing if the alignment is 'correct'
  - Local minimum problem. If an error is introduced early in the alignment process, it is impossible to correct this later in the procedure
  - Arbitrary alignment

# Increasing the sophistication of the alignment process

- Should we treat all the sequences in the same way?
  - some sequences are closely related and some sequences are distant relatives.
- Should we treat all positions in the sequences as though they were the same?
  - they might have different functions and different locations in the 3-dimensional structure.
  - codon structure how to retain this?



#### Iterative refinement methods

- Initial alignments split into two groups randomly
- Within groups the alignment is kept fixed
- Dynamic programming used to align the two groups to each other
- This is repeated until score converges
- Used in e.g. Muscle and MAFFT

## Using models in alignment

- New methods are being developed all the time
- Latest methods include using a Bayesian statistic framework, DNA evolutionary models and alignment concomitantly with estimation of phylogentic relationships
- Still not feasible with a moderately sized dataset

#### Bottom line

- Alignments are extremely important in phylogenetics
- A bad alignment means many wrong statements of homology, which means pure rubbish as output
- A good alignment can be hard to attain

# The Tree

Finding the optimal trees

## Numbers of possible trees for N taxa

```
2
3
                                     How can
5
        15
6
                                     we find
        105
       945
                                     the most
8
       10395
       135135
                                     optimal
10
       2027025
       34459425
                                     tree?
       654729075
13
       13749310575
```

Astronomers estimate that the universe could contain up to one septillion stars – that's a one followed by 24 zeros. Our Milky Way alone contains more than 100 billion, including our most well-studied star, the Sun.

50 3 x 10<sup>74</sup>

**NASA** 

#### Finding optimal trees - exact solutions

- Exact solutions can only be used for small numbers of taxa
- Exhaustive search examines all possible trees
- Branch and bound does not examine all trees, but will find optimal tree(s)
- Typically used for problems with 10–20 taxa

- The number of possible trees increases faster than exponentially with the number of taxa making exhaustive searches impractical for many data sets (an NP-complete problem)
- Heuristic methods are used to search tree space for optimal trees by building or selecting an initial tree and swapping branches to search for better ones
- The trees found are not guaranteed to be optimal they are best guesses

Stepwise addition

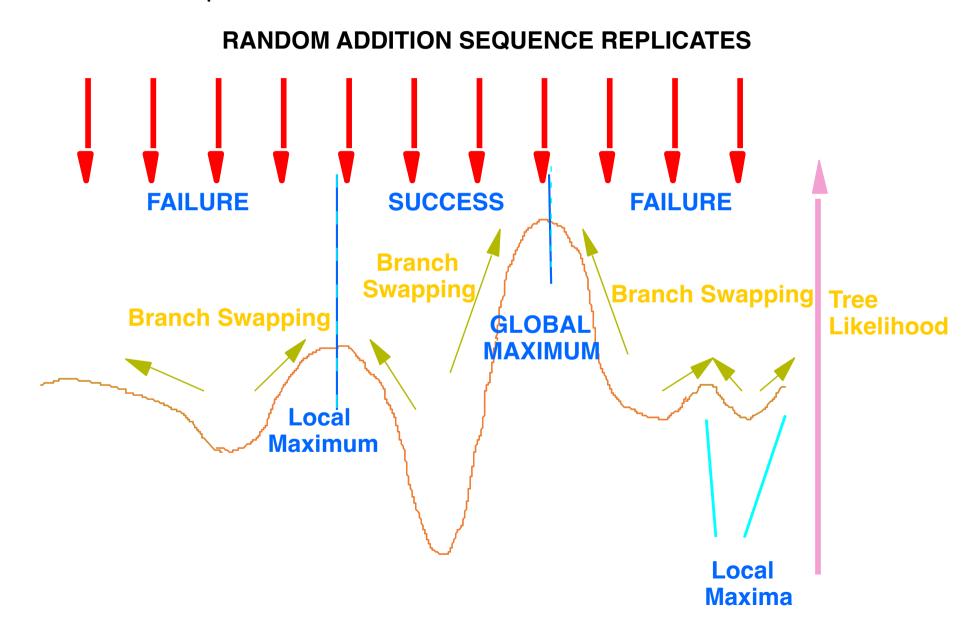
Asis - the order in the data matrix

Closest - starts with shortest 3-taxon tree, adds taxa in order that produces the least increase in tree length (greedy heuristic)

Simple - the first taxon in the matrix is taken as a reference - taxa are added to it in the order of their decreasing similarity to the reference

Random - taxa are added in a random sequence, many different sequences can be used

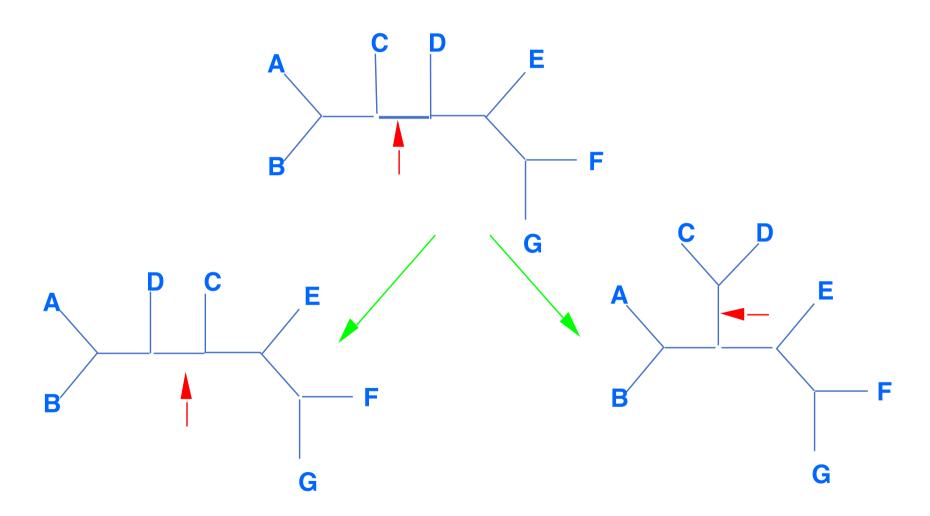
Tree space may be populated by local optima and islands of optimal trees



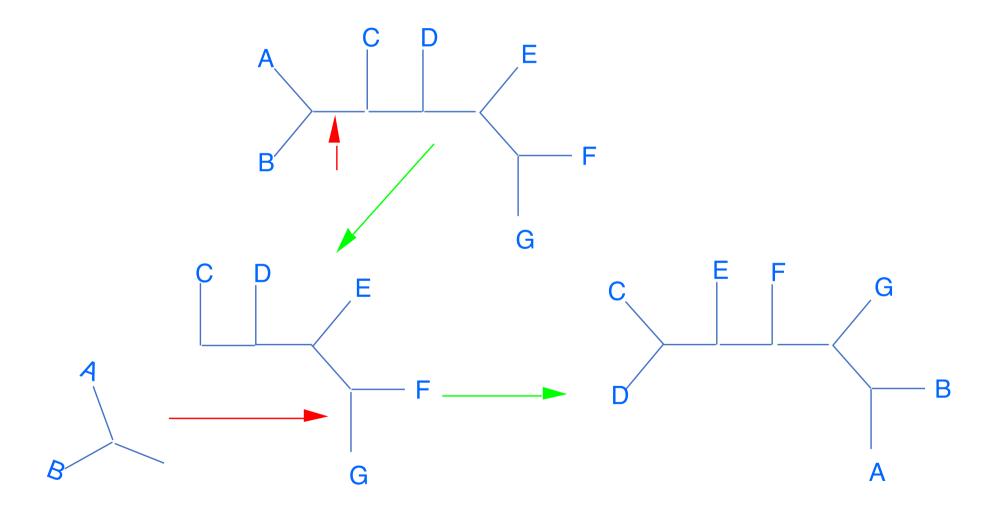
#### Finding optimal trees – branch swapping

- Nearest neighbor interchange (NNI)
- Subtree pruning and regrafting (SPR)
- Tree bisection and reconnection (TBR)

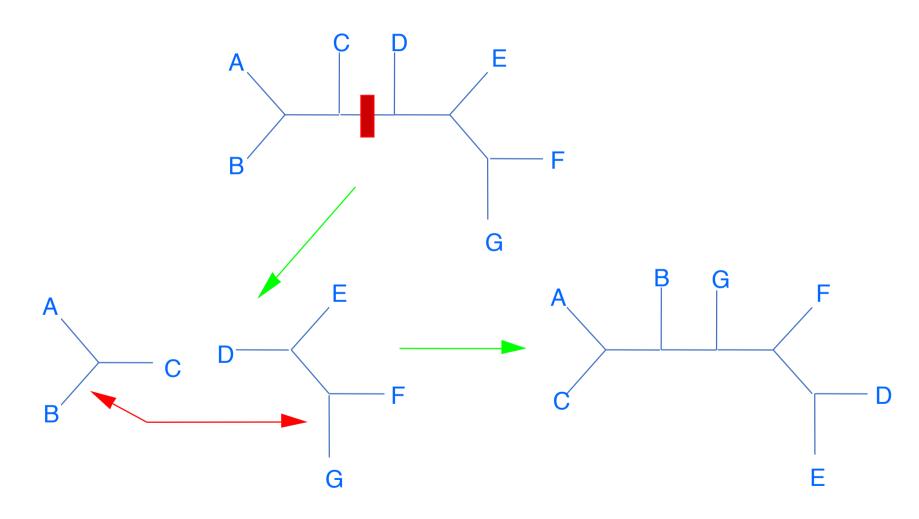
Nearest neighbor interchange (NNI)



Subtree pruning and regrafting (SPR)



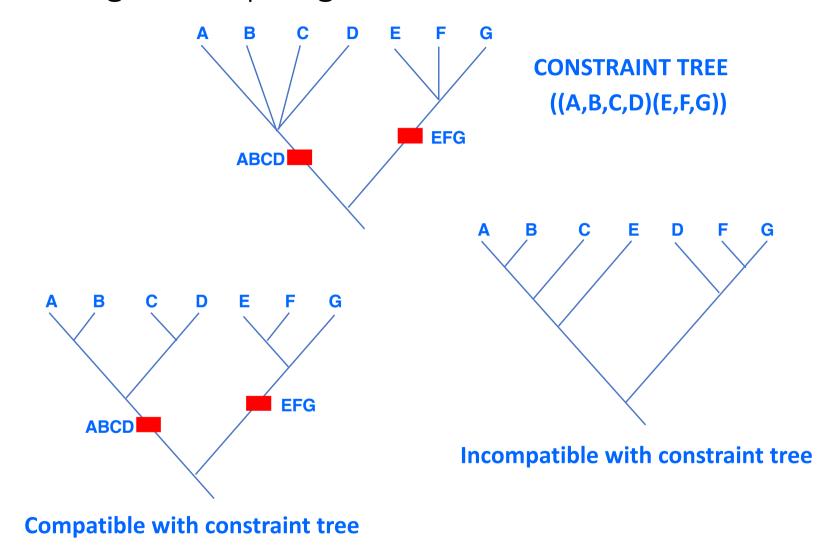
Tree bisection and reconnection (TBR)



#### Searching with topological constraints

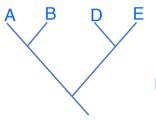
- Topological constraints are user-defined phylogenetic hypotheses
- Can be used to find optimal trees that either:
  - 1. include a specified clade or set of relationships
  - 2. exclude a specified clade or set of relationships (reverse constraint)

#### Searching with topological constraints



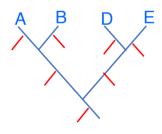
## Searching with topological constraints backbone constraints

- Backbone constraints specify relationships among a subset of the taxa
- Taxa A, B, C, D, E



BACKBONE CONSTRAINT ((A,B)(D,E))

relationships of taxon C are not specified



A D B E

possible positions of taxon CCompatible with backbone constraint

Incompatible with backbone constraint

# Consensus methods

#### Multiple optimal trees

- Many methods can yield multiple equally optimal trees
- We can further select among these trees with additional criteria, but
- Typically, relationships common to all the optimal trees are summarised with *consensus trees*

#### Consensus methods

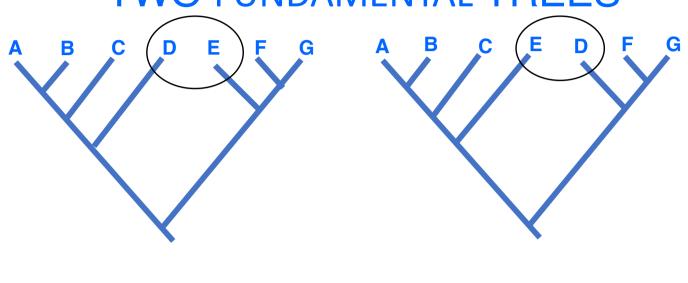
- A consensus tree is a summary of the agreement among a set of fundamental trees
- There are many consensus methods that differ in:
  - 1. the kind of agreement
  - 2. the level of agreement
- Consensus methods can be used with multiple trees from a single analysis or from multiple analyses

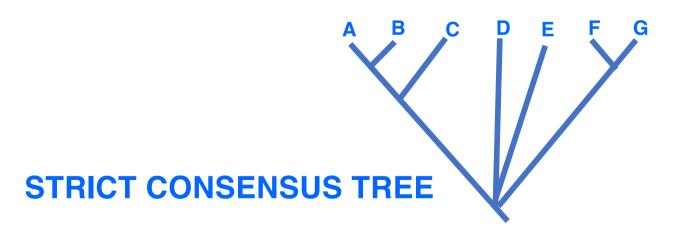
#### Strict consensus methods

- Strict consensus methods require agreement across all the fundamental trees
- They show only those relationships that are unambiguously supported by the parsimonious interpretation of the data
- This method produces a consensus tree that includes all and only those full splits found in all the fundamental trees
- Other relationships (those in which the fundamental trees disagree) are shown as unresolved polytomies

#### Strict consensus methods





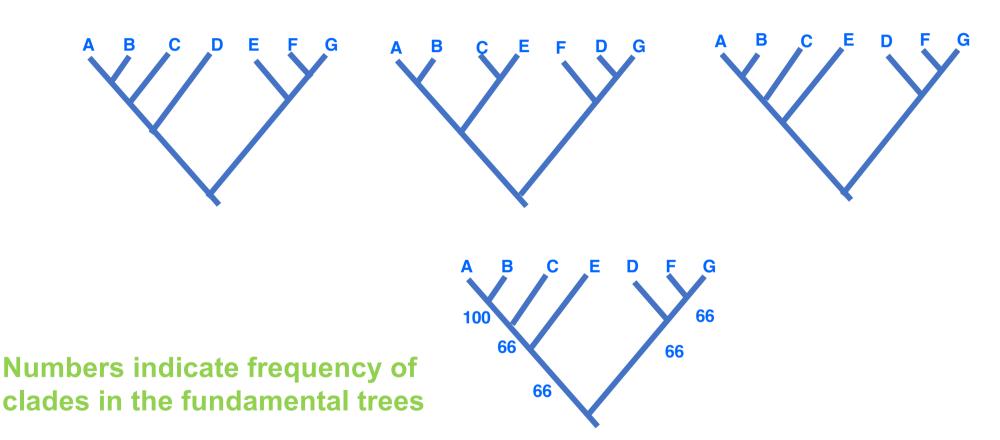


#### Majority-rule consensus methods

- Majority-rule consensus methods require agreement across a majority of the fundamental trees
- May include relationships that are not supported by the most parsimonious interpretation of the data
- This method produces a consensus tree that includes all and only those full splits found in a majority (>50%) of the fundamental trees
- Other relationships are shown as unresolved polytomies
- Of particular use in bootstrapping

#### Majority rule consensus

#### THREE FUNDAMENTAL TREES



**MAJORITY-RULE CONSENSUS TREE** 

#### Consensus methods – use

- Currently majority-rule methods mainly used
  - bootstrapping
  - Bayesian methods
- Reduced methods can be useful to identify problem taxa
  - E.g. RogueNaRok
- Strict methods mainly used in parsimony analyses
  - rarely used with molecular data

#### Take home messages

- Statements of homology are the basis of phylogenetics
- Alignments of molecular sequences are very strong statements of positional homology
- Finding an optimal tree is not a trivial task

# The Data

File formats

#### Computer programs

- Multitude of programs available for free!
- Most have their own input format
- Many are "black box" programs
- Input files are always simple text files!!!

No good online resource available

http://evolution.gs.washington.edu/phylip/software.html
was an attempt but not updated for a long time

#### Computer programs - ML

- IQ-TREE (recommended)
- RAxML (recommended)
- PHYML
- GARLI

#### Computer programs- Bayesian inference

- MrBayes (recommended)
- BEAST (recommended)
- BAMBE
- BayesPhylogenies

#### Viewing trees

- FigTree (recommended)
- TreeView
- Winclada
- Dendroscope (for large trees >200 taxa)

#### Three most common data formats

- FASTA
- Phylip
- Nexus

#### Input format - FASTA

```
>Papilio glaucus 69 3
GAGATGGAAGACAAGGTTTCGTCGACCCTGTCCGGCCTCGAGGGCGAACT
>Hamearis84 13
GGaATGGAaGAGAAGTCTCCACAACCCTCTCCGGACTCGAAGGTGAGCT
>Danaus plexippus108 21
GAGATGGAGGAGAGGTCTCCTCCACCCTCTCAGGTCTCGAAGGTGAACT
>Greta oto70 9
GGAATGGAAGAGGTCTCCTCGACCCTCTCAGGCCTTGAAGGTGAACT
>Amathusia phidippus114 17
GGaATGGAaGACAAaGTCTCCTCAaCCCTCTCCGGTCTTGAGGGTGAACT
>Morpho peleides66 5
GGaATGGAGAGAAAaGTCTCTACTACCCTGTCTGGCCTCGAAGGCGAACT
>BrintesiaB01
GGAATGGAAGACAAAGTCTCGTCCACCCTCTCCGGGCTGGAAGGCGAGCT
>Elymnias casiphone121 20
GAGAWGGAAGACAAAGTATCCTCCACCCTCTCTGGTCTTGAAGCTGAACT
>Erebia oemeEW24 7
gGaATGGAaGACAAaGTCTCCTCGACTCTCTCTGGCCTCGAAGGCGAGCT
```

#### Input format – PHYLIP

```
Papilio_gl GAGATGGAAGACAAGGTTTCGTCGACCCTGTCCGGCCTCGAGGGCGAACT
Hamearis84 GGAATGGAAGAGAGAGAGTCTCCACAACCCTCTCCGGACTCGAAGGTGAGCT
Danaus_ple GAGATGGAAGAGAGAGAGGTCTCCTCCACCCTCTCAGGTCTCGAAGGTGAACT
Greta_oto7 GGAATGGAAGAGAGAGAGGTCTCCTCGACCCTCTCAGGCCTTGAAGGTGAACT
Amathusia_ GGAATGGAAGACAAAGTCTCCTCAACCCTCTCCGGTCTTGAGGGTGAACT
Morpho_pel GGAATGGAGAGAAAGTCTCTACTACCCTGTCTGGCCTCGAAGGCGAACT
BrintesiaB GGAATGGAAGACAAAGTCTCGTCCACCCTCTCCGGGCTGGAAGGCGAGCT
Elymnias_c GAGAWGGAAGACAAAGTCTCCTCCACCCTCTCTGGTCTTGAAGCTGAACT
Erebia_oem gGaATGGAAGACAAAGTCTCCTCCACCCTCTCTGGCCTCGAAGGCGAGCT
```

#### Input format - NEXUS

• Nexus blocks: data block, tree block, character set block, MrBayes block, ...

```
#NEXUS
BEGIN DATA;
   DIMENSIONS NTAX=9 NCHAR=50;
   FORMAT DATATYPE=DNA MISSING=? GAP=- INTERLEAVE=No;
   Matrix
[ArgKin 596]
Papilio glaucus 69 3
                          GAGATGGAAGACAAGGTTTCGTCGACCCTGTCCGGCCTCGAGGGCGAACT
Hamearis84 13
                          GGaATGGAaGAGAAGTCTCCACAACCCTCTCCGGACTCGAAGGTGAGCT
Danaus plexippus108 21
                          GAGATGGAGGAGAAGGTCTCCTCCACCCTCTCAGGTCTCGAAGGTGAACT
Greta oto70 9
                          GGAATGGAAGAGAGGTCTCCTCGACCCTCTCAGGCCTTGAAGGTGAACT
Amathusia phidippus114 17 GGaATGGAaGACAAaGTCTCCTCAaCCCTCTCCGGTCTTGAGGGTGAACT
Morpho peleides66 5
                          GGaATGGAGAGAAAaGTCTCTACTACCCTGTCTGGCCTCGAAGGCGAACT
BrintesiaB01
                          GGAATGGAAGACAAAGTCTCGTCCACCCTCTCCGGGCTGGAAGGCGAGCT
Elymnias casiphone121 20 GAGAwGGaAGAcaAAGTATCCTCCACCCTCTCTGGTCTTGAAGCTGAACT
Erebia oemeEW24 7
                          gGaATGGAaGACAAaGTCTCCTCGACTCTCTCTGGCCTCGAAGGCGAGCT
end;
```

#### Input format – NEXUS interleaved

```
#NEXUS
BEGIN DATA;
   DIMENSIONS NTAX=9 NCHAR=121;
   FORMAT DATATYPE=DNA MISSING=? GAP=- INTERLEAVE=Yes;
  Matrix
[ArgKin 50 bp]
Papilio glaucus 69 3
                         GAGaTGGAaGACAaGGTTTCGTCGACCCTGTCCGGCCTCGAGGGCGAACT
Hamearis84 13
                         GGaATGGAaGAGAAGTCTCCACAACCCTCTCCGGACTCGAAGGTGAGCT
Danaus_plexippus108 21
                         GAGAtGGAGGAGAGGTCTCCTCCACCCTCTCAGGTCTCGAAGGTGAACT
Greta oto70 9
                         GGAATGGAAGAGAGGTCTCCTCGACCCTCTCAGGCCTTGAAGGTGAACT
Amathusia phidippus114 17 GGaATGGAaGACAAaGTCTCCTCAaCCCTCTCCGGTCTTGAGGGTGAACT
Morpho peleides66 5
                         GGaATGGAGAGAAAaGTCTCTACTACCCTGTCTGGCCTCGAAGGCGAACT
BrintesiaB01
                         GGAATGGAAGACAAaGTCTCGTCCACCCTCTCCGGGCTGGAAGGCGAGCT
Elymnias casiphone121 20
                         GAGAWGGaAGAcaAAGTATCCTCCACCCTCTCTGGTCTTGAAGCTGAACT
Erebia oemeEW24 7
                         qGaATGGAaGACAAaGTCTCCTCGACTCTCTCTGGCCTCGAAGGCGAGCT
[COI 71 bp]
Papilio glaucus 69 3
                         taAaqAtaTTqGaACATTATACTTTATTTTTGGAATTTTGAGCAAGAATATTAGGAACTTCTTTAAGTTTAT
Hamearis84 13
                         ???????????????????????????????TGAGCAGGAATAGTAGGAACATCATTAAGATTAC
Libythea celtis71 1
                         ???????????????????????????????TGAGCAGGAATAGTAGGAACTTCATTAAGTCTAT
Danaus plexippus108 21
                         ???????????????????????????????TGAGCAGGAATAGTTGGGACATCTTTAAGTCTTT
Greta oto70 9
                         ????????????????????????????????TGAGCAGGAATAGTAGGAACATCTTTAAGTTTAT
Amathusia phidippus114 17 ????????????????????????????????TGATCTGGAATAGTAGGAACATCCCTCAGTCTTA
Morpho peleides66 5
                         ???????????????????????????????TGAGCCGGTATAATTGGTACATCCCTAAGTCTTA
BrintesiaB01
                         ????????????????????????????????TGAGCAGGTATAGTAGGAACATCTCTTAGTTTAA
Elymnias casiphone121 20 ?????????????????????????????TGATCAGGAATAGTAGGAACTTCCCTCAGTCTTA
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end;
```

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