

Jurassic Park, by Michael Crichton. Ballantine Books, New York. 1990.

Ian Malcolm, one of the characters in *Jurassic Park*, says: "Discovery is always a rape of the natural world. Always."

My mind wandered a bit from the story when I read that line on page 284. My mind's eye focused on Columbus and others who conducted trips of "discovery." I asked myself what are the real cultural, social, and biological ramifications of these expeditions? ***Jurassic Park*** is not a story about an expedition, but it does present a set of fictional conditions that could be profitably noted by many, especially those managing natural ecosystems.

Power and influence have driven some mighty events, and these driving forces are behind the coming-into-existence of the fictional ***Jurassic Park***. In the book, money buys specific technology, knowledge, and isolated space for a park that features cloned dinosaurs.

Continued on page 19

The project, with its exotic cast of prehistoric characters, is held close to the power brokers' chests. Those who provide general knowledge about the animals and their behavior are kept in the dark as much as possible.

A meeting of the power brokers and those knowledgeable about the animals, held at the island park, is the setting for events that demonstrate the impossibility of "control" on the part of the perpetrators. Once natural events are set in motion – even in the most unnatural ways – the question rapidly degenerates from one of control to one of mere survival.

Ian Malcolm and Dr. Grant are characters who grab and hold your interest as the exciting plot unwinds. Malcolm's intellect and Grant's broad knowledge are consistent reminders that all societies need a healthy mix of raw intelligence and educated thought as we continue our search for understanding our world.

If you are a regular reader of world and environmental issues, this book will help you focus beyond the specifics. We are part of a larger scheme – one which simply may not be comprehensible, but one which is not necessarily totally chaotic.

To quote Ian Malcolm: "It's a matter of what you think you can accomplish. When the hunter goes out in the rain forest to seek food for his family, does he expect to control nature? No. He imagines that nature is beyond him. Beyond his understanding. Beyond his control. Maybe he prays to nature, to the fertility of the forest that provides him. He prays because he knows he doesn't control it. He's at the mercy of it ... Your power are much less than your dreams of reason would have you believe."

R.J. Valen, Chief of Interpretation
Guadalupe Mountains National Park