

April 29, 2013, noon

## What we want from Jurassic Park 4: dinosaur farms, pet raptors - and feathers



MIKE TAYLOR - Like a lot of people, I fell in love with the original *Jurassic Park* film. It wasn't just that the special effects made the dinosaurs far more convincing than anything we'd seen before. It was the way the dinosaurs were portrayed as real, flesh-and-blood animals rather than monsters.

The highlight of the film was the heroes' first sight of a *Brachiosaurus*, minding its own business and even oblivious to their presence, just getting on with its life. *Jurassic Park* gave dinosaurs their dignity back.

And like lot of people, I thoroughly enjoyed the roller-coaster ride of *Jurassic Park: The Lost World* without ever quite loving it. For all the excitement, it never moved me the way the original had.

And also like a lot of people, I found *Jurassic Park 3* to be a rather disappointing re-tread. Yet again, we joined a group of people lost on a dinosaur-infested island.

Maybe it's not surprising, then, that it has taken 12 years (and a couple of false starts) for work to start seriously on *Jurassic Park 4*. But it's been given only a cautious welcome by palaeontologists.

A big part of that is in response to director Colin Trevorrow's infamous two-word tweet: "No feathers". Since the initial film 20 years ago, evidence for feathers in dinosaurs has become increasingly compelling.

There is now absolutely no doubt that the iconic *Velociraptor* was extensively feathered and looked much more like a bird than a reptile.

Many palaeontologists see the director's rejection of this evidence as contempt for all the science underlying the series. It seems to suggest that *Jurassic Park 4* may be destined to be a mere monster movie.

We want a *Jurassic Park* film to be something different, more ambitious.

So here's what I would like to see:

First, surely we're done with the islands of the original trilogy. The environments limited the story-telling potential, hence all the running-from-monsters plots. Let's get the dinosaurs onto the mainland.

Second, it's been 16 years since a *T. rex* ran amok in San Diego. The *Jurassic Park* universe has to accept that any chance of secrecy is gone, and that the whole world knows about the dinosaurs. So in the new film, they need to be a ubiquitous part of everyday life.

So here's my proposal. There are resurrected dinosaurs everywhere. They're in zoos, of course. Out in the Midwest of America, there are vast dinosaur ranches where herds of ornithomimids (the ostrich-shaped dinosaurs such as *Gallimimus*) roam free, to be harvested for their meat.

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### What we want from Jurassic Park 4: dinosaur farms, pet raptors and feathers

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Horned dinosaurs, the ceratopsians, are used as beasts of burden. Among wealthy socialites in New York, cute little baby raptors are the latest fashion accessory – to be flushed down the toilet when they start to become unwieldy. Ordinary families might pick a pet dinosaur instead of a dog; something small and innocuous like *Hypsilophodon*.

Much of this actually makes sense. I would certainly jump at the chance of owning my own pet dinosaur, especially now we know they were warm-blooded and probably nicely insulated with hair-like protofeathers.

What could possibly go wrong? Well, here are a few things:

Idiots showing off in a zoo could come to a nasty end as dinosaur food (as sometimes happens today with big cats).

A massive storm could spook all those herds of meat animals and the ceratopsians that were used on their farms. Flushed raptors could survive and thrive in the sewers, to emerge as adults onto the streets of New York when floods force them out.

These are the kinds of things I'd like to see. Dinosaurs behaving more like animals than like monsters – as in the original film – but in a variety of locations and situations. We might find we've brought back more than we can cope with!

*- Dr. Mike Taylor is a computer programmer in his day-job, and a Research Associate at the University of Bristol. He has the luxury of working almost exclusively on sauropods, the most impressive and inspiring of all dinosaurs.*

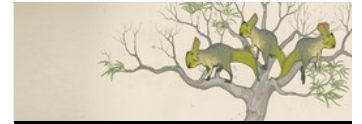


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