

GURPS®

Fourth Edition

LANDS OUT OF TIME



An e23 Sourcebook for GURPS® from Steve Jackson Games

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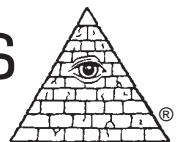
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About GURPS

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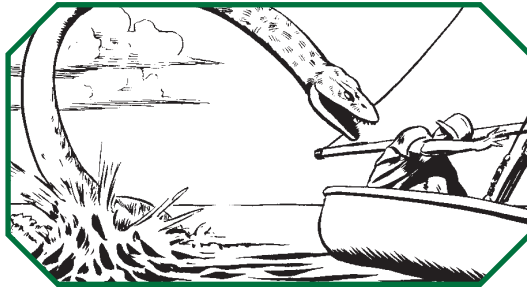
About the Author

Lizard has been a gamer since 1978 and a freelancer since 2000. He used to own *Melee* and *Wizard*, and played *The Fantasy Trip* at his first gaming con back in 1979 or so. He has watched **GURPS** go from *Man to Man* to the shelf-buckling collection of tomes which comprised *Third Edition*

to the streamlined and elegant *Fourth Edition*. He has produced a number of *d20* and *Dying Earth* products, but this is his first **GURPS** work. He is currently trapped in the Midwest, where he resides with four cats and a girlfriend. In his day job, he writes database software.

INTRODUCTION

Humans and dinosaurs go together like gamers and pizza. That tens of millions of years separated the last of the dinosaurs from the first of the humans is a mere inconvenience, easily ignored. *GURPS Lands Out of Time* is a sourcebook for human/dino adventuring, providing all you need to know to place man and giant reptile side-by-side.



The appeal is obvious – dinosaurs are just plain cool. It's patently unfair that no human ever got to ride an armored triceratops into battle, cook bronto-burgers, or match his hunting skills against the ultimate predator of the land, the tyrannosaurus. This sourcebook corrects this fundamental injustice.

ABOUT THE GENRE

The genre of man-and-dinosaur goes back at least as far as the early 20th century, with *The Lost World* by Arthur Conan Doyle. Edgar Rice Burroughs further popularized the genre with *The Land That Time Forgot*. Films such as *King Kong*, *One Million Years BC*, *Jurassic Park*, and *Valley of the Gwangi* are also primary sources. On the small screen, *The Flintstones* and *Land of the Lost* are both iconic examples of the genre.

We had this doctor with us, from the Natural History museum in New York. Someone figured he'd be useful. The last thing he said to us was, "The tyrannosaurus was a scavenger, not a hunter, and it will completely ignore our presence." We brought back what we could find, afterwards.

*– Jack McGovern,
Infinity Unlimited
"First In" Team Member*

The genre is inherently cinematic. The unreality of the premise makes improbable stunts and hair's-breadth escapes fit right in, although more "realistic" takes are possible. An "alternative" campaign can be made into a grim struggle for survival, as the characters confront horrors many times worse than cave bears or smilodons with only stone, bone, and cunning on their side. It can also be a slapstick comedy – from *The Flintstones* to *Caveman*, the humorous possibilities of the genre are well represented. However, most dino-world stories are high adventure, and that is the primary focus of this book.



CAMPAIGN STYLES

There are two primary campaign styles for a *GURPS Lands Out of Time* campaign. These are the Standalone World and the Destination World.

On The General Lack of History or Science

GURPS Lands Out of Time is about the genre of man-and-dinosaur. Fidelity to genre is more important than fidelity to science. Creatures which lived millions of years apart and in wildly different climates live side-by-side here, because that's the way movies, comic books, and television does it. The focus is on the most common fictional tropes, not on up-to-date scientific theories. Here, the *Tyrannosaurus rex* is a hunter and killer, not a mere scavenger; here, brachiosaurs live in deep rivers with their nostrils sticking above the water. Pterosaurs carry off hapless cavemen in their claws, and stegosaurus really do have a "second brain" in their hips. The cultures and societies of the Cro-Magnon and Neanderthals presented here do *not* represent genuine paleoanthropological thought, but, rather, the outdated stereotypes seen in the source fiction.

Where possible, current theories are noted, so that fact-minded gamemasters and players can adjust as needed. However, the fun of the genre is adventuring with dinosaurs as they should have been, not as they were.

In some cases, more modern interpretations are used in preference to older beliefs, not because they are more accurate, but because they open up more dramatic possibilities.

STANDALONE WORLD

In this campaign style, the world of men and dinosaurs (and other creatures) exists as an end in itself. The players play natives of the world, and they know of the world only as their home. Adventures tend to be focused on exploration and survival. Often, the player characters are exiles from their native land, or otherwise separated from their own people, and are

struggling to either return home or find a new one. Another common concept is that the characters are tribal leaders, who must manage to keep their people alive despite the many dangers confronting them. This style of campaign is excellent for those with an interest in low-tech roleplaying who still desire fantastic or anachronistic elements.

DESTINATION WORLD

This campaign style is far more common. In this mode of play, most or all of the characters are not natives; they are visitors from another world, usually contemporary Earth – though "contemporary" has changed as the genre has. The world the explorers come from can range from the late 19th century to the early 21st. There may even be mixed groups – a banestorm or nexus gate could bring people from many different times to the World of Banded Night (p. 38), and they would have to work together to survive.



Arrival at the world may be accidental or deliberate. As a genre convention, though, even a deliberate expedition will quickly meet some unexpected tragedy, leaving the survivors lost and under-equipped. Accidental arrivals were usually on a wilderness trek to begin with, giving them some of the tools they will need to survive.

In such a campaign, it is common to have a single character who is a native of the world. Such a character can provide a great deal of information about the world to the other characters, but this can also undermine the sense of exploration and discovery. For this to work, it is best if the adventurers are exploring a part of the world even the native does not know well, or if the native's knowledge is restricted due to cultural taboos. ("Only the wise one of tribe allowed to enter sacred valley. I do not know what is beyond.")

CHAPTER THREE

BESTIARY

The most important thing about a world where man and dinosaur live together is, of course, the dinosaurs! This section discusses a wide variety of dinosaurs, along with other prehistoric creatures which are genre-appropriate but which are not

true dinos. Also included are a few creatures which never existed, but which also fit into the genre.

A special focus is placed on how the creatures can interact with humans, along with notes on the “cinematic” nature of the creature vs. the best current theories.

DINOSAURS

Many of the creatures in this section, such as pterosaurs and mosasaurs, are not “dinosaurs” at all. They are here because *thematically* they belong with the dinosaurs, and any effect or ability which is limited to “dinosaurs” will affect all creatures listed here within most *GURPS Lands Out of Time* settings. (A realistic setting might reject this genre convention, which can have interesting results.) Creatures which do not thematically belong in the “dinosaur” category are listed elsewhere.

SAUROPODS

Sauropods are the massive plant eaters iconized by *Brontosaurus*. They are the largest land animals known to have lived, with such creatures as *Argentinasaurus* reaching an estimated 120 feet in length, relegating the once gargantuan brontosaurus to middleweight status in the sauropod lineup. (There is no such thing as an *Apatosaurus*. Not in *this* rulebook.)

In reality, the sauropods were most likely plains dwellers, their immense necks stretched out before them, scooping up food in great arcs, allowing the creatures to reach tremendous amounts of plant matter without having to take many steps. In the worlds of *GURPS Lands Out of Time*, however, many of the larger sauropods dwell in swamps, where the water helps support their great bulk, or in dense jungles, where the long necks allow them to reach the leaves at the top of the tallest giant ferns.



Brontosaurus (“Long Neck”)

The most iconic of the sauropods, the brontosaurus is about 75 feet long and is a peaceful herbivore. Brontosaurus are too large to be domesticated or used by humans, and are even too big to hunt – there is no way to preserve enough of the meat long enough to make the effort worthwhile. Brontosaurus rely entirely on their size to survive, and have no real combat skills.

A brontosaurus can trample for 8d cr. It can swing with its tail, which has a SM of +4 and a reach of 10 hexes, for 10d cr.

ST 72; **DX** 9; **IQ** 2; **HT** 11.

Will 9; **Per** 9; **Speed** 5.25; **Dodge** 8; **Move** 5.

SM +7 (10 hexes); 18-36 tons.

Traits: DR 4 (Tough Skin); Quadruped; Weak Striker (Tail); Weak Bite; Wild Animal.

Skills: Running-10.

Diplodocus (“Water Stone Neck”)

The diplodocus is one of the longest dinosaurs known, but it is lighter than many of the other sauropods in its size range. Ninety feet in length, it is primarily a river dweller, feeding on the lush plant life that lines the sides of the river bank. With its nostrils at the top of its head, it can exist almost completely submerged in water, which is what gives it the name noted above. Not a few river fishers or swimmers have grabbed onto a greenish rock, only to be amazed as a monstrous head and neck erupted from the water. While not a great swimmer, the diplodocus can propel itself through water too deep to stand in by kicking itself along with its hind legs, allowing the water to support its huge bulk.

ST 56; **DX** 11; **IQ** 2; **HT** 11.

Will 10; **Per** 11; **Speed** 5.5; **Dodge** 8; **Move** 5.

SM +7 (30 hexes); 22,000 lbs.

Traits: DR 2 (Tough Skin); Quadruped; Weak Striker (Tail); Weak Bite; Wild Animal.

Skills: None.

A diplodocus can trample for 6d cr. It can swing with its tail, which has a SM of +5 and a reach of 15 hexes, for 8d cr.

The Impact of Dinosaurs

The presence of the dinosaurs will have an impact on technological development, since such beasts can be used in a variety of roles. Many are larger and stronger, but less intelligent, than the animals which were available to primitive man in reality. Furthermore, the pulp atmosphere of most *GURPS Lands Out of Time* campaigns means that unrealistic concepts will be accepted because they “feel right”. Dino-power can be used to justify a wide range of anachronisms.

For TL0 and lower societies, the main use for dinosaurs will be raw parts. The equipment section (p. 20) lists a wide range of such items. However, even tribal cultures can train or raise animals, especially those which can forage along with the tribe. A triceratops may need too much fodder to be a useful beast for a pre-agricultural civilization, but small carnosaurs can be used as hunting or guard

beasts. Larger dinosaurs will almost certainly be the focus of religious rituals.

TL1 societies with good agricultural practices can truly incorporate the dinosaurs into their lives. Triceratops form the basis for heavy cavalry, while raptors can be trained to kill and turned on the enemy during war. A tyrannosaur captured as a baby and raised in a city can be a fearsome living god to whom prisoners or volunteers are sacrificed. The elite of such a society might hunt with archaeopteryx, much as medieval nobles used hawks. The smaller sauropods can provide meat, labor, or both. The main thing which dinosaurs will *not* provide is milk or fur.

Since a large part of the appeal of a *GURPS Lands Out of Time* campaign is the imagery and “feel,” the incorporation of dinosaur-based resources can be a bit gratuitous. As a general rule, it doesn’t matter if it would be efficient or logical, provided it *looks cool*.

This Is My Boom Stick!

One of the critical themes of any campaign featuring Timelost characters is the mixture of high- and stone-age technology. The equipment section (p. 22) discusses many of the issues of maintaining such technology, especially in the highly corrosive environment of the World of Banded Night. This sidebar discusses other game balance and world design issues.



The simplest solution to high-tech is “It doesn’t work.” The camera doesn’t take pictures. The flashlight won’t light. The gun won’t fire. The explorers have nothing but their wits to fall back on. This can be very challenging, but, it can also deprive players of some of the best “moments” of the genre. If the decision is made to “zero out” technology, then, the maximum level that can be natively made should be established. Even if guns and electricity do not work, how about steam power? Could a knowledgeable character make penicillin, rig a still, or build a repeating crossbow? Many inventions require only the knowledge of how to make them, not an advanced infrastructure. For simplicity’s sake, it is best to say nothing over TL1 can be made, even if the underlying principles can be found in devices which did work in TL1.

If tech is nullified, the utility of the High TL advantage is reduced, as follows:

If high-tech machines do not work, but if high-tech *knowledge* is still useful, reduce the cost of the advantage to 3 points/TL.

If even high-tech knowledge is useless due to differing laws of reality, the advantage is worth nothing.

As a final option, scrap the High TL advantage and simply impose an Unusual Background on all Timelost to reflect the general value of their gear and equipment.

Important! Only alter the value of the advantage if the characters will be there for the duration of the campaign. If the dino-world is a stopover, leave the advantage as is; that it is less useful for one adventure is irrelevant.

If characters can keep their existing tech, or make new devices, things get interesting. A pistol or a rifle can make a man a god, at least until the ammo runs out. The key ingredients for gunpowder are common, and while making an effective gun using local industry is unlikely, the manufacture of simple bombs is quite possible. Passing on the simplest knowledge about the need to clean wounds or the mechanics of reproduction can profoundly alter the future development of civilization. In the World of Banded Night setting (p. 38), characters may be able to give the folk of Tarn several millennia of lore in a short period of time, just by teaching them decimal math, phonetic alphabets, and crop rotation. Even things as simple as the design of the plow or the invention of the stirrup can alter an entire culture, and this is knowledge any marginally educated Timelost will have.

The other side of the equation, of course, is that many people fear change more than they desire its benefits. An experiment in gunpowder may turn a tribe into a screaming mob rather than ardent followers. Everyone in power, from tribal chieftains to the Priest-King of Tarn-Ul, will have reasons to want the meddling strangers eliminated.

Lastly, it must be emphasized – primitive does not mean stupid! No matter how much a character may warn that his gun is protected by spirits, some enterprising caveman will probably make a play for it, and, if they’ve had time to watch the character, know how to use it. This provides an excellent opportunity for gamemasters to perform the traditional “Ha! The strangers are not gods! They are just men like us! Seize them!” scene.

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