



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

San Diego Public Library

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PRESENTATION BY PALEONTOLOGIST PETER WARD AT THE SAN DIEGO NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

A Provocative Look at the History of Our Living Planet

SAN DIEGO – The San Diego Public Library, San Diego State University’s Common Experience, KPBS and the San Diego Natural History Museum will host a free lecture by award-winning paleontologist and author of the forthcoming book, *The Medea Hypothesis*, Peter Ward. The lecture will take place in the Museum’s Charmaine and Maurice Kaplan Theater, located at 1788 El Prado in Balboa Park, on Thursday, May 7 at 6:30 p.m. This event is in conjunction with 2009 as the “Year of Darwin” and *One Book, One San Diego*. You must REGISTER FOR THIS FREE EVENT!

In *The Medea Hypothesis*, Ward proposes a revolutionary and provocative vision of life's relationship with the Earth's biosphere--one that has frightening implications for our future, yet also offers hope. Using the latest discoveries from the geological record, he argues that life might be its own worst enemy. This stands in stark contrast to James Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis--the idea that life sustains habitable conditions on Earth. In answer to Gaia, which draws on the idea of the "good mother" who nurtures life, Ward invokes Medea, the mythical mother who killed her own children. Could life by its very nature threaten its own existence?

According to the Medea hypothesis, it does. Ward demonstrates that all but one of the mass extinctions that have struck Earth were caused by life itself. He looks at our planet's history in a new way, revealing an Earth that is witnessing an alarming decline of diversity and biomass--a decline brought on by life's own "biocidal" tendencies. Moreover, the Medea hypothesis applies not just to our planet--its dire prognosis extends to all potential life in the universe. Yet life on Earth does not have to be lethal. Ward shows why, but warns that our time is running out.

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Breathtaking in scope, *The Medea Hypothesis* is certain to arouse fierce debate and radically transform our worldview. It serves as an urgent challenge to all of us to think in new ways if we hope to save ourselves from ourselves.

Peter Ward's many books include the highly acclaimed *Rare Earth: Why Complex Life Is Uncommon in the Universe and Under a Green Sky* (Collins). He is professor of biology and Earth and space sciences at the University of Washington, and an astrobiologist with NASA.

Visit tickets.sdnhm.org to register in advance and obtain a free ticket for the lecture. Reserved theater seating with ticket is guaranteed only until 6:15 p.m. Advance registration for online tickets is available through Wednesday, May 6. Same day tickets are available only at the Museum.

Learn about other events at the San Diego Public Library's Central Library and 35 branches, find links to numerous additional resources, or search for materials in the Library's catalog online at www.sandiegolibrary.org

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