

KSN News Release

Extinct or not extinct, That is the question about pterosaurs

Are all species of pterosaurs extinct, or have a few survived? That question is tackled in the third edition of the nonfiction cryptozoology book by the American Jonathan David Whitcomb: *Live Pterosaurs in America*

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For Immediate Release

LONG BEACH, Calif/KSN/Nov 26, 2011 --- How rarely do we read anything about dinosaurs or pterosaurs without reference to extinction millions of years ago! But a controversial idea promoted by the American cryptozoologist Jonathan Whitcomb has caught the attention of the *Houston Chronicle*, a Smithsonian magazine blog, and a well-known paleontologist in England. Not everybody embraces living pterosaurs.

In the third edition of his nonfiction book *Live Pterosaurs in America*, Whitcomb suggests the non-extinction of at least two species of the flying creature many people call “pterodactyl.” He admits having no body of a living or recently-deceased pterosaur but refers to the body of evidence from dozens of eyewitnesses of flying creatures different from any bird or bat. The limitations of eyewitness testimony, however, confine the modern pterosaur to cryptozoology, outside of standard zoology.

As a forensic videographer in Southern California, Whitcomb had acquired skills that helped him interview native eyewitnesses in Papua New Guinea,

in 2004, as he videotaped them in their villages on Umboi Island. He returned to the United States convinced that the nocturnal flying creature the natives call “ropen” is a *Rhamphorhynchoid* (long-tailed) pterosaur. After reading about his experiences, some Americans gave him a bigger surprise: reports of similar flying creatures within many of the forty-eight contiguous states of America.

Adding to the controversy, Whitcomb maintains that at least some of the apparent pterosaurs in both Papua New Guinea and North America have intrinsic bioluminescence. He supports the opinions of his cryptozoology associates who believe that legends of fire-breathing flying dragons originated from ancient eyewitness sightings of large glowing pterosaurs.

The well-known British paleontologist Darren Naish, in his late-2007 blog post “Pterosaurs alive in, like, the modern day,” responded to old reports, shooting down apparent pterosaurs. But Whitcomb wrote, in his book and on blog posts, that none of the detailed accounts listed by Naish are critical

Whitcomb's Book . . . Pterodactyl . . . CONTINUED

sightings, that he ignored all details about the sighting reports published by twenty-first-century investigators, and that he included only what would discredit the possibility of modern living pterosaurs.

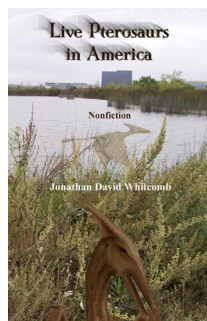
The freelance science writer Brian Switek, in the 2010 Smithsonian blog post “Don’t Get Strung Along by the ‘Ropen’ Myth,” used the word “hucksters” and other descriptions for twentieth-century explorers who searched for modern dinosaurs. But according to Whitcomb, like Naish he ignored all details about the twenty-first-century interviews of the many eyewitnesses, and included only what would discredit the possibility of modern living pterosaurs.

The largest daily newspaper in Texas, the *Houston Chronicle*, in December of 2010, published an article by Claudia Feldman: “What’s going on in Marfa?” (Whitcomb’s press release “Unmasking a Flying Predator in Texas” caught Feldman’s attention, giving her the idea to write about the mysterious flying lights of southwest Texas.) But much of her article was about the work of the retired aerospace engineer James Bunnell, who has studied the lights for many years. Bunnell did not take seriously Whitcomb’s conjecture about bioluminescent flying predators, but after years of investigating Marfa Lights admits, “Here is a real scientific puzzle that still exists in this modern day and age, and nobody has solved it yet.”

Whitcomb believes that the official discovery of living pterosaurs may be years away, but that the eyewitnesses will someday be proven correct.

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Jonathan Whitcomb on Umboi Island, Papua New Guinea, in late 2004



Sketch by U. S. Marine Eskin Kuhn: what he observed in southeast Cuba



Gitmo Pterosaur, 1965
Eyewitness: Patty Carson
Guantanamo Bay, Cuba

Sketch by Patty Carson: what she observed (also) in southeast Cuba (Guantanamo)