

Whitcomb's Book, Searching For Ropens, Asserts Pterodactyl Reported In Papua New Guinea

An investigator who explored Umboi Island, Papua New Guinea, declares that a large flying creature reported by an American soldier in 1944 is the same species of long-tailed featherless creature known as ropen.

For Immediate Release

LONG BEACH, Calif./EWorldWire/Aug. 14, 2006 --- A study by a forensic videographer suggests that the "pterodactyl" described by the World War II veteran Duane Hodgkinson is a real creature that lives in coastal areas of Papua New Guinea. Jonathan Whitcomb, of Long Beach, analyzed a videotaped testimony of Hodgkinson in 2005 and maintains that the veteran saw, near Finschhafen, New Guinea, in 1944, what natives of nearby Umboi Island call a ropen.

Whitcomb explored Umboi Island in 2004, and, after failing to find a ropen, videotaped native eyewitnesses. In his new book, "Searching for Ropens," he asserts that the nocturnal creature is a Rhamphorhynchoid pterosaur, commonly called a "pterodactyl."

Whitcomb disputes the traditional Western interpretation of the pterodactyl sightings as misidentifications of Flying Fox fruit bats. Natives described how one ropen held itself upright on a tree trunk, but the fruit bats hang upside down from branches. In addition, the ropen eats fish and has a long tail, unlike the Flying Fox.

According to standard models of science, all pterosaurs became extinct by about 65-million years ago. Although Whitcomb admits having no photograph to disprove textbook declarations that all pterosaurs are extinct, he disputes the idea that the ropen is an unknown bat. His book examines an investigation by the explorers Garth Guesman, a Southern California firefighter, and David Woetzel, a New Hampshire businessman. Their 2004 expedition, a few weeks after Whitcomb's, uncovered a native tradition about the ropen's tail: It moves only near the tail's base. This, says Guesman, relates to fossil-pterosaur anatomy.

Jim Blume, a missionary in Wau, on the mainland of Papua New Guinea, has also investigated reports of the giant flying creatures. His interviews with natives reveal that the tails of the nocturnal creatures have flanges somewhat like eel tails. Around Manus Island, the wingspan is said to be three to four feet, but may reach ten to fifteen feet in other areas. Whitcomb's book mentions a few ropens that are even larger, including the one seen by Hodgkinson.

Whitcomb found no indication of any hallucination or hoax with the American veteran. He also noted that the native eyewitnesses he interviewed mentioned no supernatural elements and that their descriptions resemble those given by Hodgkinson.

Whitcomb, a 57-year-old independent videographer who records evidence for attorney firms, completed his book after one year of compiling and analyzing eyewitness testimonies. He supports a major expedition to videotape a ropen before the end of 2007.

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