

“Pterodactyl Expert”

I sometimes refer to postings on the blog Pterosaur Eyewitness, and I now tackle the controversy in “Jonathan Whitcomb: Pterodactyl Expert.” I will not get into any of the controversy on religion. Actually the subject of religion is not covered in depth, but that is what apparently elicited the critical comments on the original cryptozoology.com forum.

Regarding the fossils of pterosaurs, Whitcomb is nothing like a paleontologist. He probably could not tell the species of a fossil of one if he dug it up himself. He is a cryptozoologist who interviews eyewitnesses of what many call “pterodactyls,” which is simply the name many non-paleontologists use for “pterosaur.” He searches for the eyewitnesses who think that they have seen modern pterosaurs, and he tries to figure out if they misidentified a bird or a bat or if they saw what they think that they did.

Popular Paleontology

Within the popular concepts of paleontology, Whitcomb’s writings about modern pterosaurs appear ridiculous. In that sense, he could not possibly be an expert on pterosaurs. But the original title for the cryptozoology.com discussion was “Jonathan Whitcomb: **Pterodactyl** Expert.” The word “pterodactyl,” in this sense, refers to the layman’s expression, not the paleontologist’s. Since common people report seeing modern “pterodactyls,” and cryptozoologists like Whitcomb interview them and believe most of those common eyewitnesses, Whitcomb is an expert. But of course that is in the sense that modern pterosaurs could be living among humans.

So what does all this boil down to? If all pterosaurs (AKA pterodactyls) are extinct, nobody whose experiences are confined to eyewitnesses can be an expert, even if he writes books on the subject, like Whitcomb has done. But if even just

one of the eyewitnesses has actually seen a modern pterosaur, then Whitcomb is an expert, having interviewed perhaps more eyewitnesses than any other cryptozoologist. Of course with all that said, the existence of modern pterosaurs does not necessarily mean that all of his ideas are correct.

Pterodactyl Expert?

But is there such a thing as a pterodactyl expert? The subject came up recently online.