

# Smithsonian Proclaims “Ropen Myth”

Brian Switek made some serious errors of judgment in his “Don’t Get Strung Along by the Ropen Myth.” It was the August 16, 2010, posting on the Smithsonian Magazine, online publication. I would now like to comment on some of those errors.

Switek wrote, “Sadly, some people still get duped by the fantastic claims espoused by ‘professional monster hunters’.” I don’t know why he put that phrase into quote marks, for when did any cryptozoologists use that phrase when referring to their expeditions or to their research? That is a small affair, but I see more serious problems with Switek’s writing.

He is correct in pointing out that a publication in Oregon had a serious error in showing a photograph of a frigate bird while mentioning the ropen of Papua New Guinea. But did Switek dig deeper to investigate the origin of the modern-pterosaur phenomenon? I think he did not.

He failed to even mention key figures in the cryptozoological investigations, including Jonathan Whitcomb, Paul Nation, and Garth Guessman. He also failed to mention key eyewitnesses whose accounts cannot easily be dismissed by any reference to a hoax or misidentification.

Next, he falters with “Then there is the problem of Aym’s sources.” But Switek mentions only two persons: Jim Blume and David Woetzel. Obviously Switek has not researched this subject like he should have, for key figures are missing, important cryptozoologists. Even though the original Oregon publication may have failed to mention those persons, why could not Switek have looked deeper?

Switek says that there is a problem with Aym’s sources. But

even if Blume and Woetzel are mistaken in certain ideas about life origins or earth age, what of that? Do we dismiss everything by all scientists who have not been perfect all of their lives? Do we dismiss Galileo's promotion of a sun-centered system because of the faults in his tidal hypothesis? Has Switek missed this critical point, rejecting all the work of Blume and Woetzel because they have religious beliefs that he despises?

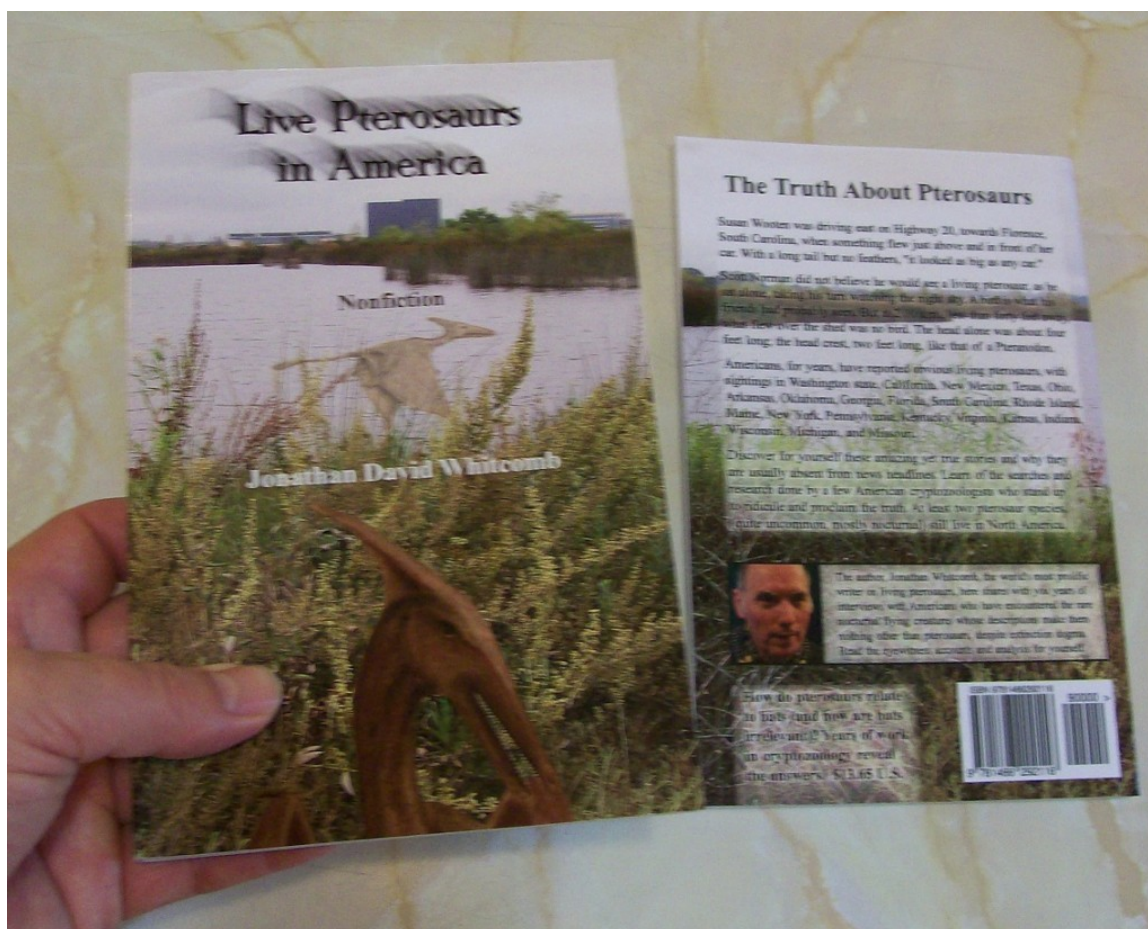
Switek soon reveals the philosophical side of the conflict. He says, ". . . we should have no expectation that a hypothetical, living member of this group would look anything like its prehistoric relatives." Yet, later he says, "Furthermore, even if a long-tailed pterosaur were found it would do nothing to undercut the science of evolution." But does he miss a critical point? What about sound scientific reasoning? Those whom he calls "creationists" point to eyewitness evidence for modern pterosaurs that have some resemblance to fossils of pterosaurs. In other words, supporters of Darwin, like Switek, predict that a modern pterosaur would be very different from fossils; supporters of a much younger earth predict that a modern pterosaur would be similar to fossils. The scientific method requires that the discovery of a modern pterosaur would give credibility to one side or the other, depending on how much that creature resembled fossils. But Switek proclaims that this is not what we should conclude. He proclaims that no matter what happens, no matter what evidence turns up, no matter what is discovered, his axioms must not lose any credibility. In other words, Darwin supporters can explain away any evidence in a way to support their assumptions. Switek has just shown us, unwittingly, that Darwinian thinking is unscientific.

### **Reply to "Don't Get Strung Along by the Ropen Myth"**

I submit that this labeling of unnamed persons "hucksters" is inappropriate, implying that the persons soon to be named are in that same category. It also brings up the possibility that

Mr. Switek is not the most objective writer to evaluate the work of James Blume and David Woetzel.

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