

Do Manta Rays Fly Over Land?

No!

I said a lot about Mr. Drinnon's Manta ray mania last year, including the stingray of Africa. I thought that we were through with that ridiculous proposal. I now see I was wrong about that. But I am sure that the concept is ridiculous. The most publicized accounts of appearances of modern pterosaurs demonstrate that they were nowhere near what fish would appear like when they jump out of water. Not only that, but sightings of those flying creatures are mostly over land, and the few that were over water show clear signs that they could not have been leaping fish.

Before going any further, I wish to acknowledge the concept of jumping Manta rays. Of course they could look shocking to a person in a boat who had never before seen such a fish, below or above the surface of the sea. But Mr. Drinnon misses the critical point, that the overall picture of pterosaur sightings could not have been jumping fishes.

I am of the strictest belief that fruitful scientific investigations require specific observations, not generalizations of imagination. With Manta rays launching themselves into the air, on some occasions, we can expect some surprised spectators. But we should not expect any of those persons to conclude that they had seen a modern pterosaur, regardless of a general similarity in wing shape. After all, when spectators saw the landing of the Space Shuttles, the general similarities of wing shapes did not cause those persons to believe that they had seen a pterosaur or a Manta ray. Overly general ideas should not be emphasized to the extreme.

Perth Sighting

Getting into the Perth sighting of 1997, we have many details. If I remember correctly, Mr. Drinnon mentioned this sighting some time ago, but I am sure he did not properly consider the significance of important details.

The Australian married couple were about half a mile inland, according to the words of the wife. That in itself almost kills any possibility that they had seen a Manta ray in the air. I'll quote some of her words here.

"Whatever people may think, the fact remains that my husband and I both saw that creature. My husband, being a scientist, took in things from the sighting that I was far too amazed/stunned to take in."

Now for the words of the husband, who had worked in a scientific field, at least up to the time of their interview.

I watched it as it approached. Soon I was able to determine that it was some sort of flying creature, and my first thought was that it must be some very large bird. I was very new to the area at the time and unfamiliar with the native creatures, so I pointed it out to [my wife], asking if she could see it.

By this time, its progress had brought it closer and while its shape did resemble a bird, I thought by now that from its apparent distance, it must be the largest bird I had ever witnessed. I would estimate that at this time it was about a quarter mile north of us and quite high. [My wife] and I had now stopped to watch it approach. Within a minute or so it had reached our position and was about 250 or 300 feet above us and slightly inland.

It is obvious that this Australian couple had not observed a Manta ray jumping out of the water, regardless of the shape of the creature's wings.

Other Sightings of Modern Pterosaurs

Examples that repudiate the suggestion of Manta rays are so numerous as to demolish any confidence in that kind of misidentification hypothesis.

Eskin Kuhn, as a United States Marine in 1971, watched two “pterodactyls” fly from the sea, with a graceful flight that he observed for some time. He estimated they were about forty to a hundred feet high. Mr. Drinnon has been struck by some general aspect of wing shape, and given Kuhn’s sketch as if it were evidence for his Manta ray hypothesis. But look at the sketch in light of Mr. Kuhn’s words.



What difference does it make that there might be a general wing-shape resemblance to the general shape of a Manta ray? Mr. Kuhn did not see one creature just above the surface of the sea for three seconds. He saw two creatures flying together over land. He did not see one fish fall back into water but two flying creatures fly off together, over land.

I have had enough of this ludicrous hypothesis. If people want to believe Mr. Drinnon’s Manta ray hypothesis, that is their problem.

Jumping Manta ray Fish

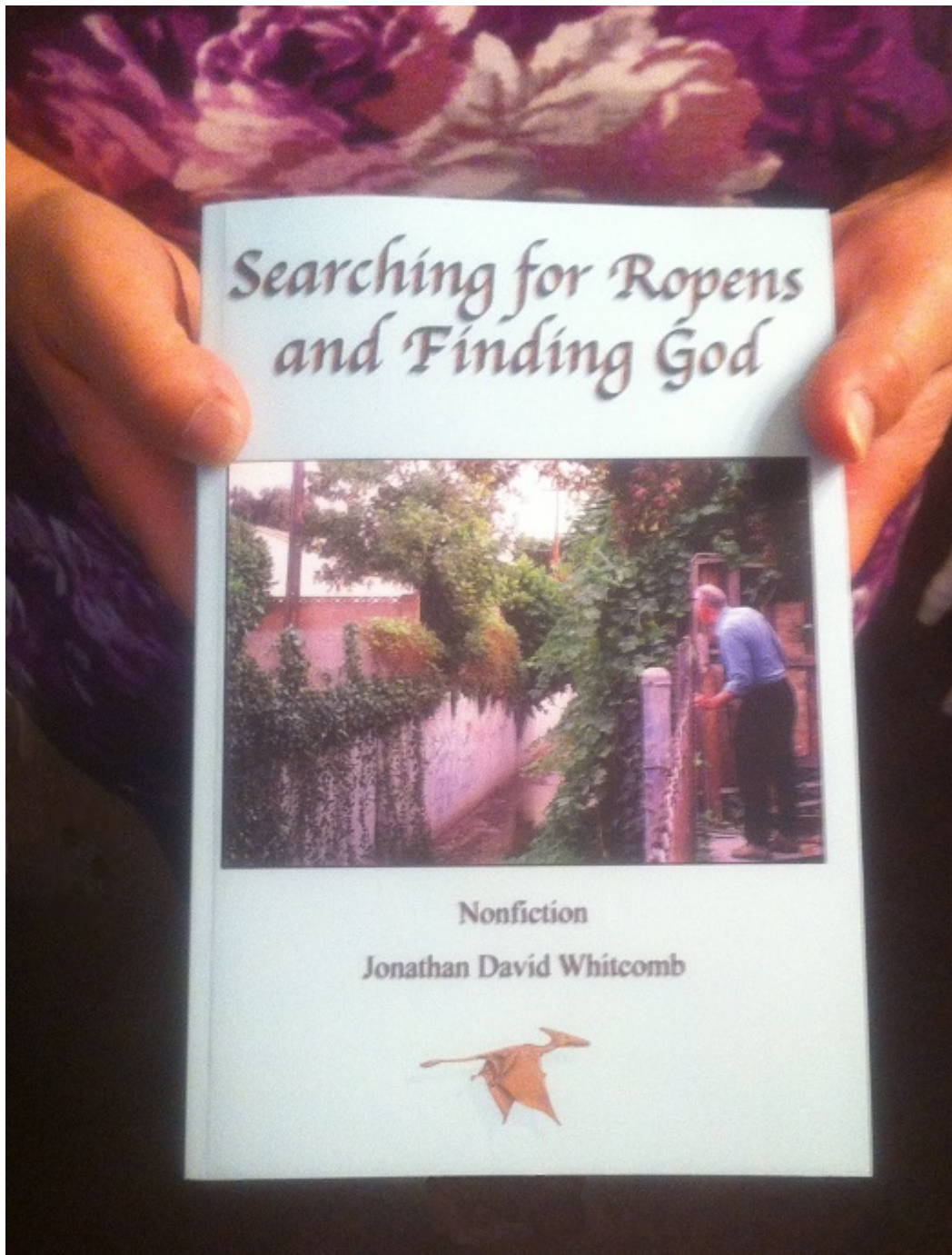
In the nonfiction Live Pterosaurs in Australia and in Papua New Guinea, four sightings are given special attention for

both high credibility and low possibility of misidentification

Leap of Faith or Leaping Fish?

They looked like the flying dinosaurs, I forget what they are called. They would fly towards the ship, then back out to sea, then fly together in tandem then make a sharp right, away from the ship and disappear into the night.

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Non-fiction ropen book – *Searching for Ropens and Finding God*

From page 183:

I have not before nor since ever been so petrified in my life. You [know] how in scary movies you always want to yell at the protagonist 'Run, you idiot! Run!' because they never do and then they always die? I was frozen with fear just like they show in the movies. I felt incapable of moving my legs.