

Sock Puppets and Jonathan Whitcomb

According to the paleontologist Donald Prothero and the biology professor P. Z. Myers, I Jonathan Whitcomb have used sock puppetry in online publications promoting the idea that modern pterosaurs are living. Each has written a post about me, with each post proclaiming that I have *admitted* using sock puppets. Both statements in each post are false, yet some of my proper use of two pseudonyms may resemble improper usage, so this needs to be explained in detail.

Norman Huntington and Nathaniel Coleman

Soon after my expedition on Umboi Island, in 2004, I found a web site highly critical of the living pterosaur investigations. In fact, the URL included the words *stupid*, *dinosaur*, and *lies*. In the original posting, both my first and last names were misspelled: "John Whittcomb." Keep in mind that this was in 2005.

So what did it say about me, Jonathan Whitcomb? It said I had led creationists on an expedition in Africa and that I had been sponsored by Carl Baugh. All three statements were false; I had never led any creationists on any expedition, never set foot anywhere in Africa, never been sponsored by Carl Baugh. It would have been purely comical except for what followed on other sites.

Insinuations and direct statements about dishonesty followed. It came to the point where one skeptic suggested people should take statements by Paul Nation with a "grain of salt" because he was associated with Jonathan Whitcomb.

By about that time, I had begun writing nonfiction book about eyewitness sightings of apparent pterosaurs, especially in Papua New Guinea and in Australia. My main purpose was not in

making a profit but in telling the truth to the world, the truth about details in the many sighting reports that I received from around the world.

To publicize details about the encounters with apparent pterosaurs, I needed some way to emphasize those reports without my name getting in the way. I began using two pseudonyms on a limited number of my many blogs: *Nathaniel Coleman* and *Norman Huntington*. Neither of those names were ever used as if they were happy purchasers of my books. They were used to emphasize the logic of a modern-pterosaur interpretation of many sighting reports and critical details in those eyewitness accounts.

When using my regular name, Jonathan Whitcomb, I sometimes admit personal weaknesses, most notably in the problems I faced in my expedition in 2004, problems sometimes caused by my lack of planning or inexperience in exploring on a tropical island. When using one of the two pen names, I sometimes mentioned a weakness or potential bias in the reasoning or writings of "Jonathan Whitcomb." That's not deceptive but honest, for I am human like everybody else. I did not use any pseudonym or sock puppet to heap empty praise on "Jonathan Whitcomb," for that would have been dishonest.

What are sock puppets?

According to Wikipedia:

A sockpuppet is an online identity used for purposes of deception. . . . [It] originally referred to a false identity assumed by a member of an Internet community who spoke to, or about, themselves while pretending to be another person. The term now includes other misleading uses of online identities, such as those created to praise, defend or support a person or organization, or to circumvent a suspension or ban from a website. A significant difference between the use of a pseudonym and the creation of a sockpuppet is that the

sockpuppet poses as an independent third-party unaffiliated with the puppeteer. Many online communities attempt to block sockpuppets.

Dr. Prothero's post went much further than suggesting that I might have been guilty of using sock puppets. He said, "it's a classic case of a typically modern internet phenomenon, sock puppetry." I suggest my usage of those two names was more like the opposite. Consider the following ways of improper online writing, sock puppetry:

1. Endorsing a self-written book as if from a common reader
2. Praising oneself
3. Sneaking around a suspension or ban

I suggest a "classic case" of sock puppetry would include at least two of the above, if not all three, when the person involved was an author. Yet none of the above three applies to my use of the names *Nathaniel Coleman* and *Norman Huntington*. Where does Dr. Prothero get the his definition of "a classic case?"

Honesty or deception in the first expedition of 2004

The point of this controversy about modern living pterosaurs is in honesty or dishonesty. In particular, have I, Jonathan Whitcomb, been deceptive or have I tried to bring the truth out into the open? Consider my expedition on Umboi Island in 2004.

Nobody disputes the fact I was on that tropical island, wanting to find evidence that a species of pterosaur was still living. Yet I returned home to the USA admitting that I had seen nothing that could be interpreted as a living pterosaur. The nocturnal ropen had kept out of my sight. A liar would have reported a sighting of a glowing pterosaur, making it appear like his expedition had been a success. I was honest and told the truth.

For some reason, Dr. Prothero says nothing about the fact that I had been on Umboi Island, looking for the ropen. Why did he say nothing about that? Is it because any mention of that expedition could have defeated his purpose in how he wanted to portray me? Since I was obviously being honest about my 2004 expedition, why not consider the possibility that I have been honest in my online publications since then?

Conclusions on sock puppets and pseudonyms

Did I make a mistake in using those two pen names. From the narrow point of view of the moment, it certainly looks like I should never have used any name except *Jonathan Whitcomb*, yet time will tell the whole story. I am content to see how history will play out.

The critical point, however seems to have been entirely overlooked by Donald Prothero: Eyewitness-testimony details prove the case for modern living pterosaurs, and his post "Fake Pterosaurs and Sock Puppets" does not even mention the word *eyewitness*. Who really has something to hide, Dr. Prothero?

.

###

.

Dr. Prothero and modern pterosaurs

My blog posts and web pages outnumber those of anyone else on the subject of modern "pterodactyls" or primitive flying creatures that have been assumed to have been long extinct; that need not suggest that I have been dishonest. Skeptics include at least three of the best-known paleontologists in the world; that need not suggest my investigation over the past eleven years has been in vain. Look at some details.

Hoax Criticism and Pterosaur Wingspans

Estimated pterosaur wingspans, analyzed in recent statistics of eyewitness reports, show what would be expected of a variety of pterosaur species of different sizes, observed under various conditions by eyewitnesses having various abilities in estimating sizes. In other words, the sighting reports support the honesty of eyewitnesses, in general.

Searching for Ropens and Finding God



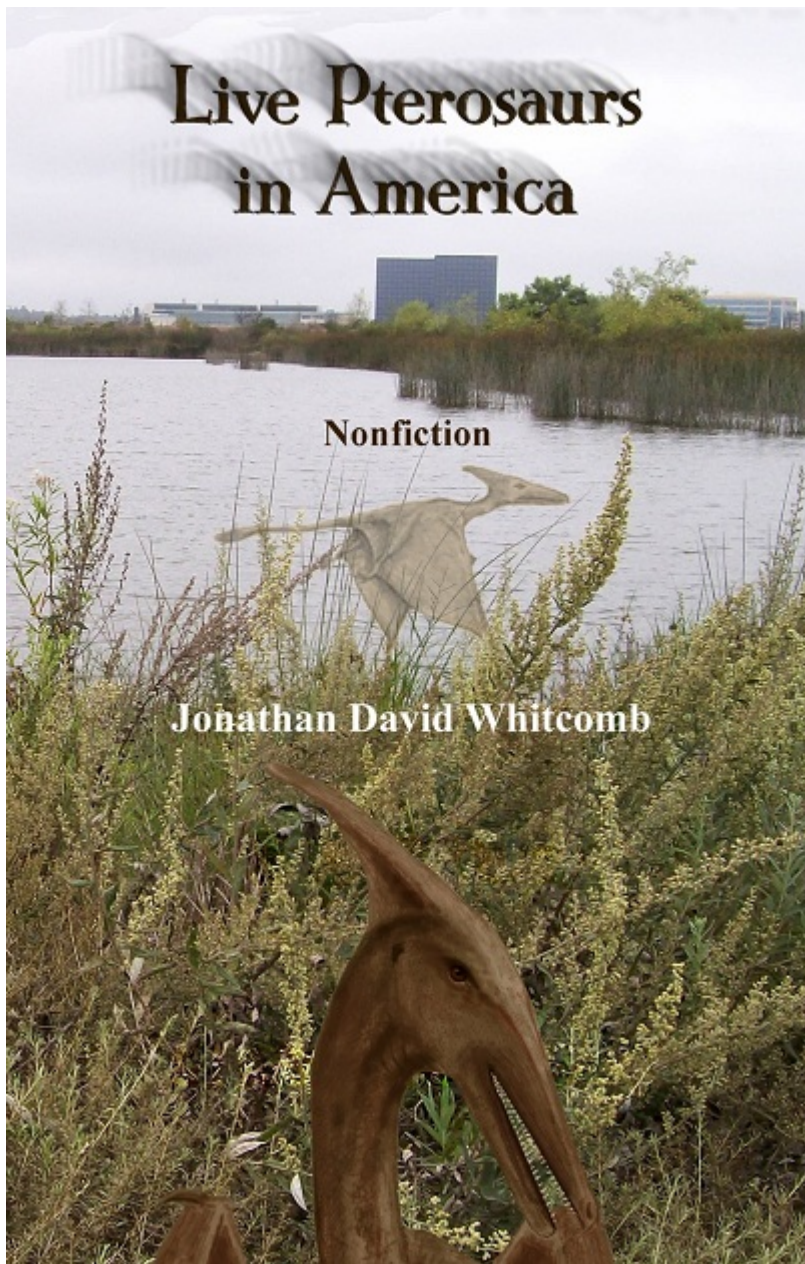
The quest for discovering modern pterosaurs ("flying dinosaurs")

Nonfiction

Jonathan David Whitcomb

Fourth Edition

Nonfiction, 360 pages, worldwide sightings of modern pterosaurs



Pure cryptozoology, 154 pages, live pterosaurs in the USA