

Reply to Drinnon re. Ropens

In my last post, I mentioned problems with the stingray interpretation by Drinnon regarding the *kongamoto* of Africa. Most sightings, it seems to me, make much better sense as observations of a modern pterosaur. Also, winged lizards do not fit well many details from eyewitness sightings.

I now reply to Drinnon's post about the *ropen* of Papua New Guinea.

Drinnon put up no less than four photos of Manta rays, two of which are shown jumping up well above the surface of the sea. But not one of those four photos looks even remotely like the drawings of modern pterosaurs, or the *ropen*, shown at the top of his post. From reading his post and looking at all of those photos, I suspect Drinnon has not done enough research or is too deeply entrenched in the dogma of universal pterosaur extinction.

There are other serious problems with the idea that sightings of Manta rays are the source of reports of giant long-tailed pterosaurs in Papua New Guinea. Before quoting one of the commenters, I have some of my own comments about the basics of scientific reasoning, for Mr. Dinnon seems to have gotten things upside down.

He says, "A sighting made by a married couple in Perth, Australia, is typical," and then quotes their description of the flying creature whose wingspan they estimated at 30-50 feet. He then moves into a brief overview of the 1944 and 1971 sightings by Hodgkinson and Hennessy, respectively.

The next paragraph I find especially interesting, for it reveals at least part of the reason why Dinnon is unconvinced that modern pterosaurs still fly. I quote:

There is a problem in all of these sightings (which occur

world-wide and in fact are becoming more and more frequent with the passage of years) in that the body conformation is NOT what you would expect of a giant Pterosaur.

Here is the crux, the reverse of what Dinnon thinks it is. When a scientific hypothesis or theory come into conflict with human experience, that original idea is normally questioned, if not rejected. Human experiences, especially when a number of them coincide, normally cause a conflicting hypothesis or theory to be discarded, not the reverse, otherwise science itself would be vaporized and the word "science" would come to mean something like dogma, enforced by something other than reasoning.

To be specific, Dinnon seems to take it for granted that no modern pterosaur could be different than what he knows from pterosaur fossils. I have known a number of paleontologists who make this same mistake. If a new fossil reveals a new type of pterosaur, they revise their ideas of what a pterosaur could be like. But if somebody observes a living modern pterosaur, then the paleontologist objects to it on the grounds that it does not exactly match any presently known fossil. That is poor reasoning!

Now I would like to quote part of that comment on that blog post, noting that it makes fun of the Manta ray interpretation, mocking it:

Yep, the ropens are actually MANTA RAYS! . . . The mantas' biggest trick was always blasting out of the water and then, instead of gliding a few feet before crashing back into the ocean like normal mantas, they gathered altitude and speed, changed their entire physical configuration, and then flew inland dozens of miles.

It's a rather long comment, so I'll leave it at that. Drinnon's reply included this:

Well of course you missed that line about there are some of the reports that refer to a type of giant hornbill. . . .

Well then, it seems to me rather strange that the title of the post is "Ropens, Pterosaurian Sightings And Manta Rays." Most of the photos were of Manta rays. The reference to the giant hornbill is buried in that post, and it seems to me irrelevant to what Hodgkinson saw, a giant featherless flying creature with a tail at least ten to fifteen feet long, with separate legs, different from the tail, that were seen to run while the creature was getting airborne in that small jungle clearing in New Guinea.