

# Is “Demon Flyer” Correct?

Numerous web pages and one MonsterQuest episode use the phrase “demon flyer” as if it were a literal interpretation of the word “ropen.” It is not. I propose examining what natives of Umboi Island, and other areas of Papua New Guinea, believe about this mysterious nocturnal flying creature.

Interviews with native eyewitnesses, including the 2004 interview with Mesa Agustin, can reveal a fear that natives have of the ropen, but that does not necessarily mean that those eyewitnesses believe that the creature is an evil spirit or monster. I recommend the following post:

## **Ropen: a Demon Flyer?**

*The second Umboi Island expedition of 2004 (a few weeks after mine) turned up an interesting perspective on the word “ropen.” Jacob Kepas, the native interpreter for the American cryptozoologists David Woetzel and Garth Guessman, knew the word but was puzzled. Why go to such trouble flying on a small plane to Umboi Island to search for a bird? In his village near Wau (mainland Papua New Guinea), “ropen” is the word used for a common bird. The large nocturnal flying creature that glows—that frightening creature they call “seklo-bali.”*

*So in those two small areas of Papua New Guinea (villages of Umboi Island including Opai and Gomlongon, and at least one village near Wau on the mainland) the meaning of the word “ropen” differs greatly. An examination of the expedition reports from American cryptozoologists who have searched for living pterosaurs in Papua New Guinea in the 1990’s and early twenty-first century—that reveals that the Western-world usage of “ropen” comes from the Kovai-speaking islanders of Opai and Gomlongon.*

## **Umboi Island Sighting in 2009**

*Rex Yapi is an accounting student at the University of Technology in Lae, Papua New Guinea. Around July of 2009, he was on a banana boat in Bunsil Bay, Umboi. Those on the boat became alarmed at a large creature that was mostly under water but approaching them. They stopped the boat as the creature passed, for apparently it was catching fish or something. Only the tail of the creature was above water, but what a tail! Rex estimated the length at six or seven meters, with a "diamond shape," which may refer to a Rhamphorhynchoid tail flange.*

The natives on those islands of Papua New Guinea where ropens are seen are sometimes afraid of what some Westerners call "demon flyer," but that phrase does not seem to be a reasonable translation of the Kovai-language word "ropen."