

Darren Naish Comments on Pterosaur Fossils

On the Live Pterosaur post “Pterosaur Extinction Revisited,” the well-known pterosaur fossil expert Darren Naish has given two comments in twelve days. Few paleontologists give much attention to cryptozoological investigations, at least until recently.

First Comment (excerpt):

By the end of the Late Cretaceous, it seems that only two or three pterosaur lineages were still in existence – there were not, so far as we know, 100s of species representing numerous lineages. Those Late Cretaceous pterosaur lineages persist to the end of the Maastrichtian age of the Late Cretaceous, but are absent from the fossil record of the entire Cenozoic. There is thus every reason for thinking that pterosaurs (a) were already at low diversity at the very end of the Late Cretaceous, and (b) died out during the mass extinction event that occurred at the end of the Late Cretaceous. There is no evidence for post-Cretaceous pterosaurs . . .

Question:

How many pterosaur fossils have been discovered and dated in the Cretaceous?

Answer (excerpt of second comment):

. . . Pterosaurs are not numerous fossils for several obvious reasons, but we’re talking about 1000s of specimens (Bennett, in his 2001 osteology of Pteranodon, refers to 1100 specimens of Pteranodon alone). Nevertheless, there are several key references that at least give a good idea of the taxa involved, most notably..

Barrett, P. M., Butler, R. J., Edwards, N. P. & Milner, A. R. 2008. Pterosaur distribution in time and space: an atlas. Zitteliana B, 28, 61-107.

What I would ask is this: "Related to the statement 'there is no evidence for post-Cretaceous pterosaurs,' was there any evidence for post-Cretaceous Coelacanths before the discovery of the living Coelacanths?"

I would also ask, "Is it possible that at least a few of those thousands of discovered pterosaur fossils actually prevented the strata from being dated as post-Cretaceous?" Could there have been any inadvertent circular reasoning in this assumption that all pterosaur fossils have been from ancient life?

The problem with getting an objective evaluation of this fossil dating is in the deeply-entrenched assumption of pterosaur extinction and the assumption that they only lived many millions of years ago. That could have influenced the dating of some of the strata from which the pterosaur fossils were taken, invalidating the claim that all those fossils had been proven to be ancient.

If Mr. Naish is correct, however, in the claim that popular axioms of paleontology make modern pterosaurs extremely unlikely, then the discovery of one or more species of living pterosaur would strongly support Biblical Creation axioms and repudiate Darwin's. You cannot have it both ways, claiming one thing contrary to what your opponent predicts, then saying it means nothing when your opponent's prediction turns out to be correct.