

The Pterosaur Database

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Marsh O. C., 1871, Note on a new and gigantic species of pterodactyle. American Journal of Science, Series 3, 1 (6) page 472

6. Note on a new and gigantic species of *Pterodactyle*. by O. C. Marsh

In addition to the Cretaceous fossils described pp. 447-453, the Yale College party obtained several specimens which indicate a huge flying reptile, apparently of the genus *Pterodactylus*. The remains belonged to two or more individuals. They are fragmentary, but some of them are quite characteristic. The distal ends of two long bones, similar in form to the tibia of a bird, are evidently portions of the peculiar metacarpal of the wing-finger. One of these, which retains the lower part of the shaft, resembles in its proportions the corresponding bone in *Pterodactylus Suevicus*. The condyles are well developed, and have a sweep of two thirds of a circle. They appear to have been originally somewhat oblique. In size and general form, they are not unlike those of the specimen figured by Owen in his Memoir on Cretaceous Reptiles, 1851 (Sup. I, Pl. IV, fig. 9-11), but there was apparently no longitudinal elevation between them. The shaft, where broken, is subtriangular, with the posterior face concave. The bones are light, with thin compact walls. The long bones are pneumatic. The teeth are smooth, and compressed. The length of the metacarpal with the part of the shaft preserved is six and one-half inches; the fore and aft extent of the condyles fourteen lines; the transverse extent about thirteen lines. This would indicate an expanse of wings of not less than twenty feet! The species, which is the first found in this country, may be named *Pterodactylus Oweni*, in honor of Professor Richard Owen, of London. The remains now representing it were discovered by the writer, in November last, in the upper Cretaceous formation of Western Kansas.

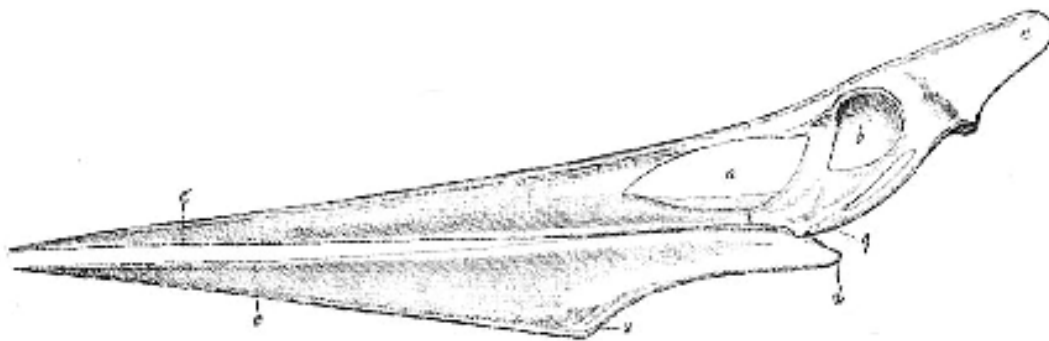


Fig. 821 – Skull of *Pteranodon longiceps*, x1/8 after Marsh