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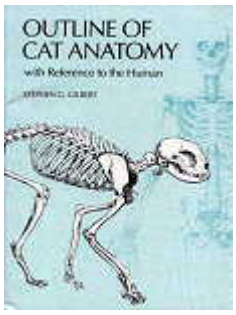
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HUMAN ANATOMY EXPLAINED... THROUGH CAT'S!

Outline of Cat Anatomy with Reference to the Human *by* Stephen G. Gilbert, Paper, 8.5" x 11" University of Washington Press, P.O.Box 50096, Seattle, Washington 98145-5096, USA; 96 pages, 84 illus. Glossary, bibliog. index,: ISBN 0-295-97818-X. LC. 99-14036. Publication Date September 2000: Price, $10.00.



Stephen G. Gilbert

Stephen G. Gilbert, the auhtor of this book, is professor emeritus in the Division of Biomedical Communications, Department of Surgery, Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronot. In addition to *Pictorial Anatomy of the Cat*, his previous publications include *Pictorial Anatomy of the frog, Pictorial Anatomy of the Fetal Pig, Pictorial Anatomy of the Dogfish*, and *Pictorial Human*

Embryology. If you have suggestions for improving future editions, he can be contacted via E-mail at s.gilbert@utoronto.ca

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What is a book on cat anatomy doing in a Journal on forensic medicine and toxicology? That is the first question that would come to everybody's mind. Well, not everybody's, for many know that these days human cadavers are not commonly available for dissection for medical students, and in many universities, dissection of cat is used to teach human anatomy!

The book under review is an excellent dissection guide of the cat. Divided into eight chapters, it gives a number of labeled diagrams, and descriptions of each conceivable anatomical structure found within cat (and humans). The chapters deal with (i)The skeleton (ii) The muscles (iii) The respiratory and digestive systems (iv) the urogenital system (v) The circulatory system (vi) The nervous system (vii) The eye and (viii) the ear.

Practical instructions on dissection are given at the beginning of every chapter. These are followed up by a number of structures which the author asks the students to identify. For instance in chapter 3 (entitled "The respiratory and digestive systems"), the author starts like so:

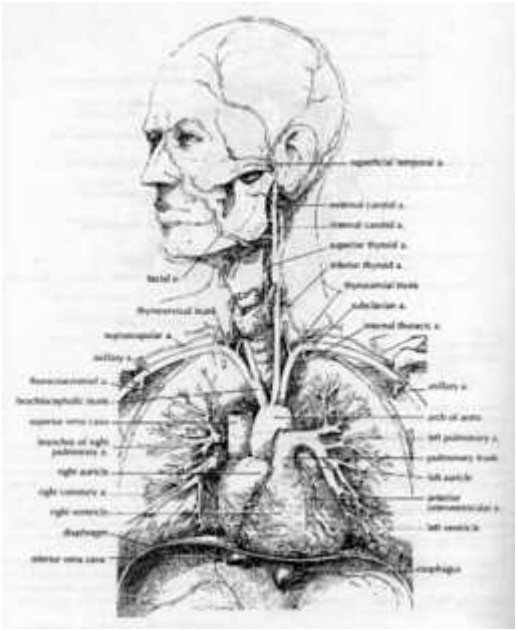
`Use a scalpel and bone clippers to cut through the muscles and costal cartilages on either side of the sternum. Extend the cuts from the region of the diaphragm to the first rib. Then.. .. ..`

And completes the instructions like this:

`.. ..Cut into the substance of a lung and observe its spongy texture. Identify the following structures.`

Now the author goes on to describe a number of structures, which he wishes the students to identify. The structures include bronchi, lungs, mediastinum, pleura, pleural cavity, pulmonary ligament, trachea, and so on.

The book gives a number of diagrams including anatomical structures both from the cat and the human. The comparative anatomy is well-illustrated, making it easier for the student to comprehend human structures while studying cat's. This diagram appears on page 56 of the book



This approach is followed throughout the book. This book is actually an abridged and modified version of the author's own *Pictorial Anatomy of the Cat*, now in its twelfth printing. The book under review, designed as a dissection guide to supplement textbooks used in introductory courses in human and mammalian anatomy, is both affordable and practical for use in one-semester courses. The author gives plenty of line diagrams, but refrains from coloring them in order to cut on costs. Students however are encouraged to color the diagrams themselves and suggestions are given for coloring codes. For instance, the author suggests that in the illustrations of the skull, bones which develop by intramembranous ossification could be colored yellow and bones derived from the chondrocranium could be colored blue. This approach is good and very effective, for when the student is coloring the bones (and other structures) like this, he tends to retain the relevant information longer.

The preface by the author gives a very good and comprehensive history of how cat came to be used as a guide for mammalian anatomy. He informs us that the first book on cat anatomy came as far back as in 1845, when Hercule Straus-Durckheim's *Anatomie descriptive et comparative du chat* was published. He then goes on to give other important developments in the field. Finally he tells us that currently there are as many as 45 titles on the anatomy of the cat. An internet search told me, that even on the internet there are an amazingly large number of interesting sites on the anatomy of cat. I am giving the links of some of the most interesting sites, that captured my attention.

The author draws our attention to as many as three different systems of nomenclature being used in describing the anatomical structures of the cat. These are (i)*Basle Nomina Anatomica,* the anatomical terminology adopted by the German Anatomical Society at their meeting in Basel, Switzerland in 1895 (ii) *Nomina Anatomica*, a list of terms agreed upon by the International Congress of Anatomists for use in human anatomy and (iii)*Nomina Anatomica Veterinaria*, another set of terms used by veterinary anatomists. This has led to utter confusion in the naming of structures. As an example, the author cites the large muscle mass that lies dorsal to the vertebral column. This muscle mass has as many as five names! Have a sampling: *Extensor dorsi communis, erector spinae, common dorsal extensor, sacrospinalis* and *erector spinae*. Of these, the last two names come from two different editions of the same book - *Gray's Anatomy*! Its American edition

calls the muscle *sacrospinalis* and its British edition *erector spinae*. Nothing can illustrate the utter confusion better than this sweet example.

The author however has tried to lessen the pain for students, by giving a comparative table at page 23, where he discusses all names currently in vogue for a given structure and tries to remove the confusion a great deal.

All in all, a very valuable book for students of anatomy. I have never dissected a cat in my life (only humans unfortunately!), but after reading this book, I am confident, if ever I were to dissect it, I would do it without a teacher. The book would be enough.

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Some Interesting internet sites on the Anatomy of Cat

1. Cat Anatomy Quiz
2. Cat Anatomy Tutorial
3. Virtual Cat Anatomy
4. The Online Cat Dissection

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