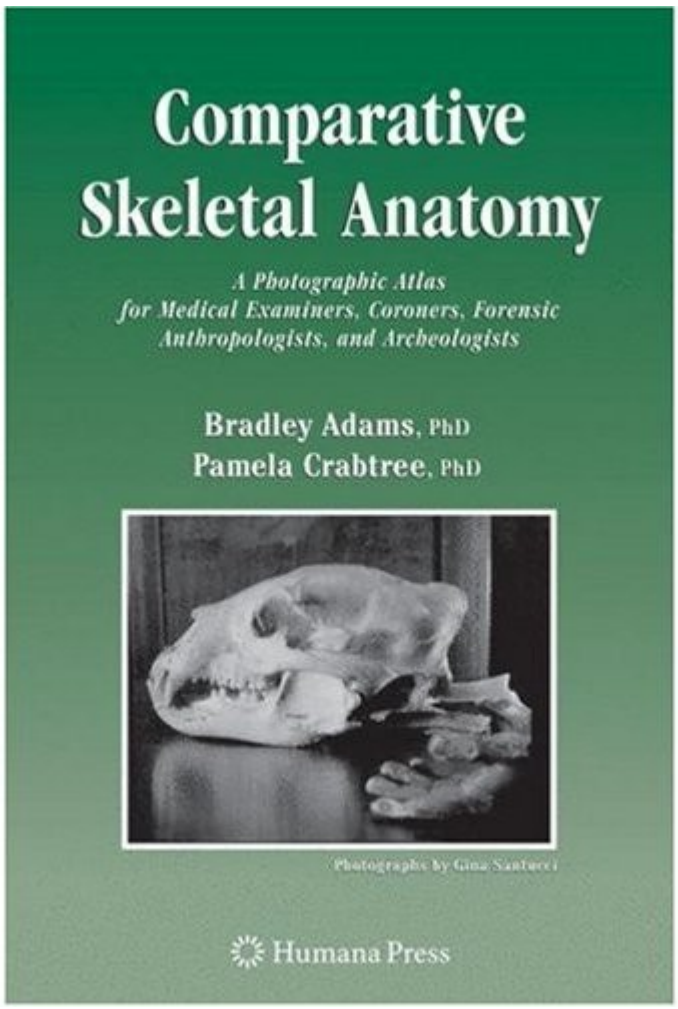

Comparative Skeletal Anatomy. A photographic atlas for medical examiners, coroners, forensic anthropologists, and archeologists. Adams BJ, Crabtree PJ (2008) Humana Press ISBN 978-1-588-29-844-7 £77

When bones are discovered – often by somebody walking their dog - law enforcement authorities need to know whether to devote considerable resources to looking for more human remains, and possibly starting a homicide investigation, or whether to de-escalate enquiries because the remains are from butchered food animals. Bones may be presented to a forensic pathologist, or anthropologist, with the request that they determine whether they are human or not, and there has been a gap in the market for a good-quality text to assist them in this endeavour. **'Comparative Skeletal Anatomy'** goes some way to filling this gap, but doesn't quite fill it completely.

Each chapter attempts to allow a comparison between human bones and those of an animal with which human skeletal components could be confused. For example, Chapter 6 compares human bones with those of the pig, and within this chapter, a single page photograph of a human bone element is produced alongside its animal counterpart, with a scale bar for sizing those bones. Many of the skeletal elements are reproduced from different views – anterior and posterior etc – and the description for the figures contains useful information about specific distinguishing features.

Unfortunately, the images are in monochrome, and are not labelled. This detracts from the usefulness of the text as a practical guide, particularly for those of us who do not work with skeletal remains regularly, and who would need to supplement this text with that of another human skeletal anatomy text 'at the benchside'.

The range of animal species described is impressive, covering the 'regular food animals' (cow, pig, goat, sheep, rabbit, turkey, duck and chicken), other domesticated animals (horse, dog, cat) and more 'exotic' animals (bear, raccoon, opossum, deer). This collection will be of use to those working in rural and urban areas, on both sides of the Atlantic, particularly in those regions in which the climate results in rapid skeletalisation of remains.

For those of us in training, this text makes a valuable contribution to our overall anthropological training, providing a guide to the key distinguishing features between skeletal elements of different species. Unfortunately, we do not often receive intact bones, and this text does not really address the effective differentiation of fragmented remains.

I would recommend this text to trainee forensic pathologists and anthropologists, but feel that its scope is somewhat limited to be of great use to qualified and experienced practitioners.

What I would ideally like to see is:

- an atlas with full scale colour images - labelled with the relevant anatomical landmarks
- with line drawings to complement the images (for further clarity), and
- an accompanying CDRom/ DVD ROM with the ability to rotate 'virtual bones' and have the human and animal equivalent 'side-by-side' as a split-screen. Such virtual tours of skeletal elements are widely available on the internet, and a comparative online atlas would be of immense use in the field.