The Lovely Bones: A New Book Surveys Animal Skeletons

Three hundred specimens showcase the development of vertebrates in 'Evolution'

By ALEXANDRA WOLFE
Dec. 20, 2013 9:20 p.m. ET

Usually, the photographer Patrick Gries's subjects aren't dangling from the ceiling. But for the book "Evolution" by Jean-Baptiste de Panafieu (Seven Stories Press, $45), Mr. Gries spent six months in science museums shooting bones—including a giraffe hanging by wires—against a black background. Starting at the National Museum of Natural History in Paris, he captured some 300 specimens showcasing the evolution of vertebrates. Retouching the photos to remove the wiring that holds the animal shapes together took a full year. The entire experience was educational for Mr. Gries: "It was like being back in school," he says. "When you look at those skeletons, there is almost an excess of information: There are too many bones."

—Alexandra Wolfe

Write to Alexandra Wolfe at alexandra.wolfe@wsj.com