

Our understanding of vertebrate origins and the backbone of human history evolves with each new fossil find and DNA map. But as longtime *Nature* editor Henry Gee argues in *Across the Bridge*, despite these great strides, the morphological chasm between vertebrates and invertebrates remains vast and enigmatic. Even as scientific advances have falsified a variety of theories linking these groups, the extant relatives of vertebrates are too few for effective genetic analysis. Moreover, the more we learn about the species that do remain—from sea-squirts to starfish—the clearer it becomes that they are too far evolved along their own courses to be of much use in reconstructing what the latest invertebrate ancestors of vertebrates looked like. Tracing both the fast-changing science that has helped illuminate the intricacies of vertebrate evolution as well as the limits of that science, *Across the Bridge* helps us to see how far the field has come in crossing the invertebrate-to-vertebrate divide—and how far we still have to go.

"An excellent addition, complementing Gee's earlier book *Before the Backbone*, which provided a historical perspective on ideas surrounding vertebrate origins. Gee addresses an important topic for biologists and zoologists about vertebrates' place in the 'grand scheme.' We are familiar with vertebrates, or think that we are. However, Gee shows beautifully, as a group we are just as strange in many ways as other groups appear to us. *Across the Bridge* takes on a very esoteric subject and is genuinely witty and charming. The book really is magnificent."

NEIL J. GOSTLING, *University of Southampton*

"In *Across the Bridge*, Gee writes a beautiful ode to some of the least appreciated animals, who reveal our own evolutionary origins: the deuterostomes. Combining a sense for detail and prosaic ease, Gee guides the reader joyfully through deuterostomes—weaving disparate elements of embryology, paleontology, and morphology into an unprecedented and accessible narrative. This book not only gives a state of affairs—being an excellent primer for anyone interested in early animal evolution—it also proposes novel, compelling, and challenging hypotheses for researchers to test for decades to come."

JAKOB VINTHER, *University of Bristol*



HENRY GEE is a senior editor at *Nature* and the author of such books as *Jacob's Ladder*, *In Search of Deep Time*, *The Science of Middle-earth*, and, most recently, *The Accidental Species: Misunderstandings of Human Evolution*, the last published by the University of Chicago Press. He lives in Cromer, Norfolk, England, with his family and numerous pets.

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