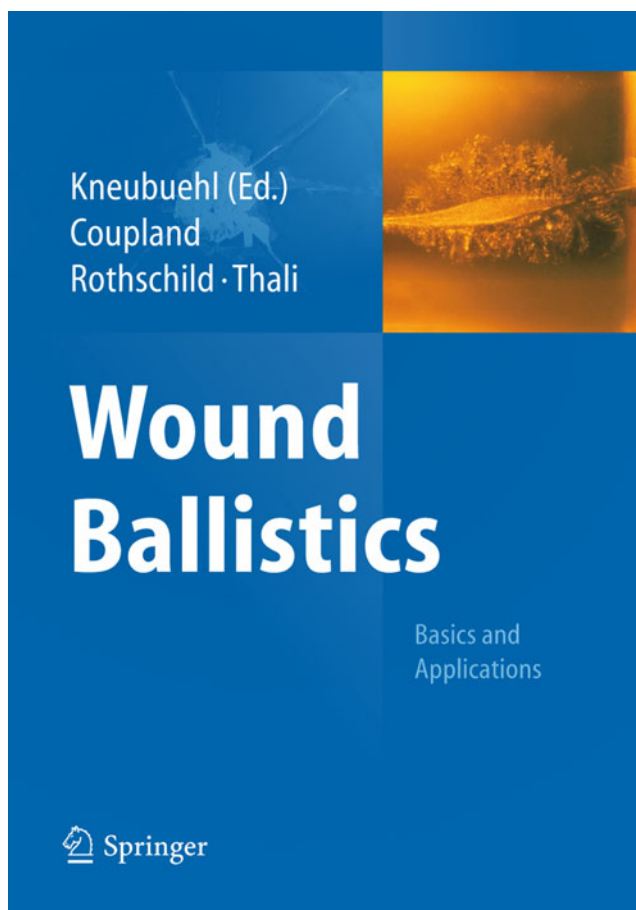


Kneubühl/Coupland/Rothschild/Thali, Wound Ballistics: basics and applications

Springer, 2011, 500 p, 234 illus., Hardcover, ISBN: 978-3-642-20355-8

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A review of the German version of the monograph “Wundballistik” appeared in the journal “Rechtsmedizin” shortly after it was published already. Now the book is available also in an English translation and the third edition will certainly find the broad distribution it deserves also outside the German-speaking territories, as it was the case already for the previous edition of “Wound Ballistics and the Scientific Background” published by Karl Sellier and Beat Kneubuehl (Elsevier, Amsterdam, 1994). However, the work is not only intended for an international expert readership, but also for German-speaking readers from the fields of forensic medicine, criminology and weapons technology. For experts specializing in gunshot wounds, it has meanwhile become indispensable to be not only familiar with the pertinent German literature, but to know the relevant English publications as well and to consider them in their expert opinions. Finally, it is very helpful for all those scientists publishing in English journals themselves to be able to use the terminology of an interdisciplinary reference work for wound ballistics.

Just as the authors, structure and contents are essentially the same as in the German edition. Apart from the behaviour of projectiles in the body and the experimental simulation of gunshot effects, the book concentrates on the practical application of research results in wound ballistics to the fields of forensic medicine and surgery. The text part is preceded by tables of symbols and conversions from US units into metric units and vice versa. The next chapters deal with the physical basics of ballistics, ammunition and weapons technology, general wound ballistics and the possibilities to simulate the processes occurring along the bullet track. Further sections discuss special wound ballistics and the effectiveness of handgun and rifle bullets, fragments and so-called non-lethal projectiles.

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The chapter on wound ballistics in forensic medicine was written by Markus Rothschild (Cologne). It deals with the collection of evidence at the scene, morphology of injuries, causes of death and ability to act. Michael Thali (Zurich) presents applications of modern imaging techniques (3D surface documentation, 3D visualisation of gunshot wounds by means of computed tomography and magnetic resonance imaging). Beat Kneubuehl and Michael Thali contributed another section on the experimental reconstruction of gunshot incidents and blunt traumas.

Robin Coupland, long-term chief surgeon of the International Committee of the Red Cross, connects wound ballistics to surgery; he compares simulated and real gunshot findings to draw conclusions on the surgical treatment of wounded people. Another chapter on international treaties (author: B. Kneubuehl) gives a compact survey of the historical development of weapons and ammunition and a concise summary of the major treaties of international humanitarian law ranging from the First Geneva Convention of 1864 to the Geneva UN Conference of 1980.

Of utmost practical importance are the tables on calibre designations, ballistic data for cartridges, numerous ballistics tables for contemporary and historical bullets and other projectiles and a wealth of further information. Just as helpful is the 56-page glossary on ballistics, weapons and ammunitions in German, English and French, followed by a comprehensive bibliography and an index. The clearly structured book is absolutely reader friendly; it includes 234 instructive illustrations and 156 tables, which are very helpful to understand the text.

The English translation of the third edition meets all expectations not only with regard to contents, but also under linguistic aspects. In the last sentence of the preface, the editor Dr. Beat Kneubuehl mentions Prof. Dr. Karl Sellier (Bonn), the late author of the first edition of 1992, who is rightly regarded as a founder of modern wound ballistics. Sellier's legacy lives on in the third edition and its English translation. This book can be recommended without any reservations to all scientifically active forensic specialists and criminalists.