



Outdoors-Magazine.com

<http://outdoors-magazine.com>

Bark River Evolution 1

Sharpshooter

- Gear reviews and tests - Edged tools - Fixed blades -



Publication: Thursday 10 June 2004

Description :

Can the Bark River Knife and Tools' Evolution 1 Walk the Walk?

Copyright (c) Outdoors-Magazine.com under a Creative Commons

Attribution-Non-Commercial-Share Alike License

Bark River Evolution 1

The Mamba was Mike Stewart's first knife design, intended to fill his need for a knife that would truly be the "One Knife" to carry in the bush. The design is an update of the classical Greek Kopis which was a rare weapon during the Greek period but was regarded as a highly effective cutting tool and weapon. The Kopis is the basis of the design of the Kukuri which is used even today.

The old Mamba's are very hard to find and quite expensive, so Mike decided that his new company, Bark River Knife and Tool should commemorate the 25th anniversary of that design.

The Evolution 1 is .230" (5.84mm) thick A2 Tool Steel, perfectly convex ground to a razor edge, the rest of the dimensions: 15"(381mm) overall with a 9"(229mm) blade. Interestingly, the knife seems to change character dependant upon what you doing with it; for up close, precision cuts, one need only choke up on the blade and it gives you feedback like a Scandi blade; for chopping, the EVO works like a much larger blade. I can only attribute this to Mike achieving perfect balance, edge geometry and a handle shape that makes for an almost perfect interface.

I have a hunch that the majority of Evolution 1's will spend their lives in a drawer someplace, only to be fondled on rare occasions and then wiped carefully down with a bit of Renwax before being returned to the safety of a zippered case.

That's no way to treat a knife, most assuredly not the way to treat a Bark River Evolution 1, even if it is a commemorative; no Drawer Queens are allowed in my collection.

It certainly looks tough!



I needed to find out if the EVO can walk the walk so the ambidexterous Kydex sheath was lashed to the side of my Maxpedition Condor pack and headed into the woods for some fun and testing. After a while I found a fallen tree on a bit of highground and figured that this would be the spot where I would build my shelter were this to be a "survival situation".

The woods were almost a swamp after a week of thunderstorm after thunderstorm. Not far from where I decided to do my thing, Robin spotted a tree that have been very recently hit by lightning...



There were wood splinters 30-40 yards away from the tree, that must have been one heck of a boom when it was hit.

The first think I did was to try chopping off a 5" branch from the fallen tree... The Evo throws wood like a well tuned hatchet, chewing it's way thru the wood...



I actually had to stop to get the picture taken, after realizing the the cutting was going far quicker than I expected.

Bark River Evolution 1

Note how deeply the Evo buried itself into the birch branch with one swing; this thing certainly can chop. Robin took a turn and three or four swings later she was thru...



I'm pretty sure that this is in large part due to the blade shape, that recurve makes every swing cut like a long draw cut thru a steak. The wood just seems to open up for the convex edge and fly away as the blade comes to a stop.

With some firewood lined up, I figured it was time to do some backwoods construction; chopping down a couple of standing dead trees to make main poles for my shelter. Using the Evo 1 as an axe, I was more impressed by the swingability and effectiveness.



My favorite woodsbumming partner, Robin, was even more impressed by MY lumberjack skills as I dropped the first

Bark River Evolution 1

pole exactly where I told he it would fall, I missed the second one by about two feet (the wind shifted...)

I then used the Evo to chop out a few notches for the poles, cut up a few smaller branches and fit them to the rest making a framework for my shelter. Before I could finish up... the sky again began lighting up as another storm began rolling in; fortunately we had a choice and decided to head for the car and home.

Once home, I cleaned up the Evolution 1 and decided that it WILL stay lashed to my pack. This knife is a **SERIOUS** worker that's going to see a lot of woods time...



There's only one bad part of this story... Mike tells me that the Evo 1 will not be added to the Bark River Line-up. I already have one, but once the few remaining knives are gone, there will be no more. I'm going to have to hunt down another one for my son, because I know he'll eventually "Need" his own.