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Bark River Forager

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



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Description :

Bark River Forager is no longer produced, but it can be perfect knife for Bushcraft oriented hunter.

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Bark River Forager

I always admired hidden tang knives for feel in the handle never feeling need for full tang, because I am looking on knife as on cutting tool, and not as a pry bar.

On the other side, beside Nordic knives, I really like traditional North American hunting knives, like old Marbles, but somehow I never get used to handles on them, usually they are too short. Marble with hidden tang handle will be perfect but I couldn't get one.

From the first moment of introducing to Bark River Knife and Tools line of knives, I was fascinated with Mikes hidden tang series of knives, and luckily my first BRKT was test sample made on the Fieldsman frame, a short, 3" blade, on almost perfect implementation of small but really comfortable handle, almost ideal outdoors knife.

But I prefer for all around carry little bigger knives with tin blades, but since I got H1 from Fallkniven, and realised how thick convex blade can be sharp and useful, I wanted another knife to support that. Perfect knife for my wishes was Forager, a 4.5" bladed hunting knife, which Mike described in one tread on forum as perfect solution for big game hunter, who needs to split joints of deer for easier packing. Well that splitting joints combined with sharpness of convex bought me, but somehow I always postponed getting Forager, from different reasons.



Forager I got Forager I got in trade, with Amber stag bone handle is current knife in my wersion of Nessmuk setup, and it is perfect tool for something like that, although designet with other use in mind.

I was really hit when I find out at the start of year, that Forager wont be produced any longer, and that only his full tang twin brother will stay in production line. luckily I found one with antique stag bone handles available for trade, and after short negotiations and long wait period on postman it was mine.

Opening the box with it was a real joy, and I fell in love on the first look. Inside the box, was waiting perfect knife, even more perfect after I put my hands on it. It had really thick spine, but edge was thin and perfect, convexing all the

Bark River Forager

way from the spine in one smooth curve, and ending much thinner than stock Fallkniven H1, only other so thick knife I was pleased with. Blade cross section reminded me on another Fallkniven, F1, but it was even thinner, and perfect for my needs.

I am using all my knives, and I am thinking on them as users, so that was destiny of this one too. For me all knives should be cutting tools, and tools producing tools, so I want try to pry something, or to do Pushups suspending my self from the blade, but on the other side any blade must withstand usual, not so easy tasks like field quartering a caracas, or making fuzzy sticks. Of course most of knife time is spend in the kitchen, so one of the first task for the Forager was kitchen work.

Well somehow that same day I got beef head for lunch, and first task, with new arrival was splitting the jaw joint so that head can fit in my pressure cooker. That isn't the task on which I will like to try thinner knife, but Forager look like it can stand it, and after few minutes of work it was proved.



Mincing Mushrooms A lot of people will think that cutting something so soft as mushrooms isn't valid test for knife, but in my opinion cutting them fast in thin slices is very good test of knife dexterity, and balance. Any knife with poorly designed handle will fail this test.

Of course mincing vegetables is much more common task in kitchen, and after head was cooked I continued with preparing stew for lunch. Although thick, Forager did the perfect job on all vegetables, starting with carrots, continuing with onions and peppers, and finishing with Garlic and potatoes. It wasn't same as chisel ground santoku I usually use, but it finished job really fast, without feeling too thick, which I expected after H1 experience, and besides, I will never try to split that jaw joint with santoku.



Mincing Onions Onions are common vegetable in the kitchen, but because they are made in layers, and their hardness sharp knife is essential. They are also great test for suitability of knife for cooking, because they are pretty acidic, and stain knives easily. Although from Carbon steel, Forager passed this part of the test with flying colours.

But hunting knives are meant for hunting, and I wanted to use it as outdoorsman knife. So its ability to cut wood was important, and I used next weekend to try it in that regard. It is spring time, and most wood in forest is wet, so making fuzzy sticks is a must, if fire is needed. I tried with few branches, and Forager, as all other convex knives excel in making them. curls were perfect, and I rarely can do that from the beginning. Thanks to thinner blade behind the edge, I was able to make thinner shavings still attached to the branch than with H1 or F1, and I feel like I have more control. I have problem with making fuzzy sticks with scandi ground knives without convex, and curls were much easier to control with Forager.



Feather stick made by Forager Forager is just another proof how convex ground blades are efficient tools for making feather sticks.

Edge of the forager starts about 0.6" from the guard, but the guard is small, and the choil is little rounded, so very easy to put index finger right behind the edge, in perfect position for wood working. Of course tip of the blade is designed to be perfect for skinning, and other hunting tasks, so it isn't perfect bushcraft knife, but all woodcarving jobs except drilling were easy to accomplish. Scraping wood is also a great test of hardness and tempering of the blade, and cryo treated A2 on forager excelled in that regard too. After all molesting I subjected it to, it sharpened in just 5 strokes on leather strop mounted on small soft back drywall sanding block, which became my choice of sharpening device for outdoors.

Forager/ Gameskeeper frame is perfect size for outdoors knife for me, and I really hope that there will be more knife in the line of the same size.

When I make a sum at the end, Forager didn't disappoint me in any regard, and it was all I expected from it, and more than that. I will keep mine, and use it, Mike's warranty policy is great, and I feel safe to use my investment. Unluckily I don't think that there will be more than few Foragers for sale and if you can get it while you can, it will become as hard to get as Winchester 71 rifles, when someone gets his will never sell it..

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