



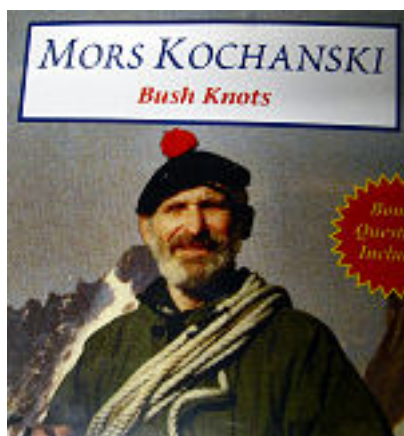
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Mors Kochanski, Bush Knots: a DVD.

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Description :

This review takes a look at Mors Kochanski's DVD, *Bush Knots*, from his Wilderness Skill Series of Videos.

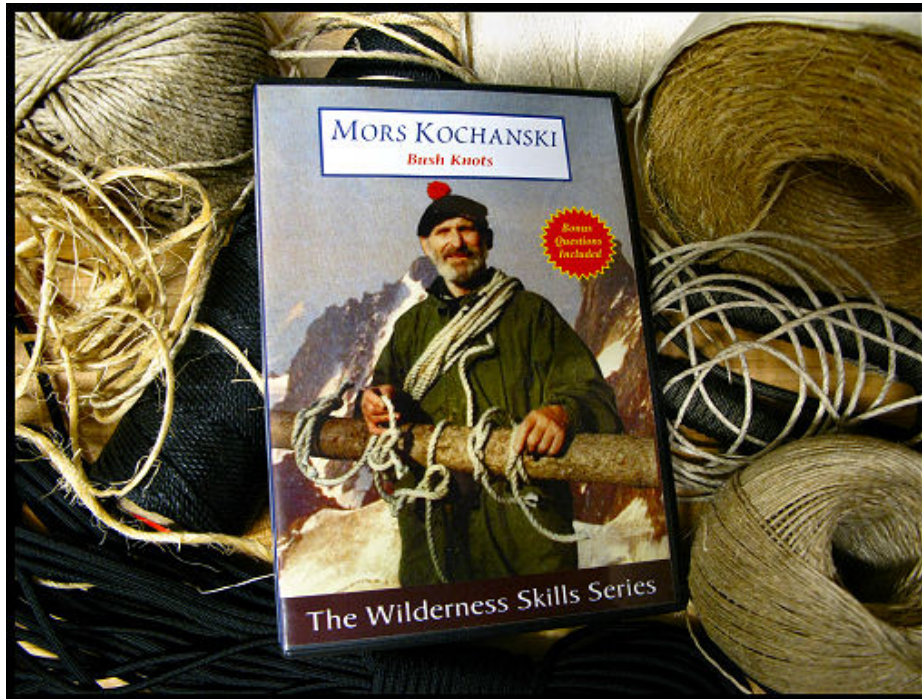
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First I want to thank Ben Piersma of Ben's Backwoods for the kind loan of this DVD for my review. Ben maintains an excellent website with many hard-to-find items of interest ranging from Arctic birch blocks to Zebra billy cans.

This is my first review of a video. Learning skills hands on is always easier than from books, a well done video presentation can ease some of the difficulties.

Recently I reviewed [16 Kochanski pamphlets](#) that augment *Bushcraft*, his main text on the subject. Each of these booklets provided some additional insight on some of the skills Mors teaches. The video series is also designed to focus on specific skills and their development.



Bush Knots

For this DVD review I will list the various knots presented with my description of them and comments on the clarity of instruction. My assessment of clarity will, of course, be within the context of my background for the skill (which I will try and convey).

So let's launch into this review of:

Bush Knots

This video like his pamphlet *Top Seven Bush Knots and the Use of the Windlass* covers material that is NOT presented in *Bushcraft*.

This DVD has these 16 scene selections:

1. Intro
2. Jam Knot
3. Constrictor
4. Apply Constrictor
5. Sheet Bend
6. Sheet Bend Family

7. Reef
8. Clothes Line
9. Taut Line Hitch
10. Figure Eight
11. Rope Making
12. Rope Making 2
13. Flip Flop Winch
14. Spanish Windlass
15. Wrap Up
16. Questions

Introduction

We find Mors outside seated at a canvas draped table, squinting into the full sun, trees and snow in the background, fingerless gloves, characteristic beret, red handled Mora around his neck, and from a box of cords and ropes beside him he launches into a brief discussion of various cordage materials useful in either bushcraft or survival situations.

Cord types are reviewed ranging from nylon kite string and paracord to heavier braided nylon rappelling line, polypropylene, synthetic sinew, linen cord, hemp, jute, sisal (baler twine), Manila hemp, baler cord (round hay bales), and even an immense towing hawser are shown.

The versatility of 7-strand paracord is covered well. He emphasizes the utility of the inner core, both the 3-strand twists (one of seven), the single strands untwisted from one of the inner strands, and the mantle itself. He recommends carrying 7-armspans of paracord.

Mors also briefly touches on a few other uses of the various cords including jute for firemaking, melted polypropylene used as a sealer, non-stretch linen as bowstring and round bale cord used as the raw material for ropemaking. Amusingly he refers to polypro rope as "*The Rope From Hell*"...I have to agree.

Jam Knot

My brief description This knot is used to bind crossed sticks. It begins with an overhand stopper knot, then a slip knot which is tied around the sticks. The slip knot is rolled to trap the tag end of the rope and form a loop. The knot is locked by passing the tag end through the loop forming a half hitch. Another separate jam knot is tied around the other legs of the sticks and the two are reef knotted together, trimmed and the nylon melt fused together.

Mors spends a good amount of time on this knot. He states it is of "*7/10's importance*", compared to all the other knots this one is the most important to learn. He begins the demo with the large braided nylon rope, shows an alternative beginning, reties and demonstrates the inversion to form the locking loop at least 4 times and clearly shows the parbuckle tightening direction that is important to getting the correct force applied to the sticks. He finishes making a rope making tool using paracord and mentions this binding knot is very useful for snowshoe making and stretcher building. He states its advantages are the short amount of string needed and its powerful force. He states that it is lumpy.

I have never tied a lash in this manner. I have used a slip knot start but generally carried the tag end of the rope repeatedly around the sticks to form a cross lash. I have never used the parbuckle tighten and lock loop Mors shows in this lash, nor applied a second knot to bring the sticks to a 90 degree lash position. I learned something with this demonstration and Mors made it very clear. I have no doubt that I can do this knot.

Constrictor Knot and Apply Constrictor

My brief description This is a flat binding knot that is a locking derivative of the clove hitch. A clove hitch is tied then the running end of one string is passed under the one of the loops to double capture the ends of the strings. Both ends are pulled putting massive force into the constriction.

Mors shows two methods to tie the constrictor. An S-loop which is slipped over the item to be bound, and the clove hitch wrap that is used when a loop cannot be passed over the ends of the item to be bound. It is a non-lumpy alternative to the jam knot but uses more string (at least for each knot). Again this is demonstrated on the large nylon rope then in the Apply Constrictor section he ties this with gutted paracord and crushes two sticks together with it.

The constrictor is one of my most used knots for leather work. Any braid that has cover knots and sometimes other terminator knots, I use a constrictor knot to bind the leather thongs prior to adding the decorative knots. It is an extremely useful and solid knot, easily tied and its flatness does not detract or show in the final braid. Mors clove hitch wrap method is the one I learned from **Ashley's Book of Knots**. I did not know how to tie this using the S-loop method. I am glad to have learned the S-loop start as that will be quite useful for many applications in my leather work. I think Mors again demonstrated this clearly.

Sheet Bend

My brief description Two lines joined together. The larger line has a bend forming a U, the smaller line is passed into the U, around and under itself.

Mors shows 3 ways to tie a sheet bend. The U method, an eye method and a rolled back slip knot method. He shows the common mistake making a thief knot. He discusses the usefulness of the slip knot method for tying off short pieces of cord and in very different rope thicknesses the double sheet bend (double loop for security). He demonstrates most of these with large colored rope.

I do not use a sheet bend much and was only familiar with the U method for joining two ropes. I had seen the eye method but never learned it in this context, but use it commonly with a single rope (bowline). I was unfamiliar with the slip knot method. Mors demonstrations are clear and if followed with rope while he ties should reinforce the correct outcome of the various methods. I particularly like the slip knot approach as I see its utility when short stubs of rope are being extended.

Sheet Bend Family

Here Mors shows a practical application of the slip knot method sheet bend using a grain sack. The bottom corners of the grain sack are used as cord in the sheet bend, a slip knot is passed over the corner of the grain sack and inverted into the clove hitch on each corner. A girth hitch is put around the sack top making a simple grain sack rucksack. He also shows the sheet bend around a tree the bowline, and his non-inverting slipperly version of that also.

Reef

My brief description The basic square knot.

Mors covers this with his larger rope. He shows the incorrectly tied thief knot and demonstrates how a reef used to join ropes fails over to a larks head. He demonstrates this as a bandage knot. The best part of this discussion is likely Mors pointing out the inappropriate use of a commonly used knot.

Clothes Line

My brief description A non-inverting slippery bowline is tied around one tree, then the clothes line is tensioned using a pulley method. A loop is tied in the rope that is used to form a pulley or two pulleys to tension the clothes line.

Mors demonstrates both ends of the clothes line with large diameter nylon rope. This pulley is demonstrated several times, again practicing along would be valuable.

I use a trucker's hitch, which is a derivate of his pulley method to tie my canoe to my bumper. It is a very useful tension knot and Mors demonstrates it well enough in this clothes line demo to learn it well. He shows multiple methods to neatly form the pulley eye allowing quick and clean removal from the trees.

Taut Line Hitch and other sliding hitches

My brief description A sliding knot used to tension a rope, for tent guy lines, climbing a vertical rope or for pulling on another rope (towing).

Mors again demonstrates this in large diameter nylon rope and in the similar application to the clothes line. He also shows the prusik and midshipman's knots.

A well done demonstration for knots I have used often.

Figure of Eight

My brief description An overhand knot derivative that is stronger and easier to untie.

Mors demonstrates the single figure eight, multiple turn figures of eight and discusses the utility as a stopper knot. He does not demonstrate the figure of eight on a loop, a knot I find very useful.

This knot that I know and use often is again clearly demonstrated in large diameter nylon.

Rope Making

My brief description "Machine made rope".

Here Mors uses a hand-cranked twister, a hook toggle swivel and a separator to make a nice section of 3 lay rope. He uses multiple passes of red baler twine to set up the machine then crank twists up the three strands. By moving the separator back towards the spinner machine the rope naturally twists. A nicely done demo.

Rope Making 2

My brief description "Wooden spinner made rope".

Here Mors uses a wooden spinner...much like a single blade on a shaft, to twist up multiple passes of red baler twine. Then by folding the material in the middle it twists up upon itself making a 2 lay rope. Another nicely done demo with an easier to make "machine".

Flip Flop Winch

My brief description Using two long poles a winding winch is made. The Flip Flop aspect of this comes from the flip and flop of the drum log so that the lever pole can always be winding the drum log in one direction.

Mors does a very commendable job of illustrating this winch. I read about this technique in his pamphlet ***Top Seven Bush Knots and the Use of the Windlass*** and have to admit I could not understand it. Seeing this technique demonstrated on the DVD makes it clear. I do think I would need to refer to the booklet in setting up this windlass but this video makes the setup obvious and points out several potential dangers and pitfalls. Mors moves a good sized frozen log with this windlass, its uses for stuck canoes and snowmobiles are mentioned and the power available using a non-elastic rope setup in this Flip Flop windlass is quite apparent.

Spanish Windlass

My brief description Again two poles are used as a windlass but the drum log is held vertically while the lever pole is rotated around it. Mors is again moving the same log, but it is definitely not as easy and you can hear him huffing and puffing to move that log. This technique is potentially easier and quicker to set up, but definitely much more difficult for a single person to use. He modified the Flip Flop setup by shortening the poles, but did not repeat the complete setup. Once again this windlass is clearly illustrated and highly useful to augment his written instructions.

Wrap Up

Mors briefly discusses the 7 families of knots just presented and encourages practice.

Questions

The DVD ends with 15 questions scrolling on the screen. I think I got them all right.

Overall

This DVD was quite well done. The production quality is high. The sound levels are very good and sound quality high. The video quality is high, the light varies a bit in parts but each of the knot demos is clear, in focus, and lit well.

It is all filmed outdoors in Alberta with about 2-3 inches of snow on the ground on a nice sunny day.

The skills are repeated enough times to solidify the skill, but not make the DVD tedious. Many of the knots are quite familiar and used by me, but I think that a knot novice could quite easily learn the techniques from the video, and that there is likely something new even to very experienced knot heads. I would say that the windlass demonstrations and the Jam knot made this DVD well worth watching for me. I can also see why many people who have taken

courses from Mors have so many positive things to say. His teaching manner is cool, calm and thorough.

Other Mors Kochanski reviews:

[Sticks as Tools and Implements: a DVD](#)

[His 16 Pamphlets](#)

[Just his knife text used to illustrate the Skookum Bush Tool](#)

[Bush Craft: Outdoor Skills and Wilderness Survival](#) by James

Resources

Bush Knots by Mors Kochanski, 118 minutes, Karamat Wilderness Ways, Filmed in Alberta copyright 2000, is available from [Ben's Backwoods](#) or directly from Karamat Wilderness Ways. It runs about \$29.

Amazon.com carries what is probably the most extensive knot text I have ever seen. Clifford Ashley's Book of Knots. This 1944, 640 page, several pound tome, that sells for a reasonable \$50 is an excellent resource.

[Ashley Book of Knots by Clifford Ashley](#) , Doubleday, 1944

Post-scriptum :

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