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The Search for the Ultimate Bushcraft Light

Sharpshooter

- Gear reviews and tests - Lamps and Lanterns -



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Description :

The AAA Led light for Bushcrafting.

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Flashlights are a too often ignored bit of Bushcrafting Kit.

Lighting up the night has been a basic need since early man. While I got into the game a bit later than the Neanderthals, it's been a long search for me as well.

It all began as a Boy Scout carrying a bright chrome Ray-O-Vac flashlight powered by two "D" cells that provided just about enough power to make a yellow beam for most of the weekend before they warned me of their impending death by dimly pulsing the bulb with an orange glow.

The next light was the Cadillac of flashlights, the "Official BSA Angle Head Flashlight". The olive green plastic body placed the head at a 90-degree angle, included a belt clip, carried a spare bulb in the cap as well as a set of different colored lenses. The replacement bulb came in handy every time I managed to drop the illuminated light, breaking the filament. Still powered by "D" cells, the life wasn't much longer, but it sure was cool.

As time passed, I discovered the Kel-Light, a SIX "D" cell behemoth, machined from steel. Adding a "Krypton Star" bulb certainly added to the brightness, but carrying a portable sun certainly has its drawbacks; in short the light qualifies classification as a crew served device.

On one camping trip, reading by the light of my Kel-Light I had an epiphany of sorts...

"The more you carry in your head, the less you carry on your back..."

Nessmuk's immortal words struck a chord and I spent the next several trips figuring out how to lighten my load. The first piece of gear to be reassigned was the Kel-Light, which found a home beside the front seat of my car; replaced with a new Maglight carrying three "C" cells. It was a good light although I never really warmed up to the little pushbutton switch and still limited run time. I wanted something smaller, lighter and longer lasting.

When Mag brought out the Mini Mag, I was quick to convert. It was small and light, but twisting the head to turn it on and then fussing with focusing quickly became a pain. The little bayonet base bulb never failed to fall out of the socket at the worst time and two "AA" batteries certainly didn't solve the run time issue. The toy like successor to the Mini just didn't inspire confidence, so I stuck with the Mini for a long time.

Then came the technological giant step for mankind; the Light Emitting Diode. LEDs don't rely on easily broken filaments and draw small enough current levels that the designers can make small efficient lights. I have a drawer full of failed designs, burned out LEDs, broken switches, obsolete batteries and just pieces of junk.

I wanted a efficient, reliable light in a small enough package that it would always be with me and used readily available batteries so I wouldn't end up buying some cheap replacement when the specialized battery died in Middle of Nowhere, South Dakota.

I believed that I had found it with the ARC AAA light.

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It was a bit difficult actually buying an ARC light with a dealer network that dried up like a swamp in the summertime, followed by unending back orders on the ARC webpage.

When I finally received the light I was pleasantly surprised by the first rate package. The light itself is tiny, machined from solid aluminum, finely knurled with a tab on the back for attachment to a key ring.



Opened

When I first turned the light on, I was blinded by the brightness of the LED, it looked to me like I was on to something deserving some serious testing.

Arc claimed the "AAA" to be waterproof to 30', I believe it after dropping it into a bucket of water and leaving it soak for an hour. It continued to glow brightly and was dry inside after the test. The light was dropped more times than I

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would like to admit, even surviving a few tosses while turned on. The anodized finish doesn't even show any wear from contact with concrete or the rest of the stuff in my pocket. This is a tough little light.

Brightness isn't something I can easily measure other than to say that it's VERY BRIGHT. The light is brighter than the CMG Infinity Ultra I carry in my pack and in a much smaller package with none of splotches or dead spots I have come to expect from LED lights.



I really liked this light, so much in fact that I stretched out the firesteel loop on my North Star sheath to carry it.

I was ready to order a few more ARC Lights, looking at the AA version as well as the high tech version; unfortunately just days after I wrote this review ARC shut it's doors.

Not being the sort to quit mid-stream, the search resumed, taking me to [Peak LED Solutions](#). The Peak Matterhorn is another AAA powered Mini-Light, available in a number of different finishes and get this... A THREE LED HEAD.



The size is just a bit longer than the ARC which actually is a good thing as it better fits a "Firesteel Loop" with the

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slightly larger head serving quite well as a stop, keeping the light from sliding out the bottom of the sheath.



I've been quite impressed with my test sample, a black anodized three LED model. Immediately after receiving the sample, I powered it up, promptly dropped it into a bottle of water and pressurized the bottle to about 10psi. The Peak Matterhorn stayed on underwater while I unscientifically checked the run time.



About 30 minutes in the bottle

Run time is another concern for me, even with the easily available "AAA" batteries. My test is simple: turn it on and wait for it to go out. The light continued to glow brightly for about 2 hours before being noticeable dimmer, about half as bright. It took almost 9 hours for the light to become uselessly dim. The cool and important part is that it would still

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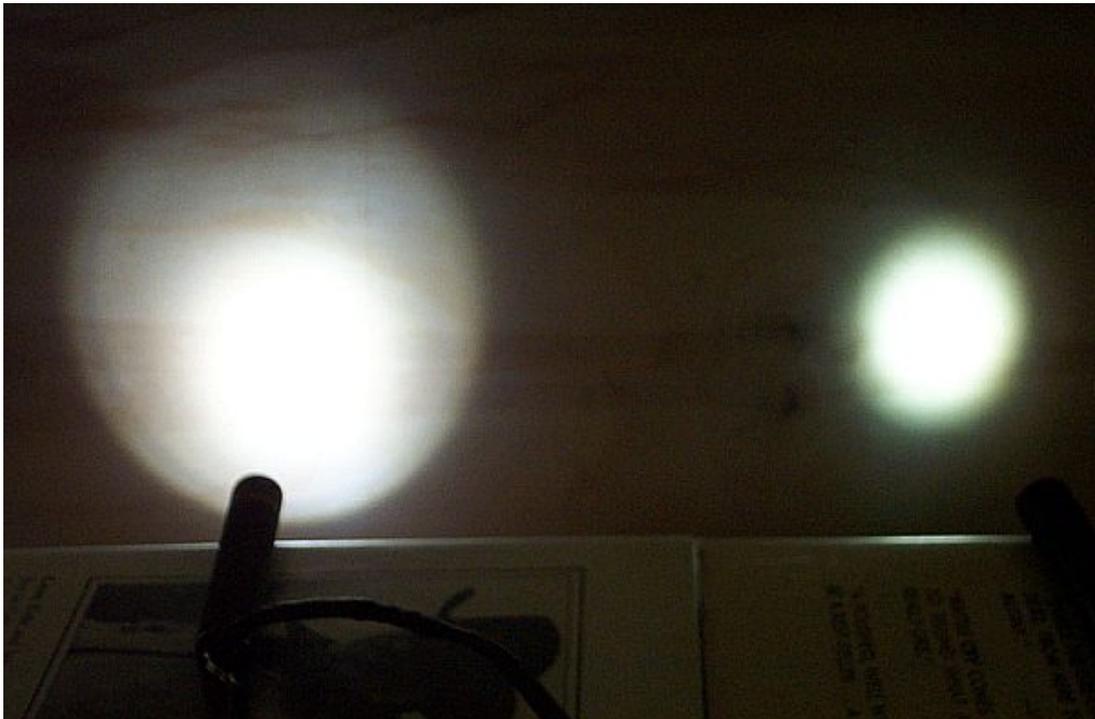
power up even when almost dead.



After a two hour swim.

The dimmer light is still sufficient to light up the trail to prevent stumbling while responding to a late night call of nature, find dropped objects on the ground or to dig into my backpack to find a fresh battery.

The actual beam is much more a spot than the flood from the ARC.



The "Spot" works better for me in the woods, the "backsplash" of light from the ARC seems to wipe out my night vision more quickly than the controlled spot of the Peak and it projects the useful light over a slightly greater distance. That's important on a dark trail or when looking into a cave.

Having carried this light for a week I still haven't found anything to not like. Even the finish works well, surviving a brake fluid shower and coming out unscathed.

