

SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

RELY ON PATHFINDER KNIFE SHOP'S
SCORPION FOR HARD BUSHCRAFT USE

STORY BY JOSHUA SWANAGON
PHOTOS BY TANNER SWANAGON AND JOSHUA SWANAGON

THERE'S a lot that can be said for experience, and Dave Canterbury is the perfect example.

Drawing from his experience and training in outdoor survival, Canterbury started the Pathfinder School, which eventually led to Self Reliance Outfitters — a one-stop resource for hand-selected survival and camping gear. So, it would only make sense that the Pathfinder Knife Shop would follow to round out Canterbury's offerings.





The Scorpion slid right through smaller logs to make kindling.



A nice start to the author's tinder pile

No survival kit is complete without a good knife, and Pathfinder Knife Shop has been offering some great entries into this field. Its newest product is the Scorpion, a hardy, mid-sized bushcrafting knife with hard use in mind. The Scorpion is a solid workhorse with simple elegance and style at an affordable price point.

Sheath

I am not a personal fan of dangler sheaths, so when I saw its fixed belt loop, I was really happy about this more-traditional styling. The sheath features high-quality, thick, brown leather with white stitching, setting the Scorpion in the right direction for me. Because of the sheath's first-class construction, I feel it will last as long as the knife itself, and will only look and feel better as it breaks in over time.

Scales

When I drew the Scorpion from its sheath for the first time, I noticed its black Micarta with red trace scales. The red trace makes the scales look brown, with a



1 Roughing out the point for a stake.



2 Refining the stake point



3 The author used a baton to create the start of the stake notch.



4 Carving out the notch for the stake



5 The completed stake in use

very nice woodgrain look. I thought this was a great touch: the classic style of wood with the longevity of Micarta.

The Scorpion felt a little squared and blocky to me when I picked it up for the first time, as if it was designed for someone with very large hands. I wouldn't have minded a bit more of an ergonomic design for a more comfortable fit, added comfort and decreased fatigue during extended use. Nevertheless, the fit isn't bad enough to be overly uncomfortable or unwieldy.

Blade

The Scorpion lists as a scandi grind, but I would consider it more of a modified scandi due to the slight secondary bevel. It isn't pronounced, but the primary bevel doesn't continue all the way to the cutting edge. Rather, it begins a slight curving to

SPECIFICATIONS

MATERIAL: 3/8-inch 1095 high-carbon steel with 90-degree spine

OVERALL LENGTH: 9 inches

BLADE: 4 1/4 inches; blued

HANDLE MATERIAL: Black Micarta with red trace

GRIND: Scandi

WEIGHT: 6.7 ounces

SHEATH: Leather or Kydex

KNIFE MANUFACTURER: Pathfinder Knife Shop (PKS)

Lifetime warranty on the blade

MSRP: \$99.95

"... HAD ENOUGH WEIGHT TO USE IT IN A CHOPPING MOTION TO ROUGH OUT THE POINTS BEFORE GETTING MORE DETAILED AND WHITTLING THEM TO FINER POINTS"



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The author was able to carve a decent "try stick" in about an hour.

Mors Kochanski, of Saskatchewan, Canada, is a wilderness survival and bushcraft expert and instructor with a global following. Kochanski has authored many wilderness survival and bushcrafting books and developed the "try stick," a method of practicing knife skills and various carving styles used in typical camp settings and bushcrafting.



The author got a clean cut on this half-inch climbing rope.

include a convex grind at the primary edge. I was actually kind of glad to see this — although I do like scandi grinds, I tend to make this same modification to any of my knives that feature full scandi grinds for added strength during hard-use tasks while still maintaining the benefits of the thinner primary bevel.

The Scorpion is a workhorse. It uses 0.125-inch-thick 1095 high-carbon steel with a 90-degree spine and has an overall length of 9 inches. Its blade measures 4.25 inches and features a blued finish that wears well and looks great.

Profile

The Scorpion's tip centers very nicely, with a natural grip that is a result of its

slight angle and the almost indistinguishable drop point. Due to the thickness of the scales toward the butt, the balance is just behind the index finger, which gives it more weight in the hand than on the blade.

Although it is a matter of personal preference, I wouldn't have minded the balance point being slightly more forward — at the index finger — which would have given it a livelier feel. In addition, it would put a little more of the work on the blade and less on the hand.

Function

Of course, no knife can be properly reviewed straight out of the box. The only way to truly know how it will perform is to get it out into the field and give it some

solid use. I was quite happy with the Scorpion's performance for all tasks I put it through.

Bushcrafting

During camp setup, I used the Scorpion for many and various tasks, such as clearing small limbs out of the way, among many others. The most common chore I usually take care of during setup is making stakes for my tarp and hammock. I don't like to carry stakes in with me, because they make for unnecessary extra weight. As a result, I make them when I arrive at my destination.

Because my son accompanied me on this trip, I had to make the stakes for both of our hammocks and tarps — a total of 12

stakes. The Scorpion had enough weight to use it in a chopping motion to rough out the points before getting more detailed and whittling them to finer points. I was then able to use a light baton to start the groove for my notches. Thanks to the Scorpion's versatility, I was able to get the 12 stakes done in roughly half an hour.

Another good test of any bushcrafting knife is the Mors Kochanski "try stick" because of the different methods of cutting required in bushcrafting. The Scorpion's modified scandi grind really created smooth cuts and made for short work on the try stick; in fact, I was able to complete the entire stick in about an hour.

The knife's thicker handle scales did feel a little big in my hand during this

phase of testing and were a touch on the uncomfortable side. And although I could feel slight fatigue during extended use, I did not develop any hot spots.

Fire Prep

With a little light batoning of some smaller, pre-cut limbs, I was quickly able to produce a nice pile of kindling needed for the next few days. The Scorpion's 4.25-inch blade allowed me to process some fairly decent-sized pieces, thereby cutting down on initial prep work.

Once I had my kindling, I was able to pull a few pieces out of the pile and begin work on a tinder pile (similar to a "fuzz stick." However, I like to make a pile instead of a stick so I can use what I need and save the rest for a future fire). I was able to get a very good pile of tinder with very little effort.

I then used the Scorpion's 90-degree spine to get a good strike from a ferro rod. I generally prefer to use a dedicated ferro rod striker for safety reasons, but if a dedicated striker is not available, the Scorpion will work well.

General Tasks

During this trip, the Scorpion came out of its sheath for more tasks than I can remember — cutting cord, opening packets and a plethora of general camp chores among them. I was very happy with its performance and eventually almost for-

got I was reviewing it, because it easily fit into my own set of camp tools.

I didn't have any rope with me on this trip, so when I returned home, I performed my rope press cut test on some half-inch climbing rope. I pressed the Scorpion through the rope to see how well it cut. It performed admirably, slicing right through the rope with only a little pressure on its spine.

Accessible and Work Ready

When I first received the Scorpion, I was immediately impressed with its subtle beauty: great lines, beautiful layering in the Micarta scales and simple, yet functional and durable sheath. I couldn't wait to get it out into the field. And once there, I wasn't disappointed.

I mentioned the thickness of the Scorpion's scales earlier, but they won't stop me from keeping this knife in the most-used portion of my collection. I will definitely be taking it into the field for plenty more use in the future.

The Scorpion was very comfortable on my waist because of its overall length of 9 inches and a weight of 6.7 ounces. It was easily accessible and ready to work.

If you are in the market for a great bushcrafting knife in the 4- to 4.5-inch range, I recommend the Scorpion. It is obvious that a lot of thought and experience went into its design and manufacturing. With a price point of only \$99.95, its quality far exceeds its cost. **KI**