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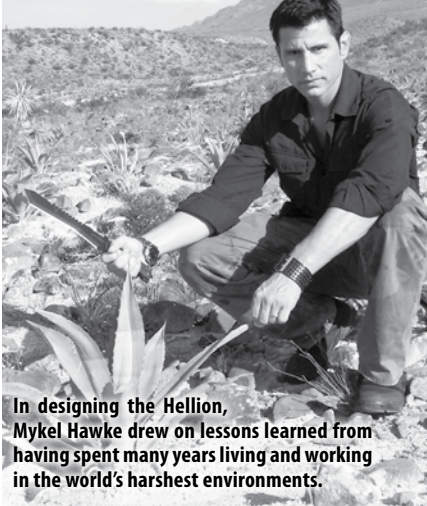
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SURVIVAL BLADE

Hawke's HELLION

Special Forces born and bred! TOPS' new monster hacker will get you through Green Hell and back again to tell about it!

BY BRIAN GRIFFIN



In designing the Hellion, Mykel Hawke drew on lessons learned from having spent many years living and working in the world's harshest environments.

Major Mykel Hawke is a 24-year veteran of the U.S. Army Special Forces. As an enlisted man he served as a Special Forces medic in communications and in intelligence operations. Two of the positions he has held as an officer were medical services officer and Special Forces commander. Mykel has spent years living and working in some of the world's more interesting and hostile places, or "good

ballparks," as he refers to them. He spent almost two years in the rainforests of Latin America, nearly two years in the harsh desert scrub and mountains of the Middle East, a year and a half in the tropics of Haiti, a year in a hot spot in Eastern Europe, six months on the continent of Africa, and has pulled duty in the Orient. In looking over his service history, it becomes clear that the man definitely has a firm grasp on just what

it takes to survive in the world's harshest environments. Which brings us to the new TOPS Hawke Hellion survival knife!

Battle Ready

My first out-of-the-box observation was that the Kydex-lined nylon sheath was designed to be very soldier-friendly. The belt loop was wide enough to slide over a standard-issue pistol belt with no disassembly required. The back



The spine's two rows of teeth formed by the opposing angles tear through bark, wood, and bamboo with vicious efficiency, and yet the Hellion is still made so that you can hold the blade in a pinch grip when doing more detailed work with the tip.



The handle of Hawke's Hellion does sport TOPS' excellent fit and finish, smooth flowing contours, and well rounded edges, but don't let it fool you because it's definitely not just another pretty handle. This handle is all business.



The Hellion is an enigma in that it is a fixed bladed, chopping, cutting, survival multi-tool on a relatively large scale. Having a combined total of 12 inches of plain edge cutting area, 3.5 inches of very functional saw teeth, a long stout blade, the strength of a full tang design, with a bow drill divot, built in hammer, and pommel spike, it puts a lot of ability at the user's disposal in one easily manageable package.



When it comes to surviving in the wilderness, the Hellion definitely brings a lot of capability to the field. From building shelter, to making traps, tools, and weapons for harvesting game, to starting a fire to cook it on and boiling your water, to making pots and skewers to cook with, to bowls and utensils to eat with, to making water filtration and collection systems so you can stay hydrated, the Hellion has all the bases covered.



The first thing I wanted to see when I got this knife in hand was just how well it could handle some finer cutting. With the total control offered by the positive grip and the razor-sharp whittling edge, the fine, tight little curls just rolled down the stick with little effort.



The obtuse "V" notch formed by the re-angle of the blade makes a sweet spot for heavier whittling. Using this notch, I was able to quickly sharpen some heavy stakes to construct a windbreak for my shelter.

of the sheath was set up for use with the MOLLE system and had two sets of eyelets, one set at each end, for other attachment options. The pouch on the front of the sheath has an expandable opening and is plenty large enough to pack along some extra gear. The pouch cover was secured with a side-squeeze quick release buckle, and a Velcro fastening nylon cinch strap. The knife itself is secured in the sheath via dual Velcro fastening retention straps.

The next thing I noticed before drawing the knife from the sheath was that it has a very positive grip. The depth of the first finger-groove functions much like a sub-hilt, but without being so long as to get in the way. Upon drawing the blade, I finally got to see in person the unique blade shape that I had been waiting on ever since it first appeared on the TOPS website some weeks back. Just looking at this blade, it is immediately obvious that normal aesthetics were cast aside, or more likely never even considered, as the knife was designed from tip to pommel from a purely "functional-in-the-field" perspective.

Overall the knife is 14.75 inches long and made of 3/16-inch 5160 hi-carbon steel that's hardened to an edge-retaining RC 56-58, and protected by a black traction epoxy hybrid powder coat. The handle is made of black canvas Micarta over red liners, has dual holes at the pommel end for multiple lanyard options, and it has a divot on one side for use with a fire bow. The blade itself is 9 inches in length and has a very distinctive, modified clip-point, tanto shape on which the primary edge runs into a secondary, creating a re-angle rather than a re-curve. There are five separate edges in all for a combined total of one foot of plain-edge cutting surface on the 9-inch blade, and with all of them being simple straight lines, field maintenance with a flat stone has been greatly simplified. Behind the 3 inches of sharpened upper edge, the spine also boasts 3.5 inches of heavy-duty saw, and between the saw and the upper guard there is a 2.25-inch section of flat spine for thumb placement for better control in detailed cutting and whittling. The knife definitely looks like it is made for business from one end to the other; time to get it in the field and get better acquainted with this beast.

Field Testing

Looking at the knife, I had no doubts there was chopping power at the ready, so I was at first more curious as to how "the whittling-edge" would handle finer cutting. The first order of business was to break off a dead pine limb and find out. At nearly 15 inches overall, it is a rather large knife that naturally doesn't handle like your favorite "bushcraft" knife; even so, whittling was no problem at all. I made fuzz sticks of dead white pine, some red cedar, and even some



The saw spine on this knife is a terrific and very well thought out feature. The teeth are alternately angled in the opposite direction, which creates two rows of cutting points that tear through bark, wood and bamboo very efficiently.



The incising point is a strong tip made at such an angle as to take a lot of abuse in the field, but it is still sharp enough to handle boring small holes for an improvised water filter. The saw, while being very efficient at tearing through bark, wood, and bamboo, is actually machined so that you can hold the knife blade in a pinch grip for more control without hurting yourself in the process.

black birch, and all were fine for tinder. The finger notch really does add leverage and control and the angled edge just rolls up the curls. My curiosity satisfied, it was on to more fun.

Sporting 9 inches of naked steel, the Hellion is blade heavy to start with, but add to that the forward weight distribution created by the 17-degree offset drop of the re-angled blade, and you have chopping power aplenty. Striking with the sweet spot just to the rear of the secondary point made taking 1.5-inch and 2-inch-diameter saplings down a breeze and chopping through 3-inch diameter bamboo very easy. The re-angle forms another sweet spot that works really well for whittling points on larger saplings for stakes. The long blade length really comes in handy when using the knife to baton larger diameter limbs for kindling, mak-



Whatever the task at hand, the Hellion's multiple edges give you a very wide range of cutting abilities. In hardwood, softwood, and bamboo it handled all of the chopping, splitting, whittling, carving, and troughing needed to make the tools, weapons and utensils you see here.



Whether for warmth, light, to cook food, purify drinking water, or even make a signal fire, being able to create flames in a wilderness environment is often a prerequisite to staying alive. With the size and strength for splitting logs, the spindle divot in the handle, the supplied thigh strap that is a meter of parachute cord, and multiple edges for carving, notching, and whittling, Hawke's Hellion gives you everything you need to make friction fire with a bow drill when no other options are left. Or, if you're like me, you may just do it for the fun of it.

ing flat planks to use as shingles, cutting boards, or a hearth board for fire bows.

I need to add that TOPS did a great job on the heat treat and tempering. At one point while splitting off boards from a large, knotty cedar log, the knife was wedged in a bind. There was so much pressure on the blade that it had a slight radius to it, but I drove the knife on through and the end result of my efforts was two flat boards for hearths and only a few scratches in the coating.

The tip, or "incising" point, is a stout one and will definitely hold up to some emergency digging and gouging. It did really well for boring small holes for an improvised water filter, and did a great job in starting the hole for the spindle in the hearth boards. On the spine immediately behind the tip, there is the last section of plain edge that serves as a back-up edge should you damage the primary one.



The length, full tang design, and great temper of the 5160 blade did really well with batoning and splitting. It handled being beaten through this knotty section of cedar log with no ill effects at all, and in no time I had a nice, flat plank to use for a hearth board, and plenty of kindling for the fire.

Sawing It Through

The saw-toothed spine of the Hellion is big and beefy to hold up to some hard use and is ground at alternately opposing angles to make two rows of cutting teeth that tear through wood and bamboo very efficiently. This makes it possible to quickly clean-cut the ends of bamboo cells, saw through small limbs, and rapidly make grooves and notches in wood. On the other hand, they are still large and flat enough on top that you can push on the spine with the thumb of your weak hand for more control when whittling without injuring yourself doing it.

The handle of the knife has three really nice features. There is a flat spot on the lower side of the pommel, which is meant to be used as a hammer, and I found this feature particularly helpful for cracking open the hard shells of crustaceans. On the very end of the pommel there is a



Another nice feature of the handle is the built-in hammer. This feature makes it possible to crack small objects like nuts and shells without as much risk of injury as when doing the same tasks using the spine of the knife. I found this feature particularly useful for cracking open the hard exoskeletons of crustaceans.

The Hellion is well appointed for dealing with fire starting and in-the-field maintenance. The expandable pouch on the sheath is large enough to pack along your favorite small sharpening tool, as well as your favorite compact fire-starting systems. For example, it will easily hold a diamond/ceramic sharpening stone in its 2-inch x 5-inch x 0.5-inch pouch, a 4-inch match safe with 1-inch diameter, a 3/8-inch ferro rod, and still have room to shove in some extra cordage and tinder. At the same time the knife itself is well equipped for starting fires using the more primitive methods, should the need arise. The handle has a divot for use with the spindle of a bow drill, and the supplied thigh strap makes an excellent bow string.

spike—perfect for breaking glass. Last, but not least, there is a divot in the side of the handle so the knife can also serve as a bearing block for the spindle of a fire bow. Personally, I think this is a great feature on any knife designed for survival in the wilderness because it means that there is one less part that has to be made, and therefore, less time taken when using a bow drill to start a fire. This is great because in a wilderness survival situation every minute, every calorie, and every drop of sweat counts. I know I certainly liked being able to start multiple fires without having to take the time to fashion a bearing block.

I have to say that this has been one of those good weeks when my nagging curiosity was answered with very pleasant results. In the end, looking around at all I had done and all the things I had made, I was left with a great appreciation for an awesome tool and a fantastic example of out-of-the box thinking at its best. TK

For More Information

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