

The BADFEATHER Solution

"Raider Creek" Knife
A Unique Design

BY FRANK KARL





The Raider Creek's blade can be locked in place at any point between fully open and fully closed – such as a barely-there position suitable for opening packages.

The “Raider Creek” is Badfeather Knives' solution to the problems with fixed blades.

What problems? I'll get to that. Let's first look at the advantages of a fixed blade.

Fixed blades are incredibly strong. I've never heard any folding knife company boast that their pivot and lock are as strong or stronger than a fixed blade. If you are careful, and apply pressure solely to the blade, you can pry with a folder. Carefully work with the solid steel blade, and you can baton small wood sections into kindling with a folder. Fixed blades perform these tasks without complications.

Anything that applies torque to a folder or bends the handle sideways stresses the weak points, its pivot and lock. This is not a new problem. A great many knife designs have been created to solve this problem, such as Billings Sportsman's and later their Improved Sportsman's Knife in the late 1890s (see Knife Magazine, May 2020).

The advantages of a folder are in its name: the knife folds. A folding knife is easy and convenient to carry, hence the name, pocket knife. It is a truism that even a poor tool in your pocket is better than a great tool a hundred yards away.

But fixed blades aren't without their problems. You need a sheath to protect yourself from the blade. Most fixed blades hang from your belt. These typically get in your way when seated, using seat belts, and can be obvious to the general public.

Yes, there are some excellent small fixed blade knives designed to clip, drop into, or pin into your pocket. Here lies their second problem: You need to retain and protect the sheath when it's not on the knife. Losing the sheath makes the fixed blade knife significantly more difficult to carry and therefore, less useful. They are called sheath knives for a reason.

Dan Vorhis asked himself, “What if the sheath couldn't be separated from the knife? What if you could clip it into a pocket so that the size and shape would anchor it until you needed it?” His answer is the Raider Creek, a three-inch fixed blade knife with a four-inch sheath that slides up and becomes its handle. Pretty slick, Dan!

The sheath is four inches long and incorporates an adjustable friction lock, allowing you to vary the blade length from just



In the closed position, the blade's tang extends outside the handle while the blade remains safely inside. Note the pocket clip; it isn't spring-loaded, but the weight distribution and size kept the knife secure in testing.

the point to the full three inches.

Vorhis spent his childhood camping, hiking, canoeing, fishing, and developing a deep love of the wild outdoors. He utilized his passion by designing innovative camping gear for the MSR Outdoor Gear Company. For the last 30 years Dan has also been farming a small orchard on Whidbey Island, Washington State. During all those years, he grappled with ideas about how outdoor and camping equipment, especial-

ly knives, should work. Inspired by these ideas, he and his wife formed Badfeather Knives. The unusual name derives from the nickname of a tough feathered bird, that despite problems, always managed to get airborne.

Dan came up with several design concepts, but this knife best fit his ideas of simplicity and durability. He named it after one of his favorite hiking trails, Raider Creek. Other companies were interested

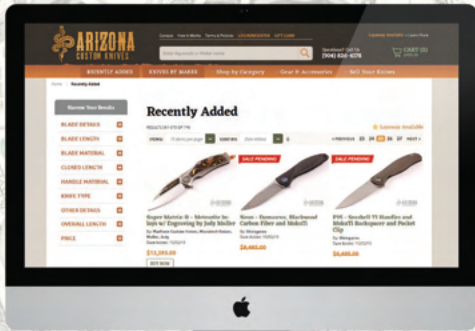
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The Raider Creek, fully disassembled. The knife's design is well thought out, and the components can only go together one way.

in his design, but Dan flatly says, "I didn't want to give up control of the quality aspect." Raider Creek reflects his ethic.

I asked Dan about his choice of steel. "I wanted to launch Badfeather's first knife

with premium materials, and I wanted an excellent stainless steel for the blade and tang," he told me. "CPM-S35VN has a nice balance of corrosion resistance, toughness, and edge holding for a stainless steel, and is cooperative on the production side."

The Raider Creek blade is a 7-inch steel bar of CPM-S35VN steel. In addition to iron, the alloy includes four important elements: 1.4% carbon, 14% chromium, 3% vanadium, and a touch of niobium. These elements form small hard grains of carbides in the iron matrix. The carbides are essential in conferring the desirable physical properties needed in a blade. The steel has a R(c) value of 59 to 61 and has significantly improved edge retention and wear properties. The powder metal process gives the steel a fine grain and excellent uniformity of properties. These contribute to the exceptional performance this steel provides the user.

The sheath or handle is a two-piece, laser-welded sleeve of titanium alloy. It is cool to the touch, and fine diamond-shaped texturing provides grip. The pocket clip is a portion of the blade's tang, and I didn't find it uncomfortable during use.

The CPM-S35VN blade is a high shoulder, flat saber grind with a drop point. This is one of the more useful blade configurations. The titanium handle slides forward on the full tang and becomes the blade's sheath. A clever friction clutch locks the handle wherever you want it. The tang has a hefty pocket clip that anchors the closed knife in your pocket or pack. The friction clutch is simple and effective. You can confidently expose all the blade or just an inch of it. The clutch's simplicity allows you to adjust the locking tension or disassemble for cleaning.

The knife comes with instructions for disassembly, and you don't need any tools.

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Photo at top shows the front side of the knife. The pivoting clutch that secures the blade is clamped down. The knife did everything it was called upon to do.

Dan has cleverly built a magnet into the titanium handle to help retain the components during disassembly. Like all good designs, the five components can only go together one way, making assembly easy as pie.

I cleaned mine of dirt and debris I picked up working with it by rinsing the knife out with water and WD-40, followed by a wipe down with a clean rag.

Dan knows from experience that wear is an inescapable fact. The clutch design al-

lows you to compensate for wear and adjust the locking tension on the blade. It also makes for simple replacement with available blades should you damage or sharpen the blade beyond its useful life. Most of us will pass the original blade down to our heirs.

I used my Raider Creek for all my typical cutting jobs. I cut rope, opened sacks of mulch, removed flaps from cardboard boxes. Later, rushing to get my chores caught up, I turned the Raider Creek on my rose

bushes, deadheading the old blooms and removing dead stems. It performed fabulously.

My benchmark for performance is cutting 'feather sticks' to build a fire. In my experience, turning sticks into kindling is the mark of an outdoor person. I walked around my property and picked up fallen branches. Spreading my red kerchief to catch escaping wood shavings, I went to work. Soon, I had a pile of shavings and feather sticks to build a fire. I didn't, only because it was 90 degrees in the shade and my neighbors would be easily alarmed.

I was initially worried the knife would slip out of my pocket. Its clip isn't spring-loaded, but the weight distribution and size kept my Raider Creek in my deep pocket. I'd worry a lot more with shallow pockets. Perhaps the only two alterations I would suggest would be altering the clip and adding a lanyard hole. I like the security a lanyard gives you in adverse conditions.

I didn't find anything I couldn't do with the Raider Creek. It's not a dress knife. I wouldn't expect to see it with Sunday dress and office work clothing. But it wouldn't surprise me to find it in someone's pocket at the church picnic or the office golf outing.

You can get yours at Badfeatherknives.com, or by calling 360-331-5242 (PDT/PST). The list price is \$298 and if you somehow manage to lose the three small locking components, you can find replacements at the website. I like the Raider Creek, and I know it will find a place with my everyday carry blades. So will you. □



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