

BITE-SIZED SURVIVAL



PHOTO CAP HERE

ESEE KNIVES' CANDIRU—THE ULTIMATE PETIT JUNGLE BLADE!

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Don't pee in the water" was one of the first things I learned when it came to safety in the Amazon River back in 2007. Reason being, the dreaded candiru. The TV series *River Monsters* has dubbed the candiru as "The Amazon's Most Feared Fish." Legend says that if one were to pee in the river, the urine would attract this little creature causing it to swim up and get lodged in the urethra thereby requiring surgery to have it removed. In reality, the catfish have more to fear than us humans. The candiru feeds off the catfish much like a leech, attaching itself deep inside the opening on the gills after being lured in by the urine of the fish. Once inside, it uses its barbs to hold on and proceeds to feed. The whole mystic nature of the candiru sounds like another Amazon River tale, like so many I've heard over the years, but I don't think any of us relieved ourselves while waist deep in the tributaries or streams we came across. As if sharks, caimans, and piranhas weren't enough reason for people to be afraid of the water, now add the candiru!

ESEE Knives owners Mike Perrin and Jeff Randall have their roots as being survival instructors in South America, specializing in a jungle environment, before adding knife designing to their list of accomplishments. ESEE Knives isn't a company that comes out with a new knife very often, but when they do it really hits home with their fans and attracts a new cult-like following.

Practical Companion

To some people, a loyal companion is a trusty K9 or spouse, while to others, it's a sharp piece of steel some place deep in the bush. The overall length of the Candiru is 5.13 inches with a 2-inch cutting edge of 1095 high carbon steel (55-57 Rc). With a thickness of 0.125 inches (thinner than their best seller, the IZULA), the Candiru is less than 2 ounces, without the sheath. The knife comes with a baked on powder coating in black, desert tan, and OD green. The scales for the Candiru are orange canvas Micarta. The sheath, at the time of this review, was a simple ambidextrous black Cordura sheath with a fold-over closure attached via Velcro. There is a belt loop for attaching to any webbing or belt that will fit it. Simple and light, that's my style. I believe an upgraded sheath is in the making. Suggested retail runs around \$82 for the bare steel knife and a little extra for the various Micarta handle options.

As I was reading an old book on woodcraft by Horace Kephart, I came across a passage where he said it best about fixed blades: "I like a small sheath knife. It is always open and 'get-at-able,' ready not only for skinning game and cleaning fish, but for cutting sticks, slicing bread and bacon, and peeling 'spuds.' It saves the pocket knife from wet and messy work, and preserves its edge for the fine jobs." This is true and for that reason, I used the ESEE Candiru for much my dirtier work in the jungle.





Jungle woodcraft with the Candiru was another reason a thin, sharp knife is an asset to the group. Making fire sticks out of damp wood is a must in making a jungle fire, as is a sharp knife.



Cleaning a chicken in the jungle is a messy affair, but done with a small knife rather than chopping the head off, the blood can be saved and cooked later. The Candiru made a clean, controlled cut making for easier work.



For detailed sharpening tasks, like making the prongs of a spear, the Candiru was the obvious choice. Getting into those hard to reach places was easy with the Candiru.

One of the first tasks performed by the Candiru was to make a frog/fish spear out of a green sapling. This was a 6-foot poking and prodding gig rather than a throwing spear. This simple spear required only a thin, sharp tool to make it by splitting the sapling down the middle in four ways, then inserting two small green sticks in the splits by slowly rolling them down into the splits, rather than pulling down. The prongs were then individually sharpened once they were splayed outward. Due to the small blade length, the Candiru aced this task, easily getting in between the wood prongs.

Sometimes it takes a group effort to get a sustainable fire in a rainforest. The Candiru helped out with making kindling by shaving semi-dry sticks down to a nice feathery shape to put in the communal pile. Not since the ESEE 3 (or RC 3) has Rowen manufactured a knife with a 1/8-inch-thickness. I really like this thickness for a knife, more so than thicker ones, especially when the knife is only going to be used for knife-like tasks such as slicing and cutting. The thin edge sliced into wood effortlessly allowing for thinner, curled shavings. When shaving wood down, usually as the portion of the knife that curves (the belly) comes in contact with the wood, it makes nice curly shavings as opposed to long, straight strips. This is better for catching a spark from a ferrocium rod and ignites from an existing flame much easier. At the time I only had the skeletonized version of the Candiru, so comfort would have been an issue after whittling wood a while. However, a few weeks later I did get a Candiru with scales that not only looked striking but was very comfortable to use for an extended period.

Wild Game Prep

Once the fire was going, it was time for the food. On the menu were live chickens that had to be prepared from scratch. The first thing that had to be done was the killing and collecting of the blood. Once the feathers were removed from

the neck, the head was bent back and the throat was slit allowing the blood to be collected into a water bottle fashioned into a collection container. This is the smarter way to kill a chicken in a survival scenario where the blood can be saved to coagulate and be cooked over a fire, giving back much needed vitamins, and salt. The bird was then gutted and cleaned thoroughly using the Candiru. Students on this particular trip were allowed to use any knife they brought along, but the small size of the Candiru was the more practical choice.

The coating protected the blade, not only from the blood, but from the elements as the knife was just rinsed off in a nearby stream by dunking and whooshing around a few seconds before being put back in its sheath, still a bit bloody and wet. I could tell by the looks on the faces of some students, toting brand new custom knives fresh out of the glass case, that they found this harsh. This is regular treatment for a knife on such a trip where the tools are of substantial quality. This is not a collector's piece for



The long-awaited ESEE Candiru knife offers a lot of bite in a small package. Currently available in black, desert tan, and OD green.

the faint of heart. A few days later a red tailed boa constrictor snake was introduced to the menu. While the initial killing was done with a machete, the skinning was done with the Candiru. You need a sharp blade to get through tough reptile skin and the thin 1/8-inch stock came in handy.

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Orange Scales

Sean Rowen sent me a black-coated Candiru with orange scales, which had a comfortable feel for long-term use and added a high degree of visibility for the terrain I was in. I don't have any interest in taking gear along that blends with the environment I'm in, just in case it falls out of its sheath or is left on the ground or stuck in a tree. For this reason, I used the desert tan in the jungle and the orange-scaled knife in the desert.

When doing a trip by canoe, weight usually isn't an issue. In fact, a full-sized axe can be taken along without having to tote it on your person. However, when kayaking to remote campsites, the cutting tools chosen must be light and packable. The Candiru was the obvious choice, along with a Swiss Army Knife, for such a trip on the Colorado River in Arizona. It was only a 4-mile paddle up river on the first day, but there was no room for anything more substantial on the belt or in the small cockpit-like vessel. Any medium- to large-size sheath knife would have been uncomfortable to wear while paddling, and placing something as important as a knife in the pack would have been an accident waiting to happen should the kayak roll causing my pack to float down river. This time of the year, where the nighttime temperatures were 90 degrees Fahrenheit, no more than a small sheath knife and pocketknife was necessary to keep warm.

Tasks at hand with the Candiru were simple: light food prep mixing soups, cutting sausage, cheese and bread. Only a small Indian-style campfire was needed to cook, especially since I was not burning all-night wood in the heat. The Candiru, with its thin, laser sharp cutting edge, was easy to re-sharpen with just a ceramic Pocket Croc Stick.

Combined with a chopping tool like a tomahawk, machete, or a larger knife, the Candiru is the perfect small, lightweight cutting tool capable of handling fine cutting chores as well as the dirty work! TK



When it comes to sharpening, a simple ceramic crock stick sharpener is all that is needed to keep the edge of the Candiru factory sharp.



A good day hiking or kayaking companion. The Candiru is lightweight and unobtrusive when worn on a belt or in a neck knife fashion.



Using the rounded back as a pill crusher, the Candiru was used to crush the chlorine dioxide water purification tablets before opening the package, making it easier to dissolve.

MORE INFORMATION

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