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SUMMER 2017

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JUNGLE STEEL

ESEE is not your typical knife company —by any stretch of the imagination

**By Tim Stetzer
Jeff Randall Photos**

When you think of a traditional knife company, you have a designer, or group of designers, a production staff and a myriad of support personnel.

With ESEE Knives, based in Gallant, Alabama, you have all of that, but you also have dedicated people with decades of experience, not just in using tactical and survival blades. These folks have spent years teaching survival and bushcraft. It's that experience and commitment to sharing skills that sets Jeff Randall, Mike Perrin, and their crew apart from many other companies.



1. Randall's Adventure & Training offers a five-day technical course focusing on remote "vertical" rescues. **2.** The CR2.5 is a handy bird and trout blade designed by Cody Rowen based upon years of field experience. **3.** ESEE Knives is more than just a knife company; it's a group of highly skilled people who not only make knives, but also teach you what to do with them. **4.** The jungle survival course teaches fire making in a tropical rainforest, as well as procuring and cooking local fish and game.

▲ ESEE's Laser Strike is a capable bushcraft blade with a bow drill divot and a ferro rod under the handle scales.



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1. Wendy Randall provides search and rescue training, logistical support, and scheduling for the other courses.
2. Whether stateside or in the jungles of Peru, Randall's courses teach survival, especially how to boost your chances for rescue.



ESEE Origins

The company traces its history back to 1997 when Jeff and Mike became frustrated with the hype surrounding the survival market. They founded Randall's Adventure & Training (RAT) to perfect practical survival tools and training for customers.

They also partnered with the Peruvian Air Force's Escuela De Supervivencia En La Selva (ESSEL) or "School of Jungle Survival," teaching clients survival skills in the Amazon jungle. (ESSEL later inspired the knife company's name.)

Meanwhile, Jeff and Mike were hard at work on knife designs for clients like the early RTAK, built by Newt Livesay's Wicked Knife Company. John Greco made the RAT skinning-and-survival knife while TOPS made the RAT Laser Strike knife, which later joined the ESEE knife line.

Randall's Adventure & Training

also developed a whole series of extremely popular knives for Ontario Knife Company including the RTAK II, TAK, RAT-7, RAT-5, RAT-3, Model 1 folder and the Model II folder.

After working in the jungle for a few years Jeff and Mike brought their knowledge back home and added a sister company to make quality knives and gear for clients and the market at large. And, so, ESEE Knives was formed (eseeknives.com).

"The company traces its history back to 1997 when Jeff and Mike became frustrated with the hype surrounding the survival market."

Rowen Manufacturing in Idaho Falls, Idaho makes all ESEE knives with a mix of modern CNC machining and hands-on work. The designs on most of the ESEE line are the work of Jeff and Mike, along with the folks at Rowen, although there are some collaboration pieces in the line. Typical construction is of 1095 high carbon steel with powder coated, flat ground blades and Micarta handles, but variations in the line have included uncoated blades and some 440C stainless models. Most of the knives come with either Kydex or injection molded plastic sheaths, but other options are available.

The line includes the ESEE-3, 4, 5 and 6 knives.

The model numbers also indicate blade lengths. The more compact 3 and 4 feature a finger choil, which allows you to choke up on the blade. They come with, or without an extended pommel.

The ESEE-5 and 6 use a larger more contoured grip and do not have the choil. There's a bow drill pivot on the 5 and both have extended glass-breaking pommels. A variety of finish and handle colors are available on the knives. The Model 5 also has the distinction of having been designed and field tested with the assistance of the U.S. Air Force Survival School.

In 2016 ESEE launched the "HM" versions of



Patrick Rollins



Mike Perrin



Jeff Randall

Chris Halleen

RAT CURRICULUM: WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE

➔ While good tools are important, it's even more important to know how to use them, and Jeff Randall and Mike Perrin haven't forgotten their roots as a training company.

Patrick Rollins instructs much of the survival and tracking courses these days at Randall's Adventure & Training, while James Gibson teaches bushcraft. Wendy Randall handles search and rescue courses and Jeff oversees the ropes courses.

The land navigation classes are a group effort by Jeff, Patrick and Hugh Coffee of Ditch Medicine, who also teaches first aid.

Randall Adventure & Training also offers firearms courses taught

by a variety of instructors. All of them are cross-trained, so they can team up for bigger classes. Many are held at RAT's Alabama facility, although some are held off site.

The course listings (found at randallsadventure.com) provide the locations along with what to expect and what gear to bring. Prices range from \$100 for a one-day session up through \$500 for three-day courses.

The jungle survival course, however, is \$1,400 for nearly a week in Iquitos, Peru.

If you're looking for something a little more basic check out the Red Mountain courses held at Red Mountain Park in Birmingham, Alabama. These intro courses are

one-day sessions on basic survival, land navigation, and search and rescue. They are \$50 each.

Randall Adventure & Training has a broad clientele ranging from parents and kids, to civilians of all walks of life. There are many law enforcement and military students.

They've even trained a number of film crews and professional adventurers and their courses have been featured on the Travel Channel and Discovery Channel, as well as numerous print publications.

Some courses, such as Intro and Advanced Sniper and Tactical Ropes, are for police and soldiers only, but offered free with proper law enforcement or military credentials.

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Patrick Rollins: 256-613-3834. Training email: info@randallsadventure.com
ESEE Knives email: info@eseeknives.com, randallsadventure.com



◀ Randall's Adventure & Training offers a number of courses in rope work from a basic course through advanced Rope Rescue training.



▲ Need to hone your map and compass skills? Randall's Adventure & Training offers basic and advanced land navigation courses.

the ESEE 3 and 4. Other models such as the 6 HM are coming soon. These versions use a modified handle, which does away with the finger choil and is a longer, a bit fatter, and more rounded than the traditional models.

I received one of the ESEE-3HMs for evaluation and I have to say that I'm a fan. I found the handle to be very comfortable and it shipped with a quality leather pouch sheath.

On the smaller end of the line are the AH-1 Arrowhead, a two pack of 1095 steel arrowheads in a handy wallet carrier.

Other small blades include the little Candiru neck knife and the popular Izula—both lightweight skeletonized designs. The Izula is one of the knives offered in 440C stainless as well as 1095 carbon steel. Optional handles are available for both the Candiru and Izula.

Like the larger ESEE knives, several finishes are available, including shades of purple and pink on the Candiru. There's even an exclusive Damascus Izula made of 180 layers of 1080 and 15N20; it's available as an exclusive option through Blue Ridge Knives.

If you need something more specialized, check out the Laser Strike—a 4.75-inch bushcraft blade with a bow divot in the handle and a fire steel and tinder hidden under the scales to ensure you have options to make fire.

Or, for heavy work, there's always the Junglas, a 16-inch beast with a 10-inch blade capable of quickly chopping up materials for shelter or firewood.

Jeff and Mike haven't forgotten their jungle roots either and also offer the Lite Machete, a tool that mates a 17.25-inch carbon steel machete blade from EL Salvador with a quality Micarta handle. It's assembled in America and comes either on its own or with a Cordura sheath.

Camp-Lore Collaborations

ESEE also has the Camp-Lore series for bushcraft. These knives are made in the U.S. from uncoated 1095 high carbon steel and use removable Micarta handles. They ship with U.S.-made leather pouch sheaths. The smallest of the bunch is the ESEE-CR2.5, a trim bird and trout blade designed by Cody Rowen, which is perfect for small game or



“The folks at ESEE build their kits based on what they teach in survival classes. And they're eager to show you why their kits work, and how to use them.”

folks wanting a light but capable field knife.

Next up is the ESEE-JG3, designed by James Gibson. Its 3.5-inch drop-point blade makes for a perfect hunting tool.

Last is the ESEE-RB3, a true bushcraft knife designed by Reuben Bolieu. The RB3 is a departure from other ESEE knives with its 3.5-inch Scandi ground blade, which Reuben mates up to a very comfortable 4.5-inch handle. I'll admit to a soft spot for blades of this style, and, in my opinion, Reuben hits all the high points of good bushcraft design. It has a handy-sized blade with a center point suitable for drilling, a big comfortable handle, and that Scandi edge that does so well at woodcraft.

Survival Kits and Other Gear

ESEE also sells high-quality survival kits. There are a lot of options in this market, but sometimes you have to wonder if the folks that design these kits have ever used them. Let's just say that quality varies wildly. And an emergency is a bad time to learn that your gear is substandard.

The folks at ESEE build their kits based on what


they teach in survival classes. And they're eager to show you why their kits work, and how to use them.

For example, the RAT Basic Survival Kit retails for \$79 and is handy enough to carry in a cargo pocket or pack. It contains the following items commonly needed for a RAT survival course:

- Water bag
- Purification tablets
- Space blanket
- Snare wire
- Ferrocerium fire starter
- Survival matches
- Fishing kit
- Victorinox pocketknife
- Starlite tinder
- Signal mirror
- Baseplate compass
- Survival whistle
- Wire saw
- Duct tape

Larger sets include the RAT Comprehensive Survival Kit, the Food Procurement Kit, and the E&E Pocket Survival Kit. They also offer a series of handy plastic survival cards covering navigation and signals.

The ESEE website showcases these products and other gear recommended by the folks at Randall's Adventure & Training. Jodi Cummings, the ESEE office manager, handles online orders. Bruce Bramlett, the company's Southeastern rep, makes sure retail shops are well stocked with ESEE blades and gear.

There are a lot of great knives on the market, but few are backed with the talents and experience of Jeff Randall, Mike Perrin, and their crew. Fewer still offer firsthand training on these tools from their actual designers. If you need a working blade or kit truly tested in the field by folks willing to teach how to get the most from them, consider Randall's Adventure & Training courses and ESEE Knives. 

◀ Randall's survival courses teach how to find food and cook with improvised tools in a primitive setting.



▲ Reuben Bolieu's RB3 departs from the rest of the ESEE line with its bushcraft-oriented Scandi grind—perfect for wood and field craft.



▼ ESEE offers uncoated blades at customer request.