

Warthog VSharp

knife sharpener

One of the most frustrating things in life is a blunt knife – whether you are filleting fish or preparing meat and vegetables for the table.

I can't tolerate blunt knives and have tried all the devices – from conventional stone and steel through to 'pull-throughs' and electric sharpeners.

The traditional stone and steel is good, but is time consuming. Depending on their quality, the pull-throughs also do the job, but can be hard on the knife; and the electric sharpeners with their coarse and fine wheel options, get the job done quickly but you risk heating the steel blade and causing damage.

At last May's Hutchwilco NZ Boat Show one of the Hunting and Fishing crew, Steve, was demonstrating a sharpening device I had not seen before – the Warthog VSharp Classic II Sharpener – touted as the 'world's first freehand constant angle sharpener'.

The demo was taking place right across from our stand, so I couldn't help but notice it.

After hearing his pitch, I laid down the challenge – "I have several Wheeler knives which need a bit of attention. If you can get a good edge on them, I will buy a sharpener off you."

The challenge accepted, I arrived at the stand the next day with my favourite filleting knife – the Snapper model created by Hawkes Bay cutler Steve Wheeler.

Wheeler knives feature Swedish 12C27 steel in many of their blades. They are great blades, and once you have the perfect edge, they hold it. This steel is particularly hard and takes a bit of effort to shape.

The knife I handed him was in dire need of that effort. He worked away on it for some 10 minutes and slowly but surely produced the result I was after. The edge now sharp as a tack – the deal was done!

The sharpener deals to both sides of the blade at the same time. The user strokes the blade against a guide, using minimal pressure to run the edge past two angled, spring-tensioned surfaces.

It takes around 20 strokes to get the



The Warthog VSharp sharpener is easy to use and produces a great edge on all the knives the reviewer has run through it.

'average' knife into shape. Then it is a matter of reversing the blades to expose the steeling honers – a few more strokes and the blade is ready to go.

This system's advantage is that the blade is sharpened at a consistent angle every stroke. The device can be altered to suit the type of knife and its main use – 30 degrees for steeling and rough cutting work where knives have a wide, durable bevel meant for chopping; 25 degrees for hunting pocket and chef's chopping knives where a durable edge is obtained for cutting on hard surfaces; and 20 degrees for knives used in the kitchen and for boning, filleting and cutting soft materials.

It is suggested you rotate the dual rods once the initial sharpening is complete and increase it to the next angle to steel up a razor edge.

While the above sounds complicated, I find the VSharp to be quick and easy to use,

with enough possible adjustment to cover off a variety of blades.

I have experimented on a range of knives – larger wide blades used for cutting up hapuku and kingfish, down to smaller blades used on trout and breasting out ducks. The Warthog V-Sharp is designed primarily to create a great edge. If the blade has badly rounded shoulders, I found I still have to take the worst of this off on a stone.

As far as creating a great edge and being safe to use, I have not encountered anything better. And if you have any doubts about how to use it, each sharpener comes with a demo DVD.

For more information go to www.knifesharpener.co.za. The sharpeners are available at selected Hunting and Fishing stores – mine was obtained from Taranaki Hunting and Fishing.

- GRANT DIXON