

Camera Equipment Review...

The Kirk BH-3 Medium Ballhead

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For those of us who need a high quality, heavy-duty ballhead, the Kirk BH-1 has always been an excellent choice. With its user-friendly design and superb build quality, the BH-1 has become a favorite among nature photographers who use the largest and heaviest of 35mm lenses, camera bodies and accessories. However, as with the other ballheads in this class, the load carrying capacity (and subsequent size) of the BH-1 is more than what some nature photographers may require. For those who have always yearned for a high-quality, medium size ballhead, the pickings have always been mighty slim to non-existent. There are plenty of medium-sized ballheads available, but few, if any, offer the quality and ease-of-use of the top-of-the-line models such as the BH-1. If you wanted smaller, you always had to settle for less quality and/or sacrifice the convenience of the Arca-style QR platform.

Kirk Enterprises has now changed that with the introduction of their new medium ballhead, the **BH-3**. Featuring the convenience and build quality of the BH-1, the BH-3 is the perfect solution for those looking for a quality ballhead in a down-sized configuration.

Specifications

- Weight: 20 ounces (as compared to 32 ounces for the BH-1)
- Height: 4.25 inches
- Ball diameter: 1.65 inches
- Pan base diameter: 2.4 inches
- Ball tilt: 45 degrees, 90 degrees in slot
- Pan base rotation: 360 degrees with positive lock
- Mounting platform: Arca-style Quick Release
- Price: \$239.95

First Look

We received our sample of the BH-3 a few weeks ago. Upon unpacking the BH-3, we were immediately impressed with its BH-1-like build quality. Although the BH-3 is smaller and lighter than the BH-1, it sports the same full size control knobs

of the BH-1. This is a very welcome feature, as the full size knobs make operating the ballhead a true pleasure. Unlike some other models, the panning action is smooth with absolutely no wobble. As with the BH-1, the ball operates very smoothly and locks securely in place. In terms of quality, handling and outward design, the BH-3 is a clone of the larger and heavier BH-1.



The new **Kirk BH-3** (left) is a down-sized version of the BH-1, shown on the right.

In the Field

With the BH-3 mounted on Donna's Bogen 3001 Pro tripod, we took to the field to give the new ballhead a try. We were immediately struck that the BH-3 is the perfect companion for small to medium size tripods like Donna's 3001, offering a very stable yet easy-to-carry platform to shoot from. With a Canon Elan 7E, EF 300/4L, 1.4 teleconverter, flash bracket and 420EX speedlite mounted, we spend a good part of the day hiking through the park and enjoying some winter nature photography. The BH-3 was pure joy to use – the smooth operation of the ball made precise framing a snap. In stark contrast to a few other medium ballheads we've tried in the past, Donna had no problem using the BH-3's full size control knobs, and was able to easily lock the ball in place for carrying the rig over her shoulder. Based on how well the BH-3 handled Donna's gear, I'm sure it would work just as well with many of the larger f/2.8 telephotos and heavier professional camera bodies - not something that can be said for other medium size ballheads.



With its superb design, high quality construction and full-size control knobs, the **Kirk BH-3** locks down easily and holds the load securely with no creep or slippage.

Final Thoughts

Perfect for those in search of uncompromising quality and performance in a down-sized package, the Kirk BH-3 has raised the benchmark in the medium ballhead market. No longer does the nature photographer have to sacrifice quality and ease-of-use in order to travel a bit lighter. To say that we are impressed with this new Kirk product would be an understatement. We're confident that anyone who buys the BH-3 will be impressed too!

Editor's Note - The BH-3 is available directly from [Kirk Enterprises](#).

Jim and Donna Erhardt - NPN 001

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