

AMERICAN How-To: Get Water Anywhere

SURVIVAL

COVID-19 QUARANTINE!

GUIDE

Vol. 9 Issue 9

- FOOD
- WATER
- SHELTER
- SECURITY
- COMMS
- HEALTH

How We Stayed Well and Passed Our Days in Purgatory



FOOD FIGHT!

The Great Grocery Grab of the 2020 Pandemic

COMPACT & CAPABLE PC CHARGER

Ruger's PDW Platform Delivers Next-Level Personal Defense

ESEE'S EXPAT DARIEN MACHETE

Is It the Ultimate Camp Knife?

RENOGY'S 1,000-WATT DC/AC INVERTER

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WORDS

FIRST

WHAT'S NEXT?

Lately, I've been feeling as if we're living in a low-budget, old-school superhero movie. It feels sort of like a *Guardians of the Galaxy* thing ... except without the great soundtrack. Stuff is flying at us from all directions, and villains we thought we'd handled come back with enhanced powers and a renewed desire to take us down.

For many months, we've all seen great challenges and rolling disasters crawl across our radar and into our daily thoughts and lives. Topics of pressing concern seem to be waiting in line for their turn to burrow into our heads to get their chance at pushing us deeper into the pit of anxiety and distract us from the enjoyable and comfortable life we once had and want to return to. Many people ignore the mainstream media and have also stepped back from social media, because neither is a reliable source of truth, and both are overloaded with dubious agendas and reprehensible personalities who seem to be more interested in divisiveness than unity.

Of course, the dominant concern over the last several months has been the COVID-19 pandemic. It started, for us Americans, as an occasional—and then daily—glimpse into what was going on in Wuhan, China. There were many impressions Americans had about this, ranging from "It's not that bad; they'll get it under control" to "This is going to go global, and we're all going to be in a world of hurt." Preppers upped their games while others ignored the warning signs.

I think many people took the approach that "it's China; what do you expect? Stuff such as that happens there all the time, but it could never happen *here*."

Time has shown that that sort of thinking couldn't have been farther off the mark. While many of the pandemic's statistics are under question here and around the world, today's case count in the U.S. stands at more than 23 times the number reported by China—a country with more than a billion more people than the United States. Yes, these are approximate numbers, but that's still pretty humbling.

On the upside, I'm happy to say that many former "grasshoppers" out there are now neophyte preppers.

They suffered the long lines and shortages of critical supplies and, like our hero, the ant, they now recognize the value and importance of being ready for whatever challenges the future might bring. Being called a "prepper" is not the sideways jibe it was just a handful of months ago.

So, what's the big lesson we want to pass on to our new preparedness pals? I think it's that you can never put your guard down. Without seeming morose and melodramatic, we need to remind them that, even as the bulk of the COVID-19 threat might be waning, there are other concerns for which we need to remain prepared.

For example, if you live anywhere near the coasts of the Gulf of Mexico or the Atlantic Ocean, you should already have your hurricane preps in place (because hurricane season began on June 1). The good news is that much of what you've done to prep for the pandemic is entirely applicable to this new, albeit annual, threat.

As I write this, tropical storm Cristobal is forecast to hit Louisiana this weekend. It's expected to bring lots of rain, strong winds and flooding. However, while it probably won't attain "hurricane" status, its effects might even impact the central United States and Canada. Only time will tell.

Because NOAA's Climate Prediction Center is forecasting the possibility of six to 10 hurricanes this season—three to six of which could be major—now's the time to fill any gaps you might have in your preparations and plans.

Do you live in the western part of the United States? The wildfire outlook is mixed, but there are some areas that could see above-normal significant fire potential. Again, *now's* the time to take the preventive measures that might reduce your risk.

No matter where you live, you should have an idea of what could be next on your threat horizon, possibly including floods, tornadoes, drought, civil unrest, and pre- or post-election violence. Where you live will drive your needs and concerns about what might be next, but the bottom line is the same: *Be prepared.*

All the best!
Mike McCourt

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PRODUCTS

NEW

BY MIKE TRAVIS



1 Pitbull Tactical Gen 2 Universal Mag Carrier

This could be the last mag carrier you'll ever need. Its unique design allows you to carry and conceal any pistol mag, from a 9mm single-stack to a .45 ACP double-stack, without the need for tools or adjustments on your part. As you insert the magazine, the UMG G2 automatically adjusts to the appropriate size while keeping it securely in place. Available in three colors, it's perfect for everyday carry and days at the range when you're practicing with multiple handguns. And, you can wear it IWB or OWB with any 1.5-inch belt.

MSRP: \$24.99

PitbullTactical.com

2 5.11 Tactical Rapid HL 1AA Headlamp

The 5.11 Tactical Rapid HL 1AA Headlamp produces up to 330 lumens on "high" with a runtime of over an hour, or it can be switched to "search" or "flood" mode for a six-hour runtime. Independently controlled LED spot and COB (chip on board) flood lights with rotation capability let you adjust and direct the headlamp as conditions demand, and a sturdy aluminum body will keep it working, no matter how much you bang it around. Need to switch to a more direct manipulation? The headlamp is removable so you can use it as a right-angle light and clip it onto a backpack or plate carrier.

MSRP: \$54.99

511Tactical.com

3 5.11 Tactical Light Marker

The 5.11 Tactical Light Marker is an environmentally friendly alternative to mini chemical lights. Its nylon body is laser cut to be compatible with MOLLE webbing and 5.11's HEXGRID mounting panels. The hole on each end of the unit is paracord compatible. The photoluminescent center bar uses 5.11 Firefly technology to store and emit light without the use of batteries or one-time-use chemical reactions.

MSRP: \$11.99

511Tactical.com

4 5.11 Tactical RUSH 100 Backpack

The RUSH 100 is the largest of all of the RUSH packs sold by 5.11 Tactical, coming in with an internal volume of 60 liters. It utilizes a custom, flat aluminum bar frame with stability fiberglass rods that are part of the RUSH line's signature Center Line design. The RUSH 100 has a multitude of intelligent storage compartments and can be expanded using 5.11's impressive array of add-on pouches. The pack uses an adjustable and removable waist belt system to comfortably distribute weight.

MSRP: \$264.99

511Tactical.com

2020

has proven to be a good test of our levels of preparedness. Between the COVID-19 pandemic and the political turmoil of an election year, many of us interested in preparedness have had a chance to examine our lives and put our preparations to the test to find their strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, we have many new people joining the ranks of those striving for self-sufficiency. In this issue, we've included a variety of new products to help you achieve your goals of self-reliance and independence. Whether you're a newcomer or an old-timer in the self-reliance community, we hope you'll find something that will help you achieve your goals.



5 Benchmade 202 Leuku

The Benchmade 202 Leuku is a no-nonsense fixed-blade knife built for strenuous bushcrafting applications while maximizing in-hand comfort. Lock down your essentials—food, water, knife and everything in between. It features a CPM-3V tool steel drop-point blade with a new heat-treat process, resulting in an HRC of 60–62. The 5.19-inch blade combines with the textured Santoprene handle to create a knife that's 9.69 inches long. The knife comes with a leather sheath, which also integrates a ferro rod loop.

MSRP: \$165
Benchmade.com

6 Beyond Clothing Modus Jacket

The Modus Jacket is a lightweight, hooded jacket that's designed for active use in warmer weather. The durable, 4-way-stretch, double-faced nylon polyester shell protects you from the wind and rain while remaining breathable for moisture transport. The inner face of the fabric is made with bamboo charcoal yarn, which is naturally antibacterial, antifungal, moisture-wicking and insulating. Wear the Modus Jacket if you need lightweight durability for active use in warmer climates. Multiple colors and long sizes are available.

MSRP: \$140
BeyondClothing.com

7 Beyond Clothing Todra Short Sleeve Crew Shirt

The K1 Todra Short Sleeve Crew takes the everyday wearability of a classic T-shirt to the next level. Blended knit jersey fabric with a sanded finish ensures a soft, velvety feel for all-day comfort. Drirelease technology manages sweat buildup from exercise, excessive heat and more, and the fitted, athletic construction makes it an ideal choice for a hike, workout and casual wear.

MSRP: \$35
BeyondClothing.com

8 Duraflame Outdoor Firelog

New for 2020 is the Duraflame Outdoor Firelog. Made in the U.S.A., the Outdoor Fire Log is 100 percent bio based. A single, three-log case will create a fire that lasts about three hours. The logs have been engineered to have fewer emissions than a traditional wood fire and to produce 48 percent more heat energy per pound than traditional wood. These logs are designed to burn brighter and are 100 percent food safe. Each log is individually packaged with a wrapper that's intended to be used to ignite the log. When wood isn't available or wood-collection is prohibited, the Outdoor Firelog will provide a hot, easy-to-start-and-maintain fire wherever you might need it.

**MSRP: \$17.98 (3-log case);
\$22.98 (6-log case)**
Duraflame.com

PRODUCTS

NEW



9 Work Tuff Gear Nomad Knife

The Work Tuff Gear Nomad is a collaborative effort with knife designer Zeke Menacho. With an overall length of 15.7 inches, this knife is designed to be able to chop like a hatchet, stab like a dagger and slice like a kitchen knife, making it a true jack-of-all-trades. The multi-position handle creates extra leverage for heavy chopping, provides an integral guard for stabbing and a generous choil for getting the hand close to the edge for detailed carving. The handles are made from 3D sculpted G10, and the blade steel is Japanese SK85 high-carbon tool steel. The 10-inch blade is carried in a custom molded Kydex sheath.

MSRP: \$235
WorkTuffGear.com

10 Rokka Knives Kopisoturi Puukko

The Kopisoturi ("wilderness" warrior) Puukko is the culmination of five years of development and is the first knife being introduced by new Finnish knife manufacturer Rokka Knives. The blade is made from 5mm-thick Bohler 80CrV2 high-carbon tool steel. Despite its thickness, the puukko's rhombic grind and dual distal taper mean that this knife won't weigh you down. Each knife is ground with a 19.5-degree edge angle, which translates to extreme performance while the differential heat treat means it'll have both superior edge retention and toughness. The handle is made from molded TPE Dryflex that's designed for superior grip and comfort in all environments. The sheath is belt- and MOLLE-compatible and provides superior retention.

MSRP: \$145
RokkaKnives.com

11 Ruger American Compact Pistol, Gray Cerakote

Ruger has introduced a new addition to its popular American Pistol lineup. This compact .45 ACP pistol features a 3.75-inch barrel and a 7+1 capacity. Coming in at only 29 ounces, this pistol was made to provide the concealed carrier with some serious firepower. The glass-filled polymer frame and stainless steel slide feature a new, gray Cerakote finish. The frame offers interchangeable, wraparound grip modules, and the slide features steel Novak LoMount 3-dot sights. A manual safety is optional.

MSRP: \$579
Ruger.com

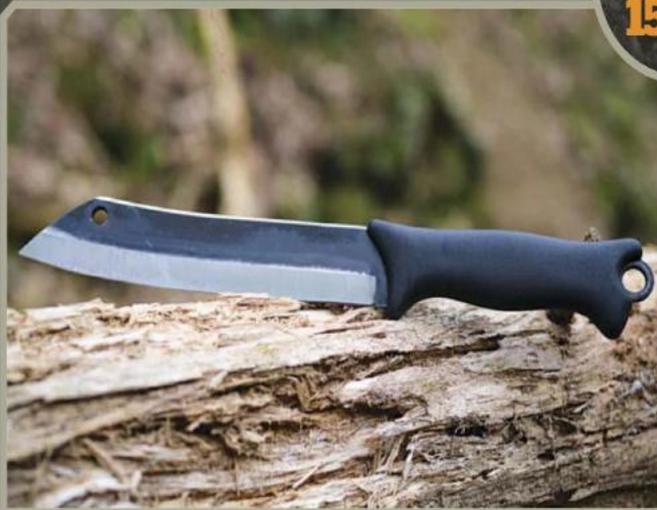
12 Dark Energy Poseidon Pro Backup Battery

Five years ago, Dark Energy introduced the Poseidon backup battery. Building on the massive success of the original Poseidon, the Poseidon Pro combines all the extreme ruggedness of the original with added power and versatility. The Poseidon Pro features a type 3 USB and USB-C charging port. The 10,200 mAh power cell not only provides an average cell phone with an extra 36 hours of power, it also delivers that power up to 2.5 times faster than the original Poseidon. If you need a battery bank capable of enduring the most rugged, demanding environments on Earth, the Poseidon Pro is the easy choice.

MSRP: \$99.99
DarkEnergy.com



13 14
15 16



13

Dark Energy Tridyn Charging Cable

Dark Energy made the Poseidon Pro to be the toughest, most reliable backup battery on the planet. To deliver that power, this company has created the Tridyn—the most rugged, capable and versatile charging cable available. The Tridyn features a three-pronged head with Lightning, Micro USB and USB-C connectors. Each cable is made with Armor-Flex technology, which includes multiple layers of reinforcement: ballistic fiber, Mylar shielding, mesh reinforcement and a nylon fiber coating. The area at which the cable meets the head has been strengthened to prevent fraying, and each head is encased in metal armor.

MSRP: \$27.99
DarkEnergy.com

14

Rockpals 330W Portable Power Station

Rockpals is a trusted source for solar power generators, solar cells and backup batteries. Its new 330W Power Station provides a reliable source of power for use in emergency situations and in areas where electricity is unavailable. The Power Station features a wireless charging station on top of the unit. It also provides (3) USB-3 ports and a single USB-C port. Other features include (1) 110V AC outlet, (2) 12V DC outlets and (1) 12V DC cigarette lighter outlet. The unit can be charged via a 110V AC wall outlet, a 12V car charger or a 100W (minimum) solar panel. Pure Sine Wave technology protects sensitive devices, and the unit is backed by a two-year warranty.

MSRP: \$349.90
Rockpals.com

15

Terava Skrama 200 Bush Knife

The original Skrama 240 has made a name for itself with outdoorsmen as a solid, no-frills utility tool for the woods. The Skrama 200 has all the great design elements of the original, along with a shorter, 7-inch blade and a shorter, single-position handle. The Skrama uses 80CrV2 Bohler tool steel. It's extremely tough, durable and easy to maintain. Just like the original, the new Skrama features a dual grind optimized for both chopping and carving. The rubber grip completely encloses the tang and insulates the hand in cold weather. This knife will chop, split wood, carve, clean game and prep food. Sheath options include a basic plastic blade cover or a leather belt sheath.

MSRP: Starting at \$64.99
Varusteleva.com/en

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Exotac fireROD V2

Exotac is an industry leader in the development and manufacturing of high-quality gear for the outdoorsman. Its line of fire-starting gear is second to none and includes all the innovations Exotac is known for. The brand-new fireROD V2 features a redesigned handle that's larger than the V1. The handle provides a better grip and offers a larger, waterproof tinder storage compartment that's designed to hold two quickLIGHT tinder tabs. The fireROD V2 is 4.7 inches long, weighs 1.2 ounces and uses the same replaceable 5/16-inch ferro rods as the V1. The lanyard is made using premium 550 FireCord.

MSRP: \$29.95
Exotac.com

WHEN COVID-19 CAME TO TOWN

HOW ONE FAMILY DEALT WITH SELF-QUARANTINE

BY SEAN CURTIS

Twenty-two years into a law enforcement career, I've seen some strange occurrences and often lamented the "luck" of the draw. The terrible wheel of chance sometimes presented the worst calls when I was on shift.

Now, in the latter part of my professional experience, I've taken to a suit and tie and banging on a keyboard as an investigator.

While I sometimes miss those crazy moments of misfortune out on the road, I was all too happy to let things break my way for once when the coronavirus came over the horizon. I had no idea COVID-19 would impose its will so sternly nor that my family and I would have been so prepared to deal with its consequences. Some of it was luck, some of it was planned, and the rest we learned in the moment.

Our experience probably started like that of many other people. We were hearing news about the

looming spread and, depending on the source, it was going to be bad or it was going to be more or less like the seasonal flu. This theme continued for a while, but when the deaths from China started reaching the thousands, more people took notice.

THE CLOSING THREAT

Next, Italy took it on the chin, while the pandemic was just breaking in America. The death toll was around 700 people per day, and then, inexplicably, toilet paper was being bought up in droves.

My work had continued its course as usual. But, things then took a turn, and people started really taking COVID-19 seriously. My last normal day in the office was March (Friday the) 13th. After that, things changed dramatically.

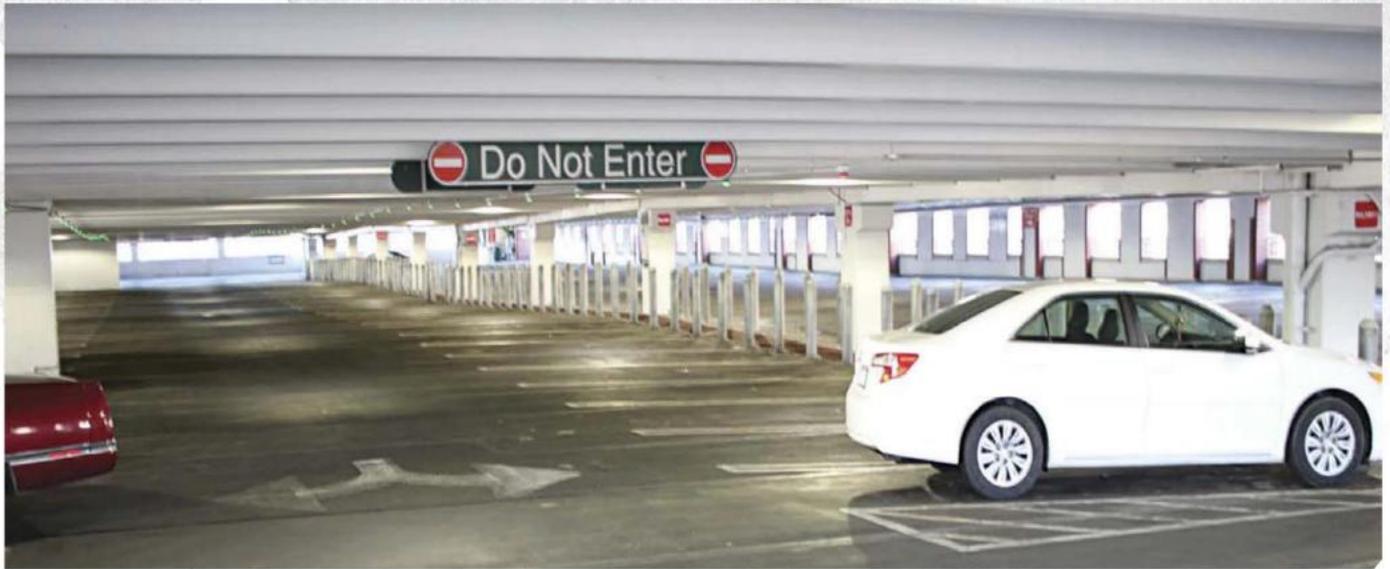
We learned the virus was in our county. While Colorado is still comparatively remote, vacationers who'd come to ski spread the virus in the mountain towns, and it trickled out into the rest of our





◀ The author's purchase of 500 rounds of 5.56 just before his quarantine proved serendipitous, because the gun shop shelves were empty a week later.

“WHILE COLORADO IS STILL COMPARATIVELY REMOTE, VACATIONERS WHO'D COME TO SKI SPREAD THE VIRUS IN THE MOUNTAIN TOWNS, AND IT TRICKLED OUT INTO THE REST OF OUR BELOVED STATE. THIS WAS WHEN WE LEARNED THAT PEOPLE COULD BE HIGHLY CONTAGIOUS BEFORE HAVING ANY SYMPTOMS.”



◀ Above: Going back to work was not all bad after the quarantine. Parking was ample as a result of minimum staffing requirements.

“VERY SUDDENLY, THE THREAT BECAME REAL, PERSONAL. IT WAS SUGGESTED WE QUARANTINE FOR 14 DAYS.”

beloved state. This was when we learned that people could be highly contagious before having any symptoms. It seemed like a somewhat remote threat, all happening to other people—that is, until the e-mail.

On Tuesday, March 17th, we received an e-mail from my daughter’s school indicating that someone had tested positive and that our child might have been exposed. This was during the time when we were just hearing that the virus appeared to be less fatal to children. The warning said our local health department had been notified of our possible exposure and that it might contact us.

Very suddenly, the threat became real, personal. It was suggested we quarantine for 14 days.

My wife, son and I felt great at the time. My daughter had cold symptoms—a runny nose, an occasional cough and low-grade fever. Thankfully, it never worsened and only improved until it was gone. This was a nebulous time; knowing what to do was an uncertain thing. So, we sheltered in place, treated symptoms and avoided contact with other people. Within a couple of days, the rest of us suffered minor symptoms but were nowhere near approaching emergency room status.

The grim reality only seen on the news had become ours with neck-breaking speed. Suddenly, we were pushed into a 14-day quarantine.

MISSION CRITICAL

Now, the mission was fairly clear. We had a number of objectives to attack. First and foremost was, *How do we logistically support a family of four without leaving our home and potentially contaminating other people?* Second, *How do we fund the operation?* Third was, *What do we do with our time?*

My job is largely based on computer work. By the grace of the gods, I’d requested a laptop during my most recent upgrade several months ago. Because of this, I was able to take my work laptop home, plug in with a virtual private network (VPN) and do 95 percent of my job from my home office. My wife was in a similar situation. She worked with her information technology (IT) department and was able to gain remote access to the majority of the functions she needed in order to do her work.

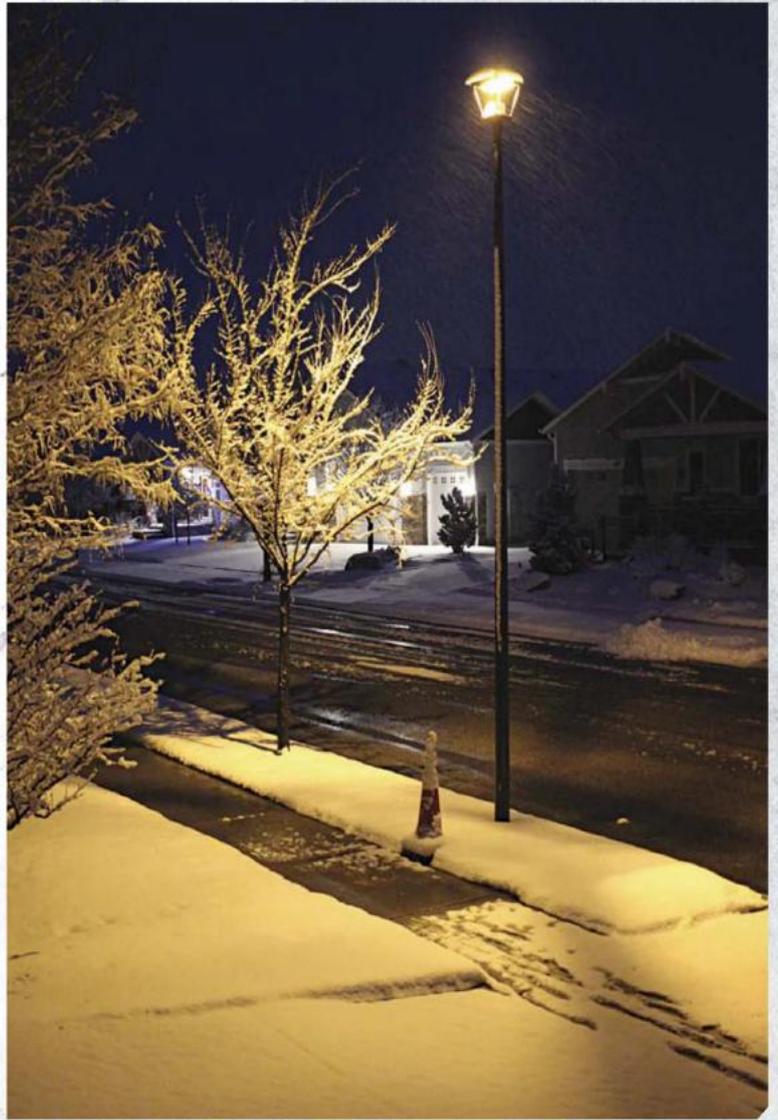
The kids ... well, they were a different story.

My son had just recently transitioned to a computer-based school

◀ Below, left: This delivery from Target was one of the first the author’s family received. Safety dictated waiting for the driver to leave before the goods were collected.



◀ Near left: Xfinity provided the family with an outstanding security system as part of its Internet package. The cable-speed service was the backbone of the family’s time at home and supported much of the work and play done during the quarantine.



› *Top left:* This was one of the few times the author enjoyed his follicular "challenges."

› *Above left:* Gracie Jiu-Jitsu courses had temporarily suspended during the quarantine, so the author's son and he tried to stay in practice on their own.

program that meant he worked from home anyway. This stroke of luck played well, because all the schools—and I mean *all*—shut down right around this time. For my son, it was business as usual. My daughter soon transitioned to a part-workbook, part-online course of studies.

ESTABLISHING A CONNECTION

The first order of business was getting transitioned to a digital working household. The IT demands on us to accommodate all four people using the Internet, Wi-Fi, computers and other gadgets became a hurdle. Thankfully, my wife and I mustered enough acumen (and swearing helped!) to get things up and running.

Once the "heavy lifting" was done, we were able to maintain good contact with established patterns. In the morning, we'd all log in, go to our respective "work places" and toil—while the world slowed to a crawl outside the window.

In the meantime, the health department

never contacted us, nor did I rest on my laurels waiting for the government to support me. Having worked in this field most of my adult life, I know how quickly local resources get overwhelmed. In a pandemic, the capacity for even larger resources to get overwhelmed exists. "Big G" wasn't coming; we had to figure things out on our own.

FAVORITE GROCERY STORE(S)

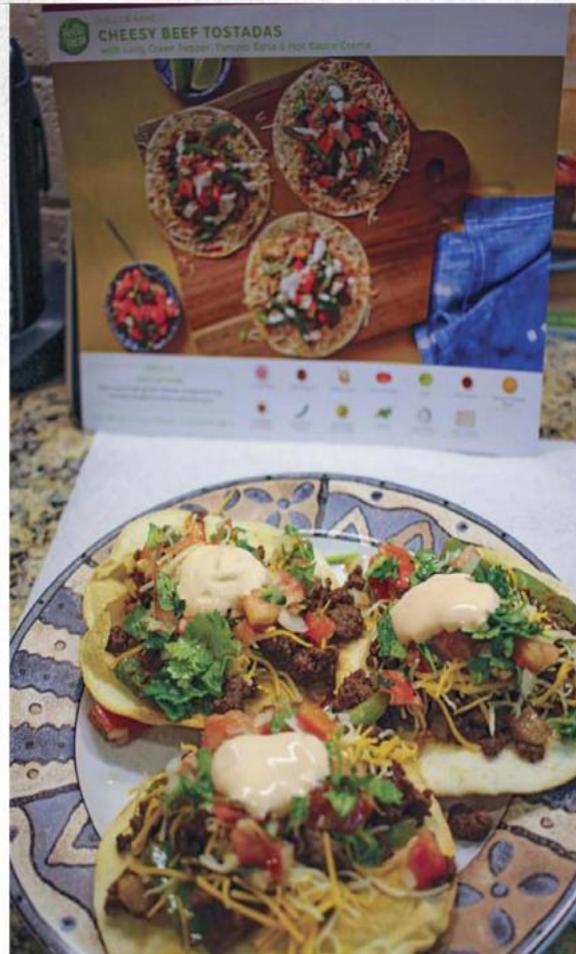
The second order of business was supporting life at home with supplies and groceries. We started reaching out through a number of means. The search for toilet paper yielded continual disappointment. We heard on social media that Dollar Stores had some. This made sense. However, by the time we got there, it was gone, and stores had started to mandate "one-per-customer" policies, because they'd already been cleaned out by frightened hoarders. We soon activated orders for delivered groceries, bulk supply deliveries from Amazon and Target, and spun up the account we had with HelloFresh to get meals delivered.

Over the next couple of weeks, we had an array of cars and vans delivering goods to our door. We'd check the security cameras, wait until the goods were dropped off and then shuttle them inside to get them squirreled away. This greatly limited any potential exposure to—and from—us. As more people caught on to the same methods of delivery we'd found, we saw more substitutions

◀ *Above:* The snow helped remind the author's family of the mentality it uses to get through blizzards: hunker down!



› Far left: With the food supply possibly struggling, the author's family loaded up on frozen items so they'd have a buffer.



› Near left: Deliveries from HelloFresh were clutch for planning and preparing meals.



› Deliveries kept coming in, even though the author and his family had to order things such as jelly packets instead of jars.



› A relative mailed the author's family some toilet paper, because folks in Missouri hadn't yet stripped the shelves bare there.

happening in our orders. While this wasn't great, it was certainly livable. Not getting the exact pasta or butter brand I wanted was a small price to pay in order to maintain our quarantine.

HOME ON THE RANGE

Security is always a concern at my home, but it was truly only strengthened during quarantine. Our hell-raising K9, the ever-watching cameras and my growing distrust at the state of things brought us to a heightened awareness. The threat was not palpable. Rather, it was more of a nagging reminder that I might not be able to keep bringing in supplies and provide for my family. However, after the initial 14 days, we'd established fairly good protocols and were dealing efficiently with the almost-daily deliveries.

We were fortunate in so many ways: Both of us had kept our jobs, had recently received a tax refund and ultimately received a stimulus check, all of which had us well-poised to keep afloat. We reinvested much of that money back into the economy—buying groceries and other needed supplies to keep us well-provisioned.

The ill-fated projections that sank in after we cleared our quarantine warned of food supply chains breaking down due to the large number of sick workers. In some areas, this happened. We learned from news broadcasts that an estimated two-thirds of the American workforce wasn't able to telework. Over a month passed before I went back into work, and even then, it was on a limited basis.

THE 'NEW NORMAL'

So, what about that extra time at home? It was amazing! The work week was much the same, although I spent a lot less time



“WHILE A SHELTER-IN-PLACE ORDER OR EVEN A QUARANTINE DOESN'T NECESSARILY A SURVIVAL SITUATION MAKE, THERE WERE BASIC TENETS THAT HELPED US GET THROUGH THIS SCENARIO WITH APLOMB.”

getting ready or dealing with laundry for work. My wife and kids also pulled their shifts, and we'd all reconvene as normal after the work day was done. On the weekends during quarantine, we did spend more time together, but I attribute much of the lack of struggle with this to living in Colorado.

Those who've lived in mountainous regions for any good amount of time know how to hunker down for storms. It's a mentality that you adopt or go crazy from cabin fever. Fourteen days definitely stretched that a bit, but we adjusted to a "new normal": We exercised in the mat room, played board games, video games, watched movies and even binge-watched "The Mandalorian" together. I occasionally tackled garage projects related to firearms or other forms of defense and preparedness.

A CHANGED WORLD

As I prepared to go back to work, even for a half-shift (one day a week due to social distancing and minimum staffing requirements from the governor), I noticed the world had changed. People were dying at an alarming rate. I'd worked for an ambulance service as an EMT for several years, and my wife was a certified nurse assistant. The thought of healthcare workers not having enough personal protective equipment was startling. The risk to those workers was paramount in my mind.

"Flatten the curve" became the mantra behind governmental mandates for staying at home. The term, "essential," took on a new meaning, and a whole lot of people wondered what they were going to do as their jobs or businesses took the hit.

› *Top, left:* The author's daughter, the "social" one, missed her school friends but was able to connect with them via Zoom.

› *Above, left:* Having received first-grade workbooks, the author's daughter kept up with her homework responsibilities.

› *Top, right:* The amount of boxes the family received pushed its recycling efforts to the max, and box-breaking details were arranged.

› *Right:* Board games—the hallmark of the mountain blizzard survivor, because electricity's always at risk.

LESSONS LEARNED

When I was a boy, I asked my grandmother (who survived the Great Depression) why she had so much food in cans, jars and in the freezer. She sagely told me that you couldn't always count on the stores when times got tough. I heard her voice echo in my head during this quarantine.

While a shelter-in-place order or even a quarantine doesn't necessarily a survival situation make, there were basic tenets that helped us get through this scenario with aplomb.

Mindset. We were okay with staying in and knew how to make the best of it. We weren't expecting anyone to help us.





› Some good, old-fashioned board games helped distract and amuse the author's clan.

“I HAD NO IDEA COVID-19 WOULD IMPOSE ITS WILL SO STERNLY NOR THAT MY FAMILY AND I WOULD HAVE BEEN SO PREPARED TO DEAL WITH ITS CONSEQUENCES.”

› *Below:* The author's son was altogether unfazed by the quarantine. His online schooling and video gaming were only interrupted by chores and mandated exercise.

› *Bottom:* Keeping old “mice” and keyboards allowed Curtis to split his home and work computers.



Medical. We had enough skills to monitor and treat our own symptoms. We also knew when we'd need to throw in the towel. At one point, we even used a tele-doc appointment (a video meeting with a doctor over the phone) for an unrelated ailment.

Technology. We harnessed tech to make grocery and other delivery services work for us—but, it was more than that. As soon as other shoppers found the same resources, orders got blocked or quantities ran out. We had to extend our search, even ordering supplies from online drug stores. By the end of our quarantine, the delivery trucks were continually buzzing through the neighborhood. Going from store to store online made the difference.

Retailers were still trying to harvest that almighty dollar, so many businesses adapted to free deliveries. In addition, a full month after the coronavirus entered Colorado, stores were still struggling to supply toilet paper, because that initial hoarding created a whip-crack that people were still recovering from. We solved that with a call to a relative in a different state where people weren't yet hoarding TP.

MEETING THE CHALLENGES

I want to stress how fortunate we were in being allowed to work from home and maintain our collective income. I know a lot of people haven't been that lucky during this pandemic. Because of this, alone, we were able to shelter in place and focus on treating whatever illness our family experienced. Eventually, we fell into a new rhythm until our quarantine passed.

We watched on social media and TV as the world changed around us. As of this writing in early June, the COVID-19 death toll in the United States is stated at 113,235, according to the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) website. As of early May, more than 27 million workers had filed for unemployment benefits. To put that into perspective: Slightly more than 1.5 million workers were receiving unemployment benefits during the comparable week of 2019.

Only time will tell whether we've hit bottom yet or if the worst is yet to come. For my family, the good news is that we met the challenges that came our way. We confirmed that we had good plans in place, and we also learned some valuable lessons during our brush with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Most importantly, we know we can do it again if the need arises. **ASG**



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DARIEN AS BOTH
A CHOPPING TOOL
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THE HARD GROUND."**



CARVING A CAMP OUT OF BAMBOO

THE ESEE EXPAT DARIEN MACHETE TAKES ON MANY AND VARIED TASKS.

BY REUBEN BOLIEU

During the weeks of late March and early April 2020, I made a stop in Georgia while on the way to what was supposed to be a bushcraft class at the Randall's Adventure & Training headquarters in Alabama. The COVID-19 pandemic changed the plan, and I ended up spending two weeks on camp- and skills-building in Georgia with the new offering from ESEE Knives—the Darien Machete.

THE DARIEN MACHETE

The latest and fourth model in ESEE's Expat line of knives is the Darien Machete. This piece is made in Central America and is named after its southernmost tip—a no-man's-land known as the Darien Gap.

The ESEE Knives Expat Darien Machete features a Micarta handle for extended-use comfort and a 12.38-inch blade. Its overall length is 18.18 inches. It weighs just 15.5 ounces and comes standard with a rugged, tan canvas sheath (which wasn't used during this trip). The blade is made of 1075 steel in El Salvador.

◀ *Top left:* Making tarp stakes was a snap with the ESEE Expat Darien Machete. Here, the author makes a light chop toward the top and then a diagonal chop for the end that sticks into the ground.

◀ *Top right:* The New ESEE Expat Darien Machete in "Camp Georgia" with a steamer behind it, cooking up some shrimp and vegetables.

◀ *Opposite:* Some of the camp implements made and used by Patrick Rollins and author Reuben Bolieu during their camp-building projects. They used an array of cups, boiling and steaming containers, spatulas and more.

◀ *Right:* The ESEE Expat Darien Machete made fast work of these tent stakes. The pointy end is created with a simple diagonal chop, rather than taking the time to sharpen each stake tip.



ESEE Knives' Expat Darien Machete

Specifications

- Overall length: 18.18 inches
- Blade length: 12.38 inches
- Maximum thickness: 0.094 inch
- Blade steel: 1075 carbon; 54-56 RC
- Weight (knife only): 15.5 ounces
- Weight (knife and sheath): 20 ounces
- Handle: Canvas Micarta
- Sheath: Canvas
- Made In El Salvador

◀ *Bottom:* The Darien was used to make notches in the greenwood stakes. This section of any long blade has the most control, and it remains sharper than the chopping portion. The author used it like a conventional fixed-blade knife.

'CAMP GEORGIA'

Upon arriving in Georgia to stay with good friend Patrick Rollins, lead instructor of Randall's Adventure & Training, he told me about a thicket of bamboo he had access to not far from his house. We were building up his camp in the woods behind his place, and bamboo would add a whole, new dimension to the camp (not to mention the cooking capabilities bamboo offers).

Once we arrived at the bamboo thicket (which we eventually referred to as the "Bamboo Store"), we got to work clearing about 15 poles. I used the Darien to chop through the bamboo and clear it low to the ground; Patrick used a saw. I think the saw was a little faster for this job, but I had really missed using a big blade to chop bamboo. I guess it was the kid in me.



THE 'BAMBOO STORE'

This bamboo was much wider and taller than the smaller genus (*riv-ercane*) in the grass family that's more common in the Southeast. However, this was proper bamboo, ranging from broomstick to approximately calf thickness. It was bright green—perfect for cooking in and making utensils with. This reminded me of the bamboo I had a chance to work with in the Philippines years ago. But, I now considered myself lucky to be able to work with bamboo again just a couple of hours' flight away from home. When we returned to the camp, the first order



of business was to reinforce and thatch the lean-to shelter that had been in need of a "woods renovation." We went along the margin of a small pond to cut some shelter poles ranging from broomstick thickness to about wrist thickness. They were some sort of invasive green tree that had been in need of thinning.

◀ *Below left:* This hardwood wedge was made with the ESEE Expat Darien Machete and was used to split thick logs for the table project. Some firewood was also split with this wedge.

CHOPPING TASKS WITH THE DARIEN

The Darien was a real chopping machine. It was very comfortable during extended use, and it stayed in the hand, thanks to its Micarta grip and handle shape. The handle's natural arch was quite reminiscent of a long blade found in Southeast Asian cutlery.

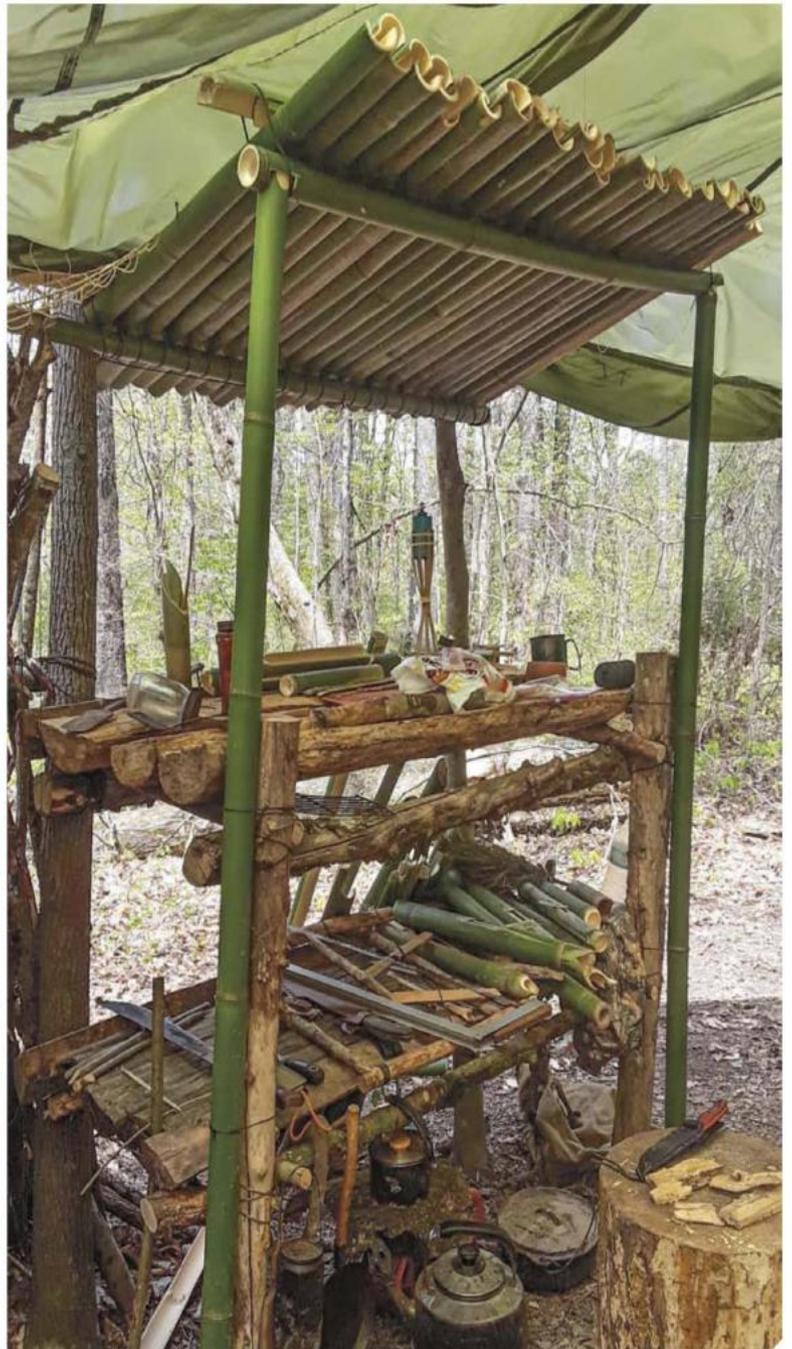
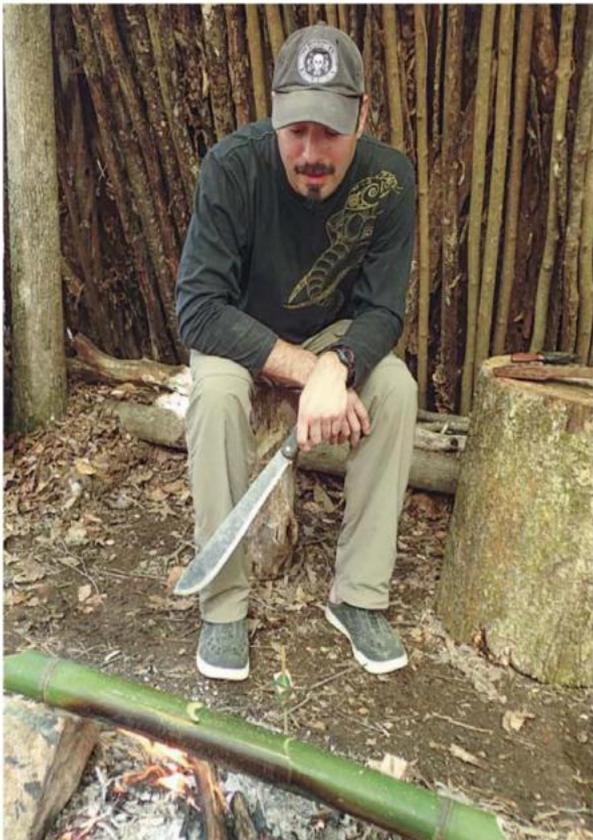
It didn't dawn on me that there was a lanyard hole until much later. I stopped using them on chopping blades years ago. Believe me, the last thing you want is to lose your grip on a chopping tool, only to have it come swinging back at you like a pendulum because of the lanyard. Experiencing this just once will make a believer out of *anyone!*

We then fixed an old rake whose broken handle was stuck inside. It was an important part of re-thatching the shelter, because it was easier than just using our feet to kick debris into piles or use our hands as rakes. It's important to work smart, and we had a lot of work ahead of us.

We weren't exactly rake repairmen, but we went at it. Patrick cut a piece of cedar and, with the help of the Darien's sharpened spine, I used it to carve off the bark and smooth it out. The Darien was also used to lop off and trim parts of poles and branches. The rake did some serious cleaning up; and, although it wasn't anything fancy, our rake repair was important.

◀ *Bottom left:* Keeping a close eye on the rice cooking in the bamboo, the author wields the Darien Machete. He learned this way of cooking rice in the Philippines.

◀ *Bottom right:* "Camp Georgia's" epic table and its bamboo roof. The Darien Machete had a hand in cutting bamboo poles, splitting bamboo for roof shingles and making many of the stakes and cooking devices on the shelves.



THE DARIEN GAP



To get in the spirit of the ESEE Expat Darien Machete, it's important to understand the origin of its name.

Unknown to most, the Darien Gap is a remote, roadless swath of jungle on the border between Panama and Colombia. Known as a drug-smuggling corridor between the two countries, it's rarely seen by outsiders. The Darien Gap has an almost mythical quality to it; it's a mysterious land full of exotic plants, rare wildlife, indigenous people and dangerous paramilitary groups. Largely untouched by the modern world, the Darien Gap is one of the least-visited places on the planet.

◀ *Below left:* It's a clean cut with one swipe of the Darien Machete. Bamboo must be chopped at an angle or it'll crack.

◀ *Bottom left:* The Darien was used to create a conventional cooking container by chopping two small, narrow, V-shaped notches close to the nodes. Its blade was then used to split the long piece out of the top. This would later cook a delicious shrimp-and-veggie omelet.

I was set up in the camp under a tarp placed over a hammock. The tarp needed to be staked out in at least four places, so I got to work fashioning about 10 stakes I made from the greenwood left over from the lean-to support poles (it's always good to make more stakes than you need to suit the ground levels, as well as how deep you need to get into the ground). I used the Darien as both a chopping tool and for cutting the notches and trimming the ends that would be hammered into the hard ground. I used the wide, flat part of the blade to lightly hammer in the stakes, making sure to wear leather gloves (for obvious reasons). Some stakes had to be pounded in the rest of the way with a wood baton—also roughly carved with the Darien. The leftover stakes were kept on hand as future replacements or for other projects.

One huge task we worked on was retrofitting a table we made a couple of years back. Basically, we needed to rebuild it, and that required splitting thick poplar logs with a hatchet and wooden mallet. This wasn't a realistic job for the Darien, but I did use it to roughly carve wedges out of oak. It was more of a "team player" than the "MVP" of this Herculean task.

Firewood was needed for the camp, especially because I was staying there almost every night. We had a couple of buck saws and a hatchet in the camp. A smart woodsman uses the best tool for the job, so I wasn't chopping firewood with a machete unless the wood was finger-thick or smaller. However, I did use the Darien to split a lot of wood, especially for use in the small Uberleben Flat Pack wood stove we had in the camp. Mostly, I split bamboo with the Darien.

The largest, most time-consuming projects were the table and the bamboo roof for it. This required a second trip to the "Bamboo Store" for more poles. We measured and cut the correct length with saws and then split the poles, length-wise, in the middle. The inside nodes were knocked out so the pieces would fit into each other, thereby creating bamboo shingles. I used the Darien for splitting the pieces with a baton and knocking out

"THE LATEST AND FOURTH MODEL IN ESEE'S EXPAT LINE OF KNIVES IS THE DARIEN MACHETE ... [IT'S] MADE IN CENTRAL AMERICA AND IS NAMED AFTER ITS SOUTHERNMOST TIP—A NO-MAN'S-LAND KNOWN AS THE DARIEN GAP."

◀ *Below:* A spatula made with the Darien Machete from a small, leftover piece of bamboo. One end is for cooking and eating rice. The other end is for poking meat and hard vegetables.





◀ Rice was made inside the bamboo. After, the bamboo vessel was split open to eat the rice. The spatulas were also made with the Darien Machete.

the nodes. Patrick did the lion's share of the work, as well as creating the design. The finished project looked like something out of *The Swiss Family Robinson*!

BAMBOO COOKING

As stated earlier, I encountered bamboo during a jungle survival class I attended at the J.E.S.T. (Jungle Environment Survival Training) Camp in the Philippines. There's a rich history there that dates back to the early days of the Vietnam War, and it's where the United States military trained before being deployed. The instructors were absolute masters of bamboo and their big-bladed tools known as "bolos."

I had to rely on my memory and old photos when it came to reproducing a lot of the bamboo implements I had learned in the Philippines several years back. I remembered carving about five spatulas a night just to keep busy while hunkering around a large star fire lay in the jungle. Eventually, I used them or discarded them when I got back home.

Now, it was time to make some more.

Like a kid sitting down eagerly to open presents on Christmas morning, that's how I was with the bamboo. The first thing I did was section a green piece about the size of my forearm, made a slightly angled chop (perpendicular) a few inches from the node and a second chop a few inches above it to get started. With the blade still in the second cut, I lightly pried the blade by turning my wrist counterclockwise until the top (lid) popped out, revealing a chamber for cooking. Then, turning the work over and inserting the blade in the start of the second cut, I sliced it down to the node. This is where the top (lid) would be slid in to hold it in place and also act as a closure point for the lid when cooking rice.

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◀ *Far left:* The cooked omelet, comprising shrimp, eggs, wild green onions, peppers, tomatoes and cheese, was made in green bamboo. The lid was removed to serve it.

◀ *Near left:* These are just some of the shelter poles for the camp's lean-to that needed to be repaired. The Darien Machete was used to chop, split and carve bamboo poles for various camp projects.



To cook rice, I filled half the chamber with rice and the entire chamber with water, making sure to shake it from side to side to spread out the rice before placing it over the fire. (If everything is done correctly, the rice will be cooked between 20 and 25 minutes.)

Getting it out was another process: I made three angled chops at one end of the cooked chamber. At the opposite end, I inserted the long blade as closely as possible to the top of the chamber surface and slowly pried—as if slicing lengthwise with a drawknife—to peel the length of the top of the chamber open. When it met up with the three chops at the other end, it came free (a few cuts might be needed to disconnect any uncut bamboo fibers).

As an experiment, I wanted to make a bamboo steamer propped up with a “Y” stick holding it in place over the fire. I cut the bamboo pieces I needed with a saw. I selected a thinner piece for the cooking chamber and poked several holes in the

node at what would become the bottom. I used a snug-fitting, larger-diameter piece of bamboo that was open at the top for boiling the water. After the bottom section was filled with water and the food added to the cooking chamber in the upper section, the latter was inserted into the open end of the larger piece. I then added a cap to the upper end of the cooking chamber.

As the water boiled, water and steam entered the upper chamber, cooking the fish and vegetables inside. It worked out pretty well.

To open the steamer to retrieve the food, I used the Darien in the same way as with the rice cooker—chopping one end and then slicing the top off the length of the food chamber to access the food.

Making an omelet in bamboo was an easy task for the Darien. The chamber was made in the most common way to cook in bamboo: I chopped a V-cut at a steep angle close to the node at each end of the same side of a length of bamboo. Then, I simply stuck the tip of the Darien into the bamboo

◀ *Left:* The Darien Machete comes with a flimsy canvas sheath. (Armatius Carry made the author a custom sheath that he used during the camp-building projects.)

at one end and pried the top off down the chamber's length to the other V-cut. This became the lid to the chamber. I spent awhile prepping the vegetables with the Darien, switching to its role as a large kitchen knife.

KITCHEN KNIFE

Kitchen duty with a machete might seem far from the norm for most of you reading this. However, in most developing countries, you'll see the machete being used for butchering and other kitchen tasks. A walk around a marketplace in Southeast Asia or South America will prove this.

Like a large kitchen knife, a machete is relatively thin for slicing, and it's wide for scooping up food to transfer, much like a Chinese cleaver. If the primary cutting edge is too thin, the back of a long blade can easily be used to crack through bones. In addition, when using a machete for kitchen duties, the grip often changes to a chef's grip—commonly known in the culinary world as a "pinch grip" (that is, lightly pinching the top of the handle with the forefinger and thumb where the handle meets the spine of the blade; the remaining three fingers grip the handle loosely). The wide profile makes a machete great for flattening meat or smashing garlic, ginger or nuts. Needless to say, the Darien fit the bill perfectly!

The weeks of the first stages of the pandemic lockdown were not wasted. Although the ESEE Expat Darien machete was a key player in Camp Georgia, it was really about the overall experience and how time was spent ... and not so much about the gear. Working with new gear and knowledgeable people will *always* be a fun and valuable investment of time. **ASG**



◀ The steamer also served as a dish after dinner was cooked. The length of bamboo was opened using the ESEE Expat Darien Machete.

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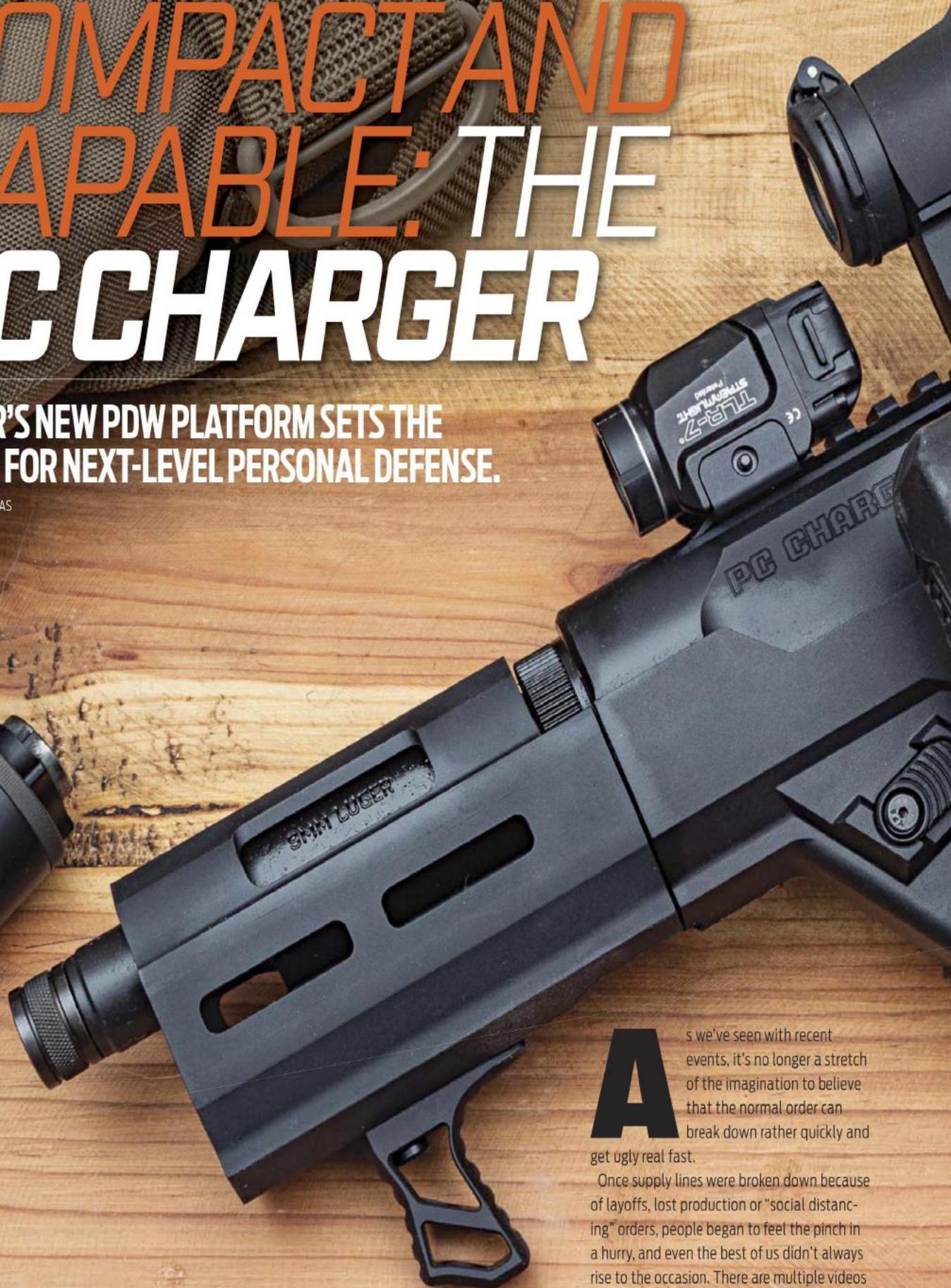
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COMPACT AND CAPABLE: THE PC CHARGER

RUGER'S NEW PDW PLATFORM SETS THE STAGE FOR NEXT-LEVEL PERSONAL DEFENSE.

BY GARRETT LUCAS



As we've seen with recent events, it's no longer a stretch of the imagination to believe that the normal order can break down rather quickly and get ugly real fast.

Once supply lines were broken down because of layoffs, lost production or "social distancing" orders, people began to feel the pinch in a hurry, and even the best of us didn't always rise to the occasion. There are multiple videos online of people getting into fights at stores

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› With a little imagination, the PC Charger can be converted into a formidable, low-profile fighting system.



The PC Charger is quick and nimble and delivers the goods in the accuracy department.



◀ Left: Most groups at 50 yards were in the 1- to 1.25-inch range. Shown here, 1.06 inches with Hornady's 135-grain Critical Duty.

and gas stations over relatively small things such as toilet paper. And that was even before the mass layoffs and the various government interventions.

Maybe what happened earlier this year is a wake-up call for people to start taking the notion of being prepared for such events more seriously. Certainly, it was a lesson in how civility buckles under the weight of even the slightest disruption.

For me, the recent turmoil emphasized the need for a more robust, but low-profile, defensive carry kit when I'm out and about. Luckily, Ruger came along at just the right moment with its new 9mm PC Charger.

BRIDGING THE GAP

The PC Charger is the next evolution of Ruger's extremely popular PC Carbine—particularly, the recent chassis model. It's a large-format pistol chambered in 9mm. However, it sports an extremely short barrel in comparison to the PCC. Just like its predecessor, it has interchangeable magazine well systems for both Ruger and Glock pistol magazines, and it also shares the same ability to separate the barrel and forend from the receiver via the quick



◀ Middle left: The PC Charger features both a reversible bolt release and magazine release.

◀ Bottom left: The relatively small PC Charger fits into Hazard4's Defense Courier messenger bag with a lot of room to spare.

› Top right: The PC Charger utilizes a crossbolt safety that's similar to those found on many standard American firearms.

› Middle right: Smaller accessories, such as the Streamlight TLR-7 and the Aimpoint Micro H1, help maintain the PC Charger's low profile.



takedown release. This allows the PC Charger to be broken down quickly and easily for storage in a relatively small bag or pack.

The Charger is a blow-back-operated pistol, although it features a dead-blow tungsten weight to help reduce bolt travel and minimize recoil. The 6.5-inch barrel is threaded ($\frac{1}{2}\times 28$) for a suppressor or other muzzle device. The folks at Ruger also kept lefties in mind: They designed both the charging handle and the magazine release to be reversible for intuitive operation.

The forend includes M-LOK attachment points, along with a factory-installed hand stop to protect the shooter. The glass-filled polymer chassis system allows the user to switch out the grip with any other standard AR grip of their choice, so that opens up a lot of possibilities for customization. Additionally, the real design coup is the short Picatinny rail at the end of the PC Charger's receiver that allows the shooter to install a stabilizing brace or other accessories for even further customization. In short, the PC Charger can be almost whatever *you* want it to be.

I wanted the PC Charger to be a stopgap defensive kit for times when I can't have a full-powered rifle with me. Sure, there are AR pistols on the market that are short and shoot more-powerful cartridges than a 9mm platform such as the PC Charger. However, they're still quite bulky overall and aren't as easy to stow away discreetly into a daypack or bag for effortless carry.

To be clear, my intent wasn't to replace my daily carry pistol but to supplement it. With the ability to take the same magazines as Ruger or Glock pistols, the PC Charger gives the user an efficient way to share the same



› The Ruger PC Charger is a large-format pistol based on the PC Carbine chassis model.

Ruger PC Charger

Specifications

- Caliber: 9mm
- Barrel: 6.5 inches (threaded $\frac{1}{2}\times 28$)
- Overall length: 16.5 inches
- Weight: 5.2 pounds
- Height: 5.6 inches
- Grip: Glass-filled nylon (A2 style)
- Sights: NA; Picatinny rail
- Action: Semi-automatic
- Finish: Type III anodized (receiver)
- Capacity: 15/17/30

MSRP: \$799

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“WITH THE ABILITY TO TAKE THE SAME MAGAZINES AS RUGER OR GLOCK PISTOLS, THE PC CHARGER GIVES THE USER AN EFFICIENT WAY TO SHARE THE SAME AMMUNITION—BUT IN A SLIGHTLY LARGER AND MORE STABLE PLATFORM.”

“FOR ME, THE PC CHARGER IS THE PERFECT STOPGAP KIT FOR THOSE TIMES WHEN I NEED MORE THAN A STANDARD PISTOL BUT DON’T HAVE THE OPTION OF A FULL-BLOWN RIFLE.”



◀ Above: As on the PC Carbine, the PC Charger’s barrel and forend can be quickly removed via the takedown mechanism.



ammunition—but in a slightly larger and more stable platform. That’s the magic of a large-format pistol. It’s not necessarily more inherently accurate than a standard pistol. However, it provides a more stable shooting platform, which tends to improve the shooter’s accuracy and effectiveness when it matters most.

GEARING UP

To take advantage of the PC Charger’s potential, I added a few accessories that would enhance its (and my) performance while still maintaining its compact and low-profile form factor.

First, I reached out to the folks at SB Tactical and requested SB’s new FS1913 folding brace to attach to the Charger’s Picatinny rail at the rear of the receiver.

SB Tactical offers two versions of that folding brace: One has a polymer strut, and the other—the “A” version—has an aluminum strut. The “A” version weighs a few ounces more, but I felt the trade-off was worth it for the rugged build quality. The “A” version costs \$249, but it’s well worth the

price, considering the excellent machining and attention to detail. But, if money’s tight, the polymer version can be had for around \$50 less.

I’ve had an Aimpoint Micro H1 red-dot optic for about 18 months, and I’ve been trying to find just the right fit for it. I found it with the PC Charger. The Micro H1 (the Aimpoint H2 is now in production) is the perfect red-dot companion to the Charger because of its very compact size and long battery life. Some sort of wizardry allows my Micro H1’s 2 MOA red-dot to stay powered for years at a time on just one 2032 battery. That means there’s no fiddling with it when I bring it out to rock and roll.

Another company I hold in high regard is Streamlight. I’ve been using its LED lights and laser modules for years and years, and I still haven’t had one go bad on me. From penlights to weapon lights, every Streamlight product I’ve used has been worth every, single penny ... and then some. One of my favorite products is the TLR-7 weapon light; I have several of them. They’re designed well, are easy to operate and very ruggedly built.

The TLR-7 offers a 500-lumen output—more than enough light for a large room or hallway. Even so, it’s not so bright that the user’s vision is impacted by the blinding glare of splashback from the light. In the future, I might switch out to a TLR-8 for the Charger. The TLR-8 includes an aiming laser in addition to the LED light. I’m sure that could be handy in certain situations.

RANGE PREPPING

Part of being prepared is not only having the gear, but also getting in lots of practice so that when the time comes, its use and operation will be second nature.

I spent a good amount of time with the PC Charger before writing this review—and for good reason: For AR-minded folks, the manual of arms isn’t quite the same. The magazine release is in a different spot, as is the crossbolt safety. It

◀ Far left, top: A Picatinny rail is mounted at the rear of the PC Charger’s receiver for attaching a brace or other accessories.

◀ Far left, bottom: For its size, the PC Charger offers a good amount of Picatinny rail space to mount optics and other accessories.

Accessories

Micro H2 Red Dot Sight

MSRP: \$750
Aimpoint
(703) 263-9795
Aimpoint.com

FS1913 Stabilizing Brace

MSRP: Starting at \$199
SB Tactical
(941) 748-2270
SB-Tactical.com

TLR-7 Weapon Light

MSRP: \$225.75
Streamlight
(800) 523-7488
Streamlight.com



took a little time to get comfortably familiar with their locations and operation. Also, the PC Charger has a reciprocating charging handle, so new users will want to watch how and where they grasp the pistol during fire.

Before hitting the range, I swapped out the magazine wells to accept Glock 9mm magazines. I've got an ample supply of them in a variety of capacities that will fit almost any occasion. Swapping the magazine well parts requires breaking down the pistol to its major components and separating the receiver from the chassis. However, after a couple of dry runs, I was able to get the whole process done in fewer than five minutes, so the learning curve isn't that steep.

On a few occasions, and with the help of a couple of shooting buddies, we ran the PC Charger both with and without my Octane 9 suppressor. We shot a total of 12 different types and brands of ammunition from Sig Sauer, Focchi, Federal, Hornady and Speer. We even threw some of Black Hills' +P Honey Badger loads into the mix.

Even with more than 600 rounds spent over several sessions, the PC Charger didn't experience a single malfunction. Our testing included both factory Glock magazines and aftermarket Magpul magazines—and that was shooting the PC Charger straight out of the box and without any cleaning. It doesn't get much better than that when it comes to reliability!

With its blow-black operating system, we did feel the *ker-thunk* of the recoil, but it's not really that off-putting. It's only 9mm, and that level of recoil is easily tamed, even by novice shooters. The PC Charger is very front-heavy, so the stabilizing brace does its part when used as intended for one-handed shooting. It's a bit cumbersome to use in that manner, especially when dealing with the Velcro straps, but it works.

Nevertheless, Ruger thoughtfully included a hand stop up front for those who want to use both hands. It served its purpose well, but I had to adjust its position slightly from the factory position to allow a little more room for my hand. And, for the uninitiated: You

› *Top left:* The Picatinny rail provided plenty of space to attach an Aimpoint Micro HI optic and Streamlight TLR-7 light.

› *Top right:* The PC Charger easily tucks away—with plenty of room left over for other gear—into a small-to-medium pack such as the 5.11 Tactical AMP 24.

› *Right:* The PC Charger is fitted with an A2-style grip and will accommodate standard aftermarket AR grips.

› *Below:* The PC Charger can be broken down into its major components in just a couple of minutes for a magazine well swap or stowage.





› Below: A factory-installed hand stop is pre-mounted for the user's protection.



› Above: The PC Charger was 100 percent reliable with all ammunition types and with more than 600 rounds, even when running the SilencerCo Octane 9 suppressor.

“WHEN IT COMES TO PERSONAL DEFENSE, IT’S JUST LIKE ANYTHING ELSE IN LIFE: YOU WANT TO HAVE THE RIGHT TOOL FOR THE JOB.”

can't put a vertical foregrip on the front, because the Charger is a pistol (doing that would create some NFA problems for you ...).

One of the high points of shooting the PC Charger was the trigger unit, which was borrowed from Ruger's 10/22. It had a surprisingly light break at around 3.42 pounds, with just the slightest bit of takeup. The reset was not insanely short, but it provided a positive tactile and audible response when it occurred. Aside from the shooting experience, itself, the superb trigger pull also contributed to the Charger's accuracy while we tested it from the bench.

With the aid of a Leupold 2-7X VXR FireDot scope, I shot some 50-yard groups with a few of my favorite loads from Hornady, Sig Sauer and Federal Premium. To be honest, between the hand stop and the unusual shape of the brace, it was tough for me to get a really stable and unmoving shooting position with the Charger. Even so, most five-shots I shot were in the 1- to 1.25-inch range at 50 yards.

From the ammunition I had available at the time, the PC Charger liked Hornady's 135-grain Critical Duty loads the most. The two best groups were shot with it and measured 1.06 and 1.12 inches. The Sig Sauer 147-grain Elite V-Crown wasn't far behind, with a best group of 1.19 inches. And, all those groups were with the Charger wobbling around a bit at the bench. During my accuracy testing, I had six different groups that had three shots going into one hole, so I'm thinking there's a lot of untapped accuracy potential there to explore ... but I was already eminently impressed with the pistol's performance.

READY FOR THE UNKNOWN

After the testing was done, I tried out a few bags and packs I use

on a regular basis. The PC Charger tucked away into a 5.11 Tactical AMP 24 pack and a Hazard 4 Defense Courier Bag with ease—I didn't even have to break down the pistol. I still had room for my laptop and accessories in the Defense Courier Bag. Both of these are low-profile products that can be worn or carried in public without drawing attention. I did find, because of space restrictions, that it was better to keep a 15- or 17-round magazine seated in the PC Charger while being carried in that fashion and to have the longer, 33-round magazines on hand for reloads.

When it comes to personal defense, it's just like anything else in life: You want to have the right tool for the job.

For me, the PC Charger is the perfect stopgap kit for those times when I need more than a standard pistol but don't have the option of a full-blown rifle. There are similar products on the market, but they're substantially more expensive. With an MSRP of just \$799, the PC Charger can be had for quite a bit less (with a little judicious shopping). That's a lot of value for your money for what the PC Charger offers, especially considering its accuracy and utter reliability. It also leaves you with enough cash to dress it up the way you like or to stock up on extra magazines.

If you're looking for a stealthy carry kit to bridge that defensive gap on the go or a handy home-defense package that doesn't bust the bank, the PC Charger might be for you. But not *this one*—I've already bought it, and it's riding shotgun with me from now on. You'll just have to find your own. **ASG**

SOURCES

5.11 Tactical
(866) 451-1726
511Tactical.com

Black Hills Ammunition
(605) 348-5150
Black-Hills.com

Federal Ammunition
(800) 648-9624
FederalPremium.com

Fiocchi USA
(417) 725-4118
FiocchiUSA.com

Glock
(770) 432-1202
US.Glock.com

Hazard-4
Hazard-4.com

Hornady
(800) 338-3220
Hornady.com

Magpul
(877) 462-4785
Magpul.com

Sig Sauer
(603) 610-3000
SigSauer.com

SilencerCo
(801) 417-5384
SilencerCo.com

Speer
(866) 286-7436
Speer.com

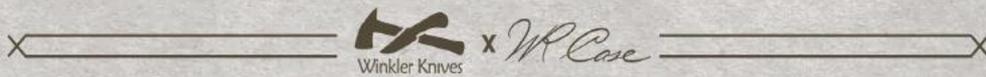


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“DON’T PANIC. STAY CALM, AND DON’T BE AFRAID TO ADAPT, OR EXPERIMENT WITH, THE METHODS DISCUSSED HERE IN YOUR EFFORTS TO FIND A SOLUTION.”



10 WAYS TO WET YOUR WHISTLE

HOW TO FIND WATER IN AUSTERE ENVIRONMENTS

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY CHRISTOPHER NYERGES

A water still is a way to extract water from the soil. The principle is similar to that of a still a moonshiner would make in the woods, but it's much simpler.

The simplest water still is powered by the sun and nature's water cycle. However, before we get started, keep in mind that this still, known as a "solar still," is a method of last resort. Although I've made many to learn how to do it and see how it works, I've never had to make one in a situation for which it would be life or death to have water.

This is a survival technology that might enable you to get some water when none is apparently available. It's possible that you'd need to know how to do this if you were lost in the desert or if you were marooned on some remote beach with only sea water. It can also be useful in other environments.

First, let's look at how to make the still. Then, after you see how to make it and how it works, we're going to explore other ways you might obtain water that are a lot easier and perhaps more reliable than the solar still.



◀ Above: Fresh water streams flow into the ocean. Look for these if you need drinkable water.

◀ Left: Two days earlier, this was just a dry wash. After a rainstorm, this stream appeared. Look for dry stream beds if you need to dig for water or build a still.

◀ *Near right:* To make a solar water still, dig a hole about 3 feet deep and 3 feet wide in a spot where water is likely to be underground.



◀ *Far right:* After you've dug the hole, pile up the soil around its perimeter.

SOLAR STILL

Supplies Required:

- One large, clear plastic sheet (ideally at least 6x6 feet)
- A cup or container
- A shovel

It only takes about 30 minutes to dig and set up a solar still, and it can be left there indefinitely.

Location is very important. You should dig in a place where the most water is likely to be found not far below the surface. That means you're going to dig in a dry stream bed, not up high on a hillside. If you're at the beach, you'll dig in the sand above the high-tide line.

In an ideal location, you're going to dig a hole about 3 feet deep and 3 feet wide. A shovel obviously makes this easier, but

I've done it with hubcaps and sticks. The type of soil you're digging in will determine the kind of tool you'll need.

Place your container in the middle of the hole. You can also place green vegetation (non-toxic) around the container, because the vegetation will also give up some of its water.

Next, cover the hole with the sheet of plastic, and seal the edges of the plastic with the soil you just dug out. Place a stone in the middle of the plastic so that it's situated directly above the container. It should be just heavy enough to cause the plastic to sag in the middle. That's it.

Now, you wait.

If conditions are just right (they rarely are), and if there's water underground, water will continue to evaporate out of the soil, as it always does as part of the hydrological cycle. Your plastic sheet will trap the moisture that comes out of the hole. It will condense on the underside of the plastic and drip back down into the container ... again, that's if everything goes right (check out the accompanying pictures, because this is a pretty simple procedure).



◀ *Far left:* A cup is put in the middle of the hole, and vegetation is then placed around the container to add to the still's output.

◀ *Top, near left:* The hole is now covered with a sheet of clear plastic, and the edges of the plastic will then be sealed with the soil.



◀ *Bottom, near left:* A little stone is placed in the middle of the plastic to form a cone, which points directly into the cup below.

How much water can you obtain in your container? In several situations in desert conditions, I had mixed results. After about 24 hours, I have gotten no water (in some cases), a couple of tablespoons and, in a few cases, nearly a quart. The amount you get is highly variable, but it depends largely on the season and the amount of water that's underground where you dug.

On one occasion when I built a solar still in the mountains, there was heavy dew that night. Nearly a quart of water collected on top of the plastic sheet, but only a few tablespoons had been collected in the inside container.

If you're stuck on an ocean beach, you already know there's water underground. When you create a solar still on the beach, you're basically distilling ocean water, and the water you collect is palatable.

STRANDED ON A BOAT

A growing number of anthropologists believe that the oceans in the past were not barriers to human travel but were the actual "highways" on which people traveled great distances. The trade winds—well-charted prevailing easterly winds near the equator—can take a sailboat from the Mediterranean Sea to the Caribbean Sea, just as they did for Columbus more than 500 years ago.

The path of the trade winds is not devoid of food, as you might think. Along the route, you'll find ocean birds, lots of fish, turtles and seaweed—all the things that can sustain life on long voyages.

However, what happens when your water supply on the ship runs out? Today, the well-equipped sailor can phone or radio for help. But what if you're out to sea unexpectedly—without adequate water. What can you do?

In the reports I've collected about sailors who survived when their ship floated out in the ocean for 30 days or more, I've noted that the survivors all had a few things in common: They all tried to collect rain and dew that collected on the sails or in the boat and used that for their water supply.

One solution to a diminishing source of fresh water is to mix your fresh water with ocean water. Thor Heyerdahl discovered that his crew was able to mix up to 40 percent ocean water with 60 percent fresh water to extend their water supply. They experienced no ill effects and noted that this blend quenched their thirst better than all fresh water.

Other survivors have reported that they would drink ocean water, but only in small sips, little by little. Salty ocean water is not inherently poisonous, as is commonly believed. It contains sodium chloride, potassium chloride and perhaps 20 more suspended minerals. However, if you were to drink it as you would regular water, the result is usually vomiting, diarrhea and a net water loss—which, over time, will lead to dehydration and death. But slow sipping—never really enough at one time to quench the thirst—can be done if you discipline yourself. In addition, it will fight off dehydration until fresh water, such as rain, can be collected. Even so, it's really not recommended unless you're very desperate.

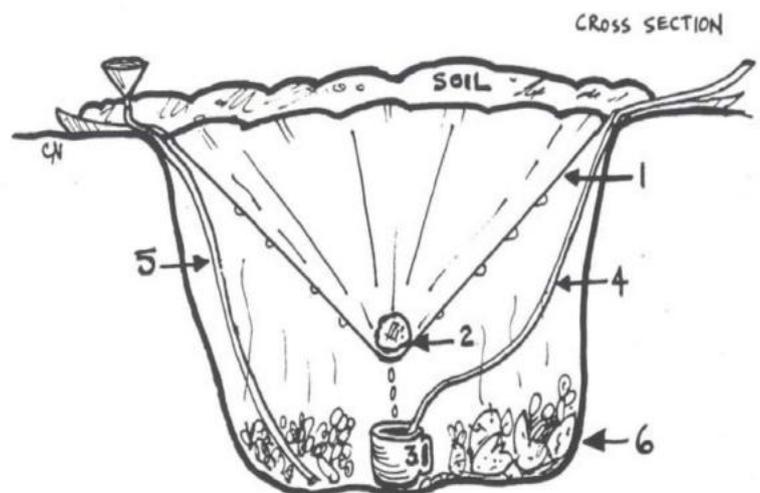
Of course, regular intake of fresh water is important. But if your canteens and jugs are totally empty, what can you do? If you planned ahead, you could set out your distillation device, fill it with ocean water and suck out some potable water in a few hours.



◀ Above: The stone is adjusted so that the cone is properly lined up with the cup.

◀ Below: This diagram shows the cross-section of a solar still. Note that you can insert a tube to suck the water out of the cup. In addition, you can also add a way to pour urine into the still, which also distills down to potable water.

SOLAR STILL



- 1: Sheet of plastic, 5 to 6 ft. diam. Soil around the edges holds the plastic in place. Note the condensation on the bottom of plastic.
- 2: Smooth, egg-sized rock to form cone.
- 3: Cup to catch water.
- 4: Drinking tube, 1/4" diam., approx. 5 ft. long.
- 5: Tube to allow urine in regularly without opening still. Note funnel at top.
- 6: Broken cacti and other vegetation placed in hole.

"IT ONLY TAKES ABOUT 30 MINUTES TO DIG AND SET UP A SOLAR STILL, AND IT CAN BE LEFT THERE INDEFINITELY."

› *Near right:* A still can be made in the backyard with these parts: a can, bucket, sheet of plastic and some cord.

› *Middle right:* Put the can into the middle of the bucket.

› *Far right:* Add rocks to the can so that it won't float in the water. Alternatively, find a way to secure the can to the bottom of the bucket. Then, add impure water to the bucket, around the can.



› *Near right:* Cover the bucket with the sheet of clear plastic and put a stone on the top to create a cone that points into the can.



› *Left:* Condensation on the bottom of the plastic. Note: For various reasons, this isn't an efficient or quick method. There are many possible ways to distill water, using the sun, fuel and other methods.

“THE SIMPLEST WATER STILL IS POWERED BY THE SUN AND NATURE’S WATER CYCLE.”

A simple still can be made with two buckets and a sheet of plastic. It's not perfect, and it's not highly efficient or all that quick, but it'll distill drinkable water. Here's how to do it.

The simplest version requires two buckets and a sheet of plastic. Place a small bucket into a larger bucket and pour ocean water into the larger one, making sure to avoid getting any in the smaller bucket. You might have to put a rock or a weight in the inner bucket so it stays put. Then, you cover the top with a sheet of clear plastic, securing it with some cordage. Finally, put a weight or stone in the middle of the plastic to create a low spot in the middle that's over the smaller bucket.

As the ocean water evaporates, pure water condenses on the underside of the plastic and drips into the inner bucket. If you're in a boat that's constantly moving and rocking, you might not capture a lot of pure water in your inner bucket. Still, it's worth trying if you have the supplies.

If you expect to be around seawater, bring a water filter that works specifically with seawater. This is the best way to be ready if your supply of fresh water is insufficient.

But, let's assume you have no such device. What now?

Dew. Another source of water is dew. By stretching and tying out a sheet of plastic, you could capture dew during the night. The sheet of plastic needs to be tied out with a slope that leads into a container. As the dew settles and coalesces into droplets, they

drain into the container. Because this is wholly dependent on weather conditions, you might get a little ... or you might get a lot. More dew results during those nights when the daytime has been clear.

Rain. It also rains out at sea, so, again, if you stretch out a sheet of plastic and slope it so it drains into a bucket, you can capture rain water. In the field, I've collected a gallon in fewer than 15 minutes during a downpour. How much you can actually collect is determined by how hard it's raining, as well as the size of your collection "device" (that is, the size of your sheet of plastic and bucket).

Seaweed. Some, but not all, seaweeds, have flotation bubbles that are usually located at the base of the "leaf." These can be cut open. The liquid inside is typically less saline than the ocean water. While there isn't a lot of water in each of these floats—maybe a half-teaspoon per float—it can add up.

Urine. *No, no, no!* Urine is your body's waste product. You *could* use urine to cool down, but why do that when the ocean is all around? Urine is useful for treating chapped skin—but *don't drink it!*

STRANDED ON THE SHORE

Let's say you've beached up on some unknown shore. There are no towns or villages around where you can get water or help.

So, where do you get your water?

Coconuts. Are you in the South Pacific? Are there coconuts growing on your beach? If so, you can remove the outer husk from a coconut and, using an awl-like device, cut into one of the three "eyes." If your timing is right, you'll have some sweet and nourishing water. If not, the coconut could be dry, or the water could be sour.

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909-594-2888



◀ Above: This man was digging a “body hollow” (a type of primitive shelter) when he hit water! He then built a different shelter nearby, and his “well” provided water.

Digging for water. One way to obtain water from beach areas is to simply dig a well above the high-tide line. The beach will likely be very sandy, so it’ll be hard to dig a deep hole—because the sand continually falls back into the hole. Even so, keep at it. Dig a few inches deeper than the water level. Wait awhile for the water that collects to clarify. This water is significantly less saline than the ocean water, and you might also be able to filter it a bit by running it through a bandanna or other primitive filtration medium.

Streams. Don’t forget that streams and other waterways flow into the ocean. Explore a bit and look for springs and streams; their water might not even have to be distilled.

Just because you found a stream that flows into the ocean doesn’t mean you can drink it without reservation. The simplest method for purifying water of biological contaminants is boiling, which necessitates having the ability to make a fire and some sort of container; for example, a discarded metal can will work fine.

Trees. Whether you’re on a beach, in the desert or the mountains, there are often trees around. If you have a clear plastic bag, you can set up a transpiration bag and hope to get some water.

It’s really easy: Find a tree with green leaves that are non-toxic. That’s not too hard to do, because the moisture evaporating out of most trees won’t be toxic. Only a few are really bad (oleander is one). Eucalyptus isn’t bad for you, but it doesn’t taste great. On the other hand, trees found along water are the best for a transpiration bag—for instance, willow, alder, cottonwood and even oaks.

Find the south-facing side of the tree (where the sun shines) and gather the leaves from a large branch into a clear plastic bag. Be

careful not to puncture the bag. Tie off the bag at the opening and return in a few hours or the next day. You might not get a lot of water with this method, but it only takes about five minutes to set it up, and it’s easy to quickly set up multiple bags.

As the tree’s leaves transpire moisture, the water collects in the bag. If conditions are optimal, you’ll get a quart or so in a day. (In case you’re wondering: Yes, the water will taste like the tree it came from.) Move the plastic bag around every other day or so, because the heat inside the bag “cooks” the leaves, and they no longer function well.

EXPERIMENT

The methods described here cover the possibilities you could have in most situations, but there might also be other options. The thing to keep in mind is that water is just about everywhere. This is certainly true at the beach and on the ocean. The key is to find potable water or figure out a way to make it.

Don’t panic. Stay calm, and don’t be afraid to adapt, or experiment with, the methods discussed here in your efforts to find a solution. **ASG**



◀ Top left: A transpiration bag is simply a clear plastic bag placed over a leafy branch; in this case, a willow branch. The plastic bag captures the transpiring moisture from the tree’s leaves.



◀ Middle left: A School of Self-Reliance student looks at the willow water that was collected in a transpiration bag. The author had attached the bag 24 hours prior.



◀ Bottom left: The author’s students discovered that their transpiration bag had collected almost a quart of willow water. Its palatability and smell would improve if they ran it through a filter before drinking it.

GEAR

GUIDE

TIMBER!

TREE-FELLING GEAR TO CUT IT DOWN AND CHOP IT UP!

BY MICHAEL D'ANGONA

Fire equals comfort, security and the ability to cook food, but it won't "live" without fuel!

Firewood is a resource many take for granted when out in a woodland environment. Surrounded by countless trees, saplings, scattered dead branches and logs, one might assume that firewood is ripe for the picking and not something that should be gathered *before* the need arises.

However, that assumption could prove disastrous. Lack of enough ready firewood can lead to your dinner not being fully cooked, nature's creepy-crawlies

inviting themselves into your camp ... or worse—hypothermia. In addition, the peace of mind and comfort a fire brings can improve your mental state when you're alone in the wilderness.

Simple solutions for gathering food for your fire come in the form of tree-felling and wood-processing gear—much needed when using the forest as your temporary home. From axes to hatchets to hand saws, having the proper tools to convert the silent giants of the woods to life-saving heat will ensure comfortable nights and satisfying meals. **ASG**





GEAR GUIDE



M48 Woodsman Axe With Sheath

Overview

M48 always brings its A-game to any tool, and the Woodman's Axe is no exception. The razor-sharp camping axe head is ready to take down small trees to clear your campsite, and its solid hammer back end is perfect for pounding stakes or other outdoor construction tasks. Its injection-molded, ridged handle provides a solid grip, ensuring hours of safe and productive work. This axe is ideal for both rural and urban environments. It measures 15.50 inches overall and packs a wallop with every strike!

Specifications

- 3Cr13 cast stainless steel with black-oxide-coated finish
- 3.25-inch, razor-sharp blade with 0.8-inch textured hammer head
- Injection-molded, nylon-reinforced fiberglass handle
- Included nylon belt sheath protects the axe head when not in use

MSRP

\$45.99

URL

CHKadels.com



Zippo AxeSaw

Overview

This item is a trifecta of usefulness out in the wilderness. It features a solid, durable axe, a powerful handsaw blade and a hefty mallet to pound stakes. You'll need to store and carry only one tool to perform multiple camp-centric tasks. A 420 stainless steel axe head and polymer handle will stand up to repeated punishment while in use and remain solid and ready for more. The AxeSaw's ingenious design ensures all parts can store away safely when not in use.

Specifications

- 5-inch steel axe offers durability under repeated use
- 15-inch, hardened stainless steel saw blade
- Heavy tent stake hammer is integrated into axe head
- Rust and corrosion protection for all-weather use
- Safety features keep blade safe, yet easily accessible

MSRP

\$89.95

URL

Zippo.com



Gerber Gear Pack Hatchet

Overview

Great things come in small packages, and the compact Pack Hatchet exemplifies this to the fullest. Sporting a total length of 9.46 inches, this all-around camp tool is ready to shatter saplings, split kindling and make short work of small logs as you prepare the campfire. Its full-tang construction ensures it will hold up to regular use. Finger grooves under the head improve control and comfort for more-detailed and precise tasks—the best of both worlds!

Specifications

- Blade length: 3.50 inches
- Weight: 20.8 ounces
- Durable, stainless steel construction
- Tall grind for optimal sharpness
- Rubber overmolded handle
- Includes belt-carry sheath for easy transport

MSRP

\$35

URL

GerberGear.com



Gerber Gear 23.5-Inch Freescape Axe

Overview

This axe sports a modern look but functions via tried-and-true chopping performance. Designed with a black PTFE coating over the blade, it has no trouble getting through logs without sticking or jamming. In addition, each chop of the Freescape averages nearly three times deeper than other comparable axes, making the chore of chopping wood for the fire quicker and almost fatigue free. The tactile grip of the nylon handle aids in relief of any strain and improves control as you swing, thereby decreasing your chance of an accident.

Specifications

- Weight: 3 pounds, 6 ounces
- Solid, forged-steel head
- Superior edge retention offers nonstop cutting power
- Durable and lightweight composite handle
- Limited lifetime warranty

MSRP

\$59

URL

GerberGear.com



Gerber Gear Freescape Camp Saw

Overview

No longer will the awkward shape of a bow saw clutter your gear bag or tool chest—not when you have the Freescape saw, that is! This amazingly designed, 12-inch wood saw quickly transforms from a safely folded, easily stored tool into a solid cutting “monster” in the field. This saw’s green, molded handle makes it easy to locate it in your pack or campsite, and its one-piece design ensures no parts are left on the ground or back at the house. This camp saw is ideal for camp, survival or any outdoor use.

Specifications

- Innovative design offers practicality and optimal performance
- Four pivot points to maximize usable cutting area
- Uses standard 12-inch saw blades
- Folds down flat for easy storage and carry
- Rubber overmolded grip allows for stable cutting

MSRP

\$55

URL

GerberGear.com



CRKT Persevere Axe Head

Overview

When storage space and load weight are concerns, this tree-chopping item is the way to go. Carried in the included pouch, this 6.8-ounce axe head is ready and willing to produce a wood pile that’ll keep you warm throughout the night. Just create a handle with any piece of found hardwood, and you’re good to go. The included pins and ties, along with detailed instructions, make creating your “customized” axe easy when it’s time to make camp.

Specifications

- Blade length: 5.42 inches
- Black powder-coated axe head
- Use as a splitting wedge, axe, knife, adze or chisel
- Includes black attachment cord with tie bead
- Included polyester pouch with belt loop holds all parts

MSRP

\$34.99

URL

CRKT.com

GEAR GUIDE



CRKT Woods Kangee T-Hawk

Overview

With its simple, yet reliable, design, the T-Hawk takes control of building your firewood pile so you'll be assured of plenty of wood throughout the cold night. Its balanced axe head features a one-piece carbon-steel blade and a multi-purpose back spike that are easily accessible with just a twist of your wrist. The Tennessee hickory hardwood within your grip stays firm, even under harsh outdoor conditions. Want a traditional 'hawk that'll provide you with years of reliable use? Then, the Kangee has a place in your pack.

Specifications

- Blade length: 4.21 inches
- 19.13-inch total length
- Hot-forged 1055 carbon steel
- Back spike offers balance and multiple uses
- Sheath not included

MSRP

\$69.99

URL

CRKT.com



UST ParaHatchet FS

Overview

Whether you're camping, backpacking, hunting, fishing or just preparing for an unexpected emergency, the ParaHatchet should be standard issue. This compact, multi-functional tool offers a sharp blade for hacking through saplings, kindling or shaving tinder. It also features a fire starter, a rope cutter, integrated wrenches and 8 feet of valuable cordage that does double duty as your handle grip. Its included sheath protects the blade and secures the hatchet to your belt for easy access and travel. At only 11.4 ounces, you won't even know you're carrying it ... until you need it!

Specifications

- Compact, black-oxide-coated blade
- Paracord-wrapped handle provides a secure grip
- Rope cutter slashes through cordage and vines
- Includes magnesium fire starter and protective sheath

MSRP

\$19.99

URL

USTBrands.com



Camillus CAMTRAX 3-In-1 Hatchet

Overview

Choose between chopping and sawing with this multi-functional tool. The 3-inch edge on its head makes short work of almost any natural material, thereby keeping your campfire fed. Its integrated, 7-inch saw rips through larger material with ease while reducing user fatigue because of its ergonomic hand grip. Time to set up your tent? No problem—stakes won't see what's coming as you pound them into the earth with the hard hammer end. Don't forget this valuable tool on your next outdoor adventure.

Specifications

- Titanium-treated steel blade reduces weight and improves performance
- Hammer is useful for numerous campsite tasks
- Locking, 7-inch saw folds out of handle
- Reversible, glass-filled nylon sheath with bottle opener
- Multi-position grips for optimal power transfer

MSRP

\$47.98

URL

CamillusKnives.com

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GEAR GUIDE



Gransfors Bruk Wildlife Hatchet

Overview

The Swedes know how to do axes right, and this little number is no exception. Created by true craftsmen, this 13.5-inch hatchet should find a home in every backwoodsman's rucksack. Its solid head lops off branches and takes down small-diameter trees in no time flat. The hearty hardwood handle holds up, no matter what Mother Nature is throwing your way. The Bruk Wildlife Hatchet is a small axe with plenty of power that puts it well in the league of the "big boys"—without sacrificing valuable gear space.

Specifications

- Weight: 1.30 pounds
- Quality Swedish craftsmanship
- Pre-drilled handle hole for hanging or adding a lanyard
- Ideal for splitting logs or felling small trees
- Includes vegetable-tanned leather sheath

MSRP

\$153

URL

HighlandWoodworking.com



CRKT Freyr Axe

Overview

With an almost battle-axe style and feel, the Freyr offers surprising heft and weight behind every powerful strike. This axe features a longer-than-average beard that's ideal for larger hacking tasks. Its Tennessee hickory handle protects from mis-strikes. The handle and solid blade work together to achieve an almost perfect balance, allowing every chop to gouge deeply into the wood. It's designed for modern-day use but incorporates influences from centuries gone by.

Specifications

- Overall length: 16.13 inches
- Weight: 1.79 pounds
- Hot-forged 1055 carbon-steel blade
- Magnesium-phosphate blade coating
- Sheath not included

MSRP

\$99.99

URL

CRKT.com



Iunio Survival Off-Road Tool Kit

Overview

This multi-purpose tool kit offers all you need to handle whatever nature sets in front of you. From chopping down small trees to clear your camp or splitting logs and splintering kindling, this axe does it all. Use the reverse-side hammer for pounding tent stakes deep into the earth. Best of all, all the pieces unscrew and store easily in its companion tool bag. You can adjust the handle length anytime with simple, screw-on attachments.

Specifications

- Total length: 16.9 inches
- Customizable for various lengths and attachments
- Back of axe head features a hammer for stakes or nails
- Chops through saplings or small logs
- Easily splits wood for kindling

MSRP

\$169.99

URL

Iuniores.com

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GEAR GUIDE



CRKT Birler Axe

Overview

Simple in design but powerful in application, the Birler Axe easily handles most camping-related tasks. From felling small trees for firewood to splitting logs and splintering timber for kindling, this 16-inch-long jack-of-all-trades is a must-have in any woodland environment. Take this “boss of the backwoods” along on all outdoor adventures to be absolutely sure your firewood pile will be full and plentiful for those cold, dark nights.

Specifications

- Blade length: 3.70 inches
- Weight: 1.14 pounds
- Axe head constructed of 1055 carbon steel
- Clear lacquer blade finish offers weather protection
- Tennessee hickory hardwood handle
- Sheath not included

MSRP

\$89.99

URL

CRKT.com



Gransfors Bruk Hunter's Axe

Overview

Traditionally created, the Hunter's Axe exhibits all the characteristics of age-old style and performance but still produces steady chopping output. It offers a textured handle, so you'll enjoy nonslip security with each intense swing. It's truly a work of art—beautiful, with a curved face, thin head and a rounded poll. Its handle is created from hickory hardwood.

Specifications

- Weight: 2 pounds
- Overall length: 18.5 inches
- Well-balanced axe allows steady strikes
- Includes leather sheath with snap closure

MSRP

\$187

URL

HighlandWoodworking.com



H & B Forge Medium Curved Spike Hawk

Overview

A mountain man's ideal companion in the woods, the Spike Hawk offers all the style and craftsmanship of times gone by. Perfect for chopping, this well-balanced axe offers reliability for long stays in the outdoors, enabling a firewood pile to grow and battle those frigid nights. The Spike Hawk sports a long hardwood handle that not only offers a solid grip for the user, it can take mis-strikes without excess wear or tear. It's also suitable for axe-throwing when it's time to wind down, relax and have some fun!

Specifications

- Total weight: 1.50 pounds
- 3.50-inch-wide head with curved spike
- Traditional design, reminiscent of battle-axes of the past
- Durable, hardwood handle
- Choose from 17- or 19-inch handles

MSRP

\$87.50

URL

HBForge.com

Ruike
Knives FP Ad
is Missing

FOOD FIGHT!

A REVIEW OF THE EPIC SHOPPING PATTERNS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY MICHAEL D'ANGONA

Never before in our lifetimes has the world witnessed the complex and deadly impact of the COVID-19 coronavirus. This world-changing event has impacted nearly every facet of mankind's way of life. From economic impacts and major job losses to the fight to stay healthy, as well as the horrific emotional shock of friends and family who've lost loved ones, this virus has shaken the roots of nearly everyone on the planet.

One significant and surprising aspect of the virus's impact that's often been overshadowed by the daily case and death counts was the roller-coaster-like panic of buying of groceries and other essential food-related items.

Unlike a natural disaster that usually moves in and out of a specific area relatively quickly, this pandemic spurred, and continues to cause, a buying spree unlike anything seen in modern times. The phases of purchasing food, water and other non-food items were distinct and were the direct effect of what was transpiring on a daily, and sometimes hourly, basis.

I've seen this type of buying firsthand in my role as a member of grocery store management. I've been on the "front lines" from the start.

To give you some insight into these events from my perspective, I'll examine those phases and look at what's occurred and what's presently in effect. No one knows what the future will look like ... especially if the oft-mentioned "second wave" of cases becomes a reality.

WATCHING THE NEWS

All was normal in the United States as reports of a spreading illness in China seeped into our local news. Stories about a highly contagious virus of unknown origin hitting the huge Chinese city of Wuhan caused talk among people at work, but the virus was nothing that would be called a concern or reason to worry.

However, as the virus spread beyond the area and into a variety of countries, Americans began to take notice a bit more closely. News and social media coverage of Wuhan being locked down—with residents having virtually no access to anything outside their apartments—also played on the psyche of people in the States.

When news reports announced that cases of the COVID-19 coronavirus were showing up here, the rush of panic buying began. Fearing that they, like the people of Wuhan (and, at that time, elsewhere), would be unable to leave their homes for days, weeks and possibly months, everything not nailed down to the grocery shelves was in their sights.

POWER BUYING FOR LOCKDOWN

The idea of being locked down at home quickly grew into a very real probability. As a result, people hit the grocery stores in droves.

At my location—and, I'd assume at most retail supermarkets, both large and small—power buying became the order of the day. People had to calculate food needs





for their entire family—with no idea when they'd be able to get back to the stores. Spring break was underway at that time, and children were out of school, further adding to breakfast and lunch food needs on the home front.

People shopped as if a major hurricane had been predicted. Fresh meats and poultry, dry grocery goods (including snacks, cookies and sweet treats), were vacuumed up for the kids. Soups, crackers and breads of all types were included in this frenzy—along with just about everything else.

Unlike a disaster, during which power outages might reduce frozen and refrigerator-stored food purchases, this COVID-19 buying binge had no such restrictions. Frozen-food cases were decimated. From frozen pizza and “TV dinners” to French fries and ice cream, the shelves in the frozen food department were emptied quickly and abruptly.

Fresh produce was also hit hard. Unlike grocery store shelves that are

deep and hold numerous varieties of the same type of product—and with a backroom loaded up with overstock items—produce racks feature only a few layers of product and little in backstock due to the perishability of the items. The idea of eating healthier to keep a family's immune system at its peak became pervasive, so produce was picked over, leaving only scraps within the first few days of the onslaught.

The concern of a possible shortage of adult beverages created a surge, not only in cold, in-the-case items, but also in all overstock that had been stored in back rooms. These items were quickly placed on the shelves and, of course, were gone within days.

What wasn't purchased aggressively? Fancy bakery cakes and pastries were practically untouched, nor were prepared hot foods, soups, ready-made salads, sandwiches and fine gourmet cheeses. It was time to buy the basics for subsistence, not indulge in frivolous items.



◀ Far left: Shoppers bought cartsful of groceries during the two to three weeks prior to the country being locked down.

◀ Near left: All types of over-the-counter medicines were purchased and stocked for assisting with the symptoms of the COVID-19 coronavirus.



◀ Far left: During the first two weeks of power shopping, meats and poultry products were wiped out. Sporadic outages still continue, because meat-processing plants have reduced output caused by the effects of COVID-19 on their workforce.

◀ Near left: In order to have enough product to serve more customers, purchase quantity limits were put on many key items.

“WHEN NEWS REPORTS ANNOUNCED THAT CASES OF THE COVID-19 CORONAVIRUS WERE SHOWING UP HERE, THE RUSH OF PANIC BUYING BEGAN.”

NON-FOOD ESSENTIALS

In addition to food, other essential, lockdown-related items were also “power-bought.”

First, water flew off the shelves as if a hurricane were barreling down. From 24-pack singles to gallon jugs and individual bottles, anything and everything labeled “water” was out the door. In addition, water-style drinks, including flavored water, seltzers and infused water, were also in high demand. A person’s faucets would still work and provide drinking water during the pandemic but, with the public almost habitually dependent on bottled water these days, this category was one of the first to be depleted.

Of course, because this was a health crisis, medications were cleared off the shelves. However, what most people didn’t realize was that over-the-counter meds wouldn’t work to cure COVID-19; in fact, they might only aid in alleviating some of the symptoms. But fear is fear, and better to have than not, so all forms of medications were wiped from the shelves in days. These included virus symptom-related pills and liquids, as well as stomach ailment medications (you know—the pink stuff), cough drops and allergy meds.

Also interesting is that medicinal teas were a popular item when the mainstream medicines were all but gone; and, not surprisingly, calming teas, such as chamomile and other variations that featured “stress-ease,” “relax” or “sleep well” on their labels, found their

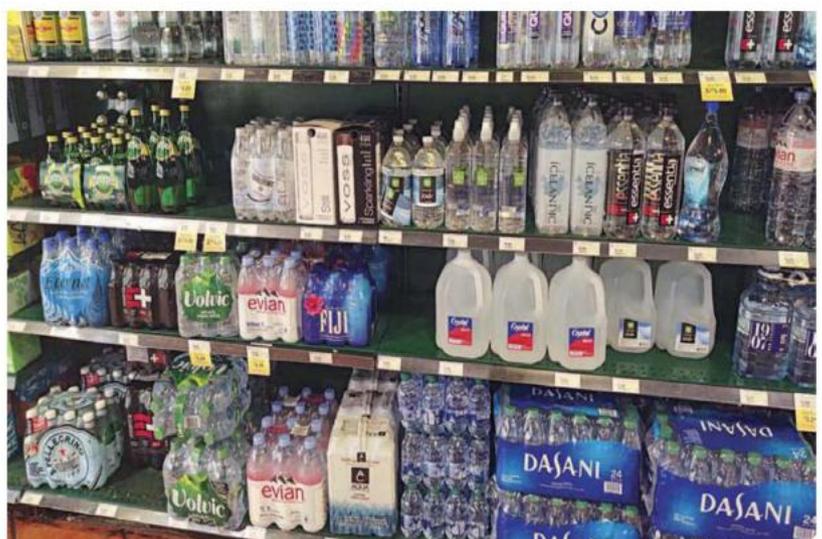
way into numerous shopping carts. With stress at an all-time high for many people, anything that could help ease their minds and bodies was widely purchased.

During the initial mad dash for groceries, toilet paper, bathroom wipes and paper towels were items that few realized were “more valuable than gold,” so to speak. The reason(s) toilet paper was in such high demand—and, at times was sought after far more than valuable food or water products—isn’t clear. However, there were some theories floating around.

Some news reports indicated that because there was a shortage in Australia, some Americans acted to avoid a similar situation, at least for themselves. Others suggested that paper factories would be closed, thus limiting the available supply. However, the basic truth is far simpler and more obvious: With so many people now staying at home—along with their children, who were at home instead of at school—

› Bottom left: Toilet paper—the surprise top purchase at the height of the shopping frenzy—was still difficult to find months after the pandemic began.

› Bottom right: Although water was still safe to drink from the tap, shoppers grabbed all types of bottled water to store in case the availability of potable water changed.



THE UNITED STATES ADAPTS TO STAY HEALTHY



Most, if not all, grocery stores were literally on the “front lines” of the COVID-19 pandemic. Like healthcare workers and first responders, workers in food stores faced safety concerns every day while interacting with panicked, stressed and short-tempered customers. As a result, safety measures were put into place to protect the cashiers, food preparers, stockers and store management.

Face coverings. From cotton masks to bandannas to surgical face coverings, store employees were required to wear nearly anything they had that would cover their faces and help stop the spread of the virus. In addition, customers were asked to adhere to a face mask protocol. To no one’s surprise, most customers participated—with no complaints or resistance.

Social-distancing markers. Tape lines were put down on the floor to signify the space for customers to stand in while waiting to check out. Six feet apart was the norm—causing checkout lines to appear longer than they really were as customers and carts lined up from the cashier to nearly the middle section of the store.

Plexiglas shields. At the cashier, distancing between the money-taker and the customer was nearly impossible. The solution was a Plexiglas barrier blocking any droplets that could be transmitted between the two people. It’s simple and effective, as long as the shopper and employee keep this barrier between them.

Crowd control. The number of customers in the store at one time was also regulated; and when a set maximum number of people inside was met, the door was monitored, and additional guests were stopped from entering. When shoppers left the store, an equal number of eager guests was allowed in.

Sanitizing nearly everything. “Sanitize” became a true buzzword in every aspect of normal store operations—from hand sanitizer for employees to using sanitizing liquid on returned shopping carts. If something had the potential to have the virus on its surface, virus-killing alcohol or other approved chemicals were almost guaranteed to be applied on a nearly hourly basis.



› *Top:* Cleaning supplies were cleaned out as fast as key food items when the pandemic hit the United States.

› *Bottom, left:* Cleaning items that were labeled as “virus-killing” disappeared from the grocery shelves as soon as the pandemic reached the United States.

› *Bottom, right:* One of the most valuable items during the pandemic was, and continues to be, hand sanitizer.

the demand for these paper products would require significantly more quantity than usual. In addition, with rumors being bandied about of a national lockdown for an undetermined amount of time, the possibility of not having such basic hygiene items frightened many. Thus, the somewhat crazy stampede for said items began ... and continued throughout the crisis.

Not to be forgotten are those opportunists who saw the chance to make money because of their neighbors’ lack of preparedness. Their selfish attempts to score big





“THE IDEA OF EATING HEALTHIER TO KEEP A FAMILY’S IMMUNE SYSTEM AT ITS PEAK BECAME PERVERSIVE, SO PRODUCE WAS PICKED OVER, LEAVING ONLY SCRAPS WITHIN THE FIRST FEW DAYS OF THE ONSLAUGHT.”

during the widespread shortages cannot be quantified for sure, but they certainly had an effect on both the levels of available supplies and the ongoing “feeding frenzy.”

VIRUS-FIGHTERS

It’s little wonder that virus-fighting merchandise disappeared from the shelves within the first few days of the shopping onslaught. Alcohol wipes, bleach, rubbing alcohol, virus-fighting aerosols and any other products that featured “kills viruses” on their labels were scooped up by the handfuls. Limits on the amount of such products that one person could buy were implemented to slow down the rush and allow others access to those critical products. But, in most cases, this was done too late; and, with products gone, it was, at best, a futile attempt to make sure all shoppers obtained at least some items.

SUPPLY CHAIN ISSUES

With the country quickly feeling the effects of limited imports of certain items from other countries, coupled with the inability of domestic vendors to anticipate the exceptional demand, supply lines became strained. Restocking was spotty for the first few weeks after the fear of a lockdown was announced. Entire sections of grocery shelves were bare from front to back. Frozen-food cases had but a few random items (usually those that were so specialized that no one could, or would, benefit from them during the crisis). In the dairy department, eggs and milk—two staples of most American families—were scarce almost constantly and continued to be so for weeks in most locations.

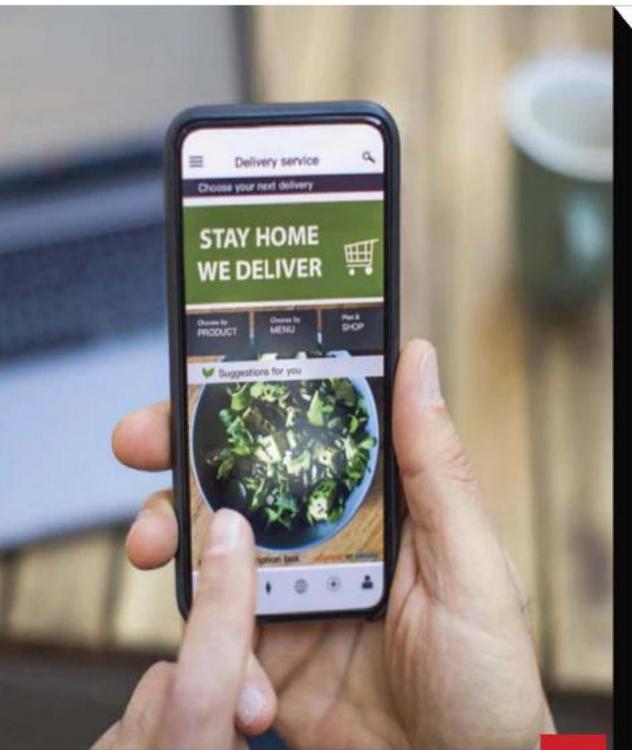


◀ Above: One item that few people would have guessed to be scarce or even non-existent was toilet paper. (Photo: Getty Images)

◀ Disposable gloves of all types were bought up to help decrease the risk of spreading the COVID-19 virus.



◀ Face masks were scarce at the beginning of the pandemic, with many people opting to make their own. They’ve since become somewhat plentiful as more stock arrived for those who need and want them.



BUYING FROM AFAR



With social distancing now the new normal in today's pandemic world, along with some people's fear of being inside a grocery store, many shoppers have chosen to buy from the comfort of their own homes via online ordering and home delivery services.

Several similar services, such as Instacart, FreshDirect and Amazon Prime, have now been used by millions of people for stay-at-home buying. Grocery chains have also added/expanded home delivery service to meet customer needs.

Not unlike services such as Lyft and Uber (many of whose workers have now switched to shopping services due to the drastic decline in vehicle travel), a person can become a shopper whenever they have the time—and an Internet connection. The amount of online and phone app buying skyrocketed during the lockdown. Many "regular" customers were replaced by quick-moving list-gatherers—complete with their phones in hand and cartsful of groceries in the check-out lanes for remote shoppers.

"UNLIKE A NATURAL DISASTER THAT USUALLY MOVES IN AND OUT OF A SPECIFIC AREA RELATIVELY QUICKLY, THIS PANDEMIC SPURRED, AND CONTINUES TO CAUSE, A BUYING SPREE UNLIKE ANYTHING SEEN IN MODERN TIMES."

◀ Above: On-the-go shoppers often bought and then brought groceries to the doorsteps of family and friends who couldn't (or didn't want to) venture out to the store.

As soon as product came into the store, that product went out of it. Backstock, which, during normal times, could be difficult to move in quantity, posed no issues at that time. Anywhere there was a "hole" in the grocery section, it was filled with available backstock items, which were soon bought by active, aggressive shoppers.

ONGOING SHORTAGES

As weeks passed, product shortages and customers' shopping habits were directly linked to the local, state and national news. For example, if there were reports of beef, poultry or pork shortages caused by plants shutting down due to outbreaks within them, the meat department would be inundated with customers from opening to closing who were trying to secure meat for their families. This would then cause further shortages at the store level due to the greater amount of meat being sold. Simultaneously, the suppliers were unable to ship complete orders, because they, too, felt the pinch of beef and pork production shortages.

In addition to paper goods being almost constantly out of stock, when some product did reach the store, all of it would be bought within hours. A month and a half after the pandemic began, toilet paper, wipes and other items were not being replenished to a point at which the casual shopper was able to find them without issue. Instead, it was only through sheer luck and providential timing that a shopper could find such goods.

NO END IN SIGHT AT THIS TIME

As of this writing in late May, there's no finality to the U.S. COVID-19 outbreak or to the erratic pattern of shopping at most grocery stores throughout the country. As news breaks, the buying agenda of the people around the country shifts accordingly.

The essential lessons that can be taken from the events of the pandemic hitting the United States are to stay prepared with plenty of food and other everyday supplies for your family; stay physically safe; and stay optimistic that you'll get through this crisis healthy and ready to tackle whatever is thrown at you next. **ASG**



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“THE [SUUNTO] CORE DOESN'T REPLACE YOUR NORMAL GEAR, BUT IT'S A POWERFUL SUPPLEMENT. PEOPLE WEARING THIS WATCH AND WHO LOSE THEIR PACKS WOULD STILL BE BETTER OFF THAN THOSE WITHOUT IT.”



◀ Below: The author checked the elevation reading on the Suunto Core at the top of Colorado's Cameron Pass and found that it agreed with the known measurement.

◀ Left: This winding path allowed the author to check multiple readings on the Suunto Core's compass.



SUUNTO'S CORE BLACK YELLOW TX

THIS OUTSTANDING WATCH IS A VIABLE WAY TO ACCESS PERTINENT—AND PERHAPS LIFESAVING— INFORMATION WHILE IN AREAS OUTSIDE CELL TOWER REACH.

BY SEAN CURTIS

“THERE ARE MANY OPTIONS AVAILABLE FOR CUSTOMIZATION ON THE SUUNTO CORE ...”



Suunto Core

Specifications

- Case size: 1.93x1.93x0.57 inches
- Case material: Composite
- Bezel material: Aluminum
- Crystal: Mineral glass
- Weight: 2.46 ounces
- Wrist strap: Web strap (elastomer replacements are available)
- Battery: CR2032
- Battery life: 1 year (depending on use)

MSRP: \$229

◀ Above: Colorado's Pawnee Buttes were an excellent contrast point to test the Suunto Core's capabilities.

I've been a watch geek for as long as I can remember. Sometimes, a simple, elegant timepiece will suffice ... although, more often, I want critical data handy with just a glance at my wrist.

When traversing mountainous regions, a well-equipped watch can even serve as a survival tool—giving you bearings, altitude and even warning of the approach of bad weather. I've used a few of these modern marvels over the years for work and recreation. This experience has given me some specific insight about the designs and features that are useful, so when I got the chance to review Suunto's Core Black Yellow TX, I relished the opportunity.

Watches with additional sensors have been around for decades. Back in the 1990s, when I started in search-and-rescue (SAR) in

◀ Middle left: The storm warning alarm on the Suunto Core is one of the device's best features. It detects where there are drastic barometric pressure drops.

◀ Bottom left: For mountain biking, hiking and extended excursions in the wild, the Suunto Core is an outstanding, multifunctional outdoor watch.



the mountains of southwest Colorado, triple-sensor watches were readily available. Cell phones weren't around until the latter part of that decade, and they certainly weren't "smart." As a result, I came to rely on this capability on my wrist.

I kept a pack with me, ready to go at a moment's notice. Having a compass, altimeter and barometer at all times further enabled me to conduct SAR operations in the field. I can't tell you how many times I used a watch to call in a helicopter while advising approximate altitude and wind direction. Pilots flying into sketchy situations love this information because it helps them calculate their lift capability (ceiling), as well as the best direction for landing and takeoff. And, although a cell phone's capabilities have increased exponentially since those hoary days of old, they still don't work in some of the locations I operate in.

Relying on a good watch is still a viable way to access pertinent information while in areas outside cell tower reach. In my experience, the Suunto Core has a pretty distinguished record of doing just that. I've owned an older Core for years and use it frequently.

By comparison, the newer Black Yellow TX is an improvement in many ways. It's lightweight, comfortable and a good size that's easy to read. I tried out this evolved model during multiple activities in vastly different terrain.

SETUP

Because the Core relies on the inputs you give to calibrate the sensors, there's some work that needs to go into having reliable

readings when you're out in the field. First, the elevation and barometer need to be programmed in. On the Front Range of Colorado, I dwell in the 5,000-foot elevation area but have high elevation within close driving range.

Next, the compass has to be calibrated. This actually takes a couple of steps. First, you need to go into "compass" mode and then slowly rotate the Core in a circle several times. I did this away from metal and any other magnetic influences. Once this is complete, you also need to set up your declination. This is critical, because magnetic north is not exact north and, depending on where you live, it could be a different direction—east or west—by several degrees. In my locale, I need to adjust north by 8.10 degrees east to get true north on a compass. Once this was entered, I compared the Core with a reliable compass.

There are many options available for customization on the Suunto Core: You can set it for military or standard time, pick a language for interface and set the standard for units of the measurement you'd like. You can choose between Celsius and Fahrenheit for the thermometer, feet and meters for the altimeter, and inHg (inches of mercury) or hPa (hectopascal pressure units) for the barometer. You can turn the button tone on or off and set up a regional notice of sunrise and sunset by plugging in a city in your vicinity. Depending on your lighting conditions, you can even adjust the contrast if you want the display to appear differently.

After some basic setup, I headed out for field trials.

IN THE MOUNTAINS

One of the first tests was taking the Core to the top of Cameron Pass, which is around 10,500 feet of elevation. It was early March, and my daughter's school had planned on taking a bunch of first-graders snowshoeing. March is traditionally our heaviest snowfall month and, at that elevation, it's not uncommon to still have 10 to 15 feet of snow.

I checked elevation at home base—a known value—and then checked again at the





◀ *Top, far left:* The Suunto Core has adjustable contrast and is easily viewed, even in extremely bright conditions.



◀ *Middle left:* Even though it provides a lot of information and detail, the Suunto Core's dial is easy to read and uncluttered.



◀ *Bottom, far left:* The newer hinged watch straps (top) allow you to lay the watch on a flat surface, such as a map, unlike the straps on the earlier Suunto Core model (bottom).

summit. The altimeter was accurate. Barometric pressure can have an impact on this, but it was a "bluebird day," when high pressure created amazingly nice weather. (By the way, I have no cell signal up there. I either end up shutting off my phone or switching it to "airplane" mode when in the mountains.)

During the trip, I checked compass readings at intervals and confirmed they agreed with what I knew about the area. I'd spent some time at home base to confirm this before I headed to the mountains (it's *always* good to confirm).

Suunto's website says the compass is accurate to within 5 degrees, and this fits with what I've observed. This, alone, could make a huge difference in how you might navigate out of a bad situation. Thankfully, the class field trip was completely without peril, and we all made it back





“RELYING ON A GOOD WATCH IS STILL A VIABLE WAY TO ACCESS PERTINENT INFORMATION WHILE IN AREAS OUTSIDE CELL TOWER REACH.”

› *Top, left:* With a couple of simple tools, you can switch among a variety of available Suunto wrist straps to suit your preferences.

› *Top, right:* As tested, the Suunto Core came with a NATO-style web wrist strap.

› *Opposite, bottom:* The second of Colorado’s Pawnee Buttes lies ahead. The compass had already accurately navigated through deep creek beds from which the horizon couldn’t be seen.

without issue ... although I ran the Core through a battery of directional and elevational tests. The watch can actually graph changes in altitude, as well as trending weather patterns.

Besides accurate readings, I enjoyed the Core’s durability. It’s an easy thing to take a tumble in the snow, and the 30-meter water resistance can easily be taken for granted. Overall, the watch is robust—although I’ve scratched the lens of the previous model a little more easily than I would’ve expected.

It’s impressive to think a device capable of providing such a wide array of atmospheric data can endure so much and last about a year on one CR2032 battery. This is the advertised battery life, and I’ve found it to be just over a year with moderate use. Another nice thing about the Core is that the user has the ability to change the battery themselves, as opposed to going to a watch shop or jeweler.

IN THE VALLEYS

While I used the Core daily, the big trips proved to be the most valuable for collecting important data. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, Colorado had shut down. However, we were encouraged to go out and exercise (social distancing observed, of course), because it was considered “essential activity.” Doing my part, I decided to go down in elevation, as opposed to up. I wanted to check out some different terrain and see how the Core performed in those areas.

The Pawnee National Grassland is east of my home. I swear, “Pawnee” must be an ancient term for “never-ending wind”! However, despite the wind, it’s a beautiful place, with lush, rolling plains interspersed with occasional graphic demonstrations of erosion. For the most part, the area is a resplendent grassland dotted with pronghorn antelope. Still further east, you can find a couple of huge buttes carved out of the land.

I also tested the Core and its features there. Temperatures were much hotter, and the wind careened incessantly as I hiked the trail that wound between the two stony buttes. I followed creek beds and topped out on high desert plains before taking it all in. The Core held true to known altitudes and also kept a good bearing throughout my navigation—confirming my trust in the device.

PROVEN AND TRUSTWORTHY

I don’t think I’ll ever forget the mission for which a co-worker and I were dropped

SUUNTO CORE: BASIC FUNCTIONS



- Dual time
- Alarm (one daily)
- Countdown timer
- Stopwatch timer
- Languages: English, Dutch, German, French
- Backlit dial
- Compass (with declination)
- Altimeter (recordable)
- Depth meter for snorkeling to 10 meters (recordable)
- Barometer (recordable)
- Thermometer
- Storm alert

off at a landing zone on the side of a mountain that was slightly less than 12,000 feet in elevation. The Colorado National Guard had lowered its Blackhawk down into the snow to drop us off. Our objective was to check out some footprints while we searched for a downed aircraft. After the helo left, we floundered in the 11-foot-deep snow until we got into our snowshoes. We discovered that the prints were those of an enormous bear ... and we then found the pilot in his plane, beyond care. The helicopter crew reported that the helo was low on fuel and could not return until the next day. We spent the night in that snow, and I checked my watch frequently to get bearings and altitude. We camped and prepared for extraction the following day.

Returning to the landing zone the following morning, the entire area was socked in with cloud cover. As we waited for our rescue, I began to feel uncomfortable because of the winds and darkness of the clouds surrounding us. You can usually look around and get an idea what the weather's going to do, but when you're in the clouds, it's a different story.

I checked my watch and saw that the barometer had dropped out violently. We made for lower ground as a storm moved up the mountain. The hail ripped in sideways, and the hair on my head rose as the static electricity built up. We got out of the storm's path just before the lightning erupted.

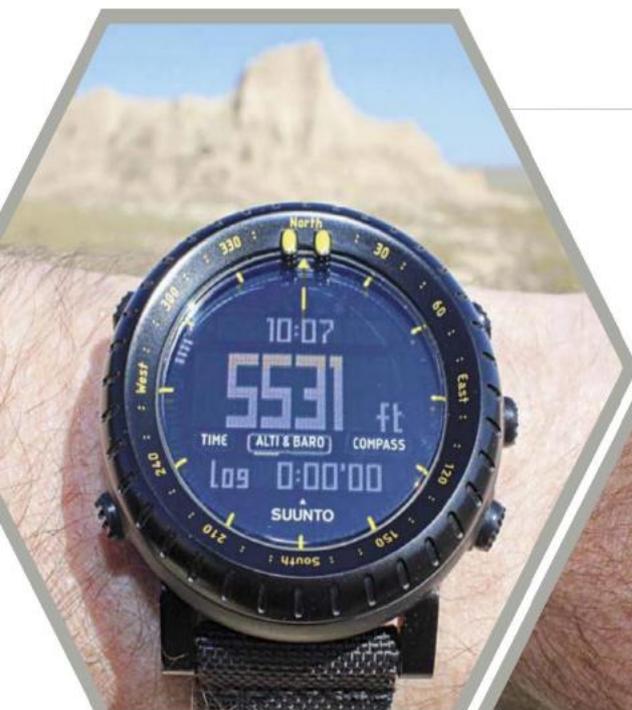
When things had cleared significantly, the helicopter pulled us off the mountain. The watch's capabilities were quite possibly literal lifesavers that day.

A SURVIVAL AID

During a survival situation, the ability to take a reading with an accurate compass could make all the difference in the world. This, alone, makes the Core a valuable aid. If you know your terrain, you can reasonably navigate it. The Core doesn't replace your normal gear, but it's a powerful supplement. People wearing this watch and who lose their packs would still be better off than those without it.

Having the added bonus of knowing the altitude can increase your comfort level with

"IT'S IMPRESSIVE TO THINK A DEVICE CAPABLE OF PROVIDING SUCH A WIDE ARRAY OF ATMOSPHERIC DATA CAN ENDURE SO MUCH AND LAST ABOUT A YEAR ON ONE CR2032 BATTERY."



◀ *Top, far left:* Another reference point, in much lower terrain than was visited during most of the rest of the field review, was accurately displayed by the Suunto Core's altimeter.



◀ *Middle left:* Unlike the bezel on a dive watch, the bezel on the Suunto Core rotates in either direction for tracking azimuths.



◀ *Bottom, far left:* The Suunto Core is designed to have the CR2032 battery replaced by the user, thereby eliminating the inconvenience and expense of having this done by a jeweler or watch repair shop.

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“I CAN’T TELL YOU HOW MANY TIMES I USED A WATCH TO CALL IN A HELICOPTER WHILE ADVISING APPROXIMATE ALTITUDE AND WIND DIRECTION.”



◀ Above: The views from the top of Colorado’s Cameron Pass are impressive.



◀ Left: The menu screen on the Suunto Core is easy to access and read and intuitive to navigate.

◀ Bottom, right: You can shoot an azimuth and monitor your progress by using the Suunto Core’s rotating watch bezel.

SOURCE

Suunto
(855) 258-0900
Suunto.com/en-us/

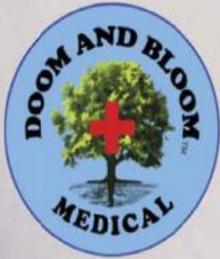


your location. It can help you track how far you’ve come. The barometer—especially its included storm warning that sounds an alarm to alert you—can be of crucial benefit. There are times when you might not have a great picture of the sky and weather around you (as I’ve already mentioned). This alarm feature is *huge*—giving you time to head to safety before it’s too late.

The other features, such as the thermometer, are nice, but not as crucial.

The Suunto Core Yellow Black TX is an outstanding watch. It has an accurate compass, barometer and altimeter. It’s lightweight, comfortable to wear and easy to read. In addition, it’s extremely customizable and water resistant and could be an invaluable aid in a survival situation—whether you’re at high altitudes in the mountains or navigating city streets. **ASG**

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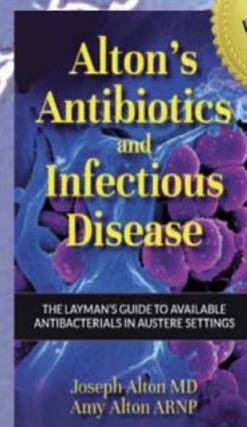
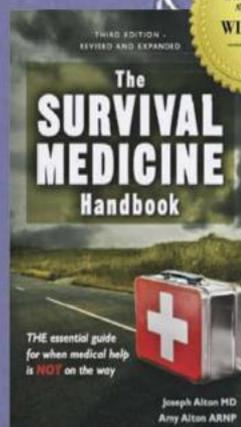
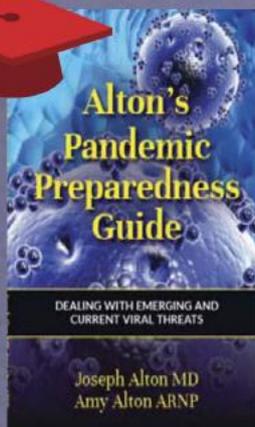


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"PEOPLE GET HURT WHEN YOU FIGHT. YOU WANT TO END A FIGHT AS QUICKLY AS IT BEGINS. YOU WANT TO DISPATCH YOUR OPPONENT AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE AND GET OUT OF THERE."



MASTER BARTON BOEHM'S PATH TO PEACE

THERE'S MORE TO
MARTIAL ARTS THAN
KICKS AND STRIKES.

BY CHRISTOPHER NYERGES



Barton Boehm held his left palm forward. He smiled and said he didn't want any trouble. His right hand was behind his back, holding his birch staff. As the "attacker" approached, Boehm's right hand rapidly swung the stick through the air with a whoosh, striking the shins of the man ... who fell to the ground.

Boehm was demonstrating a simple technique that he teaches in his private Seiken classes.

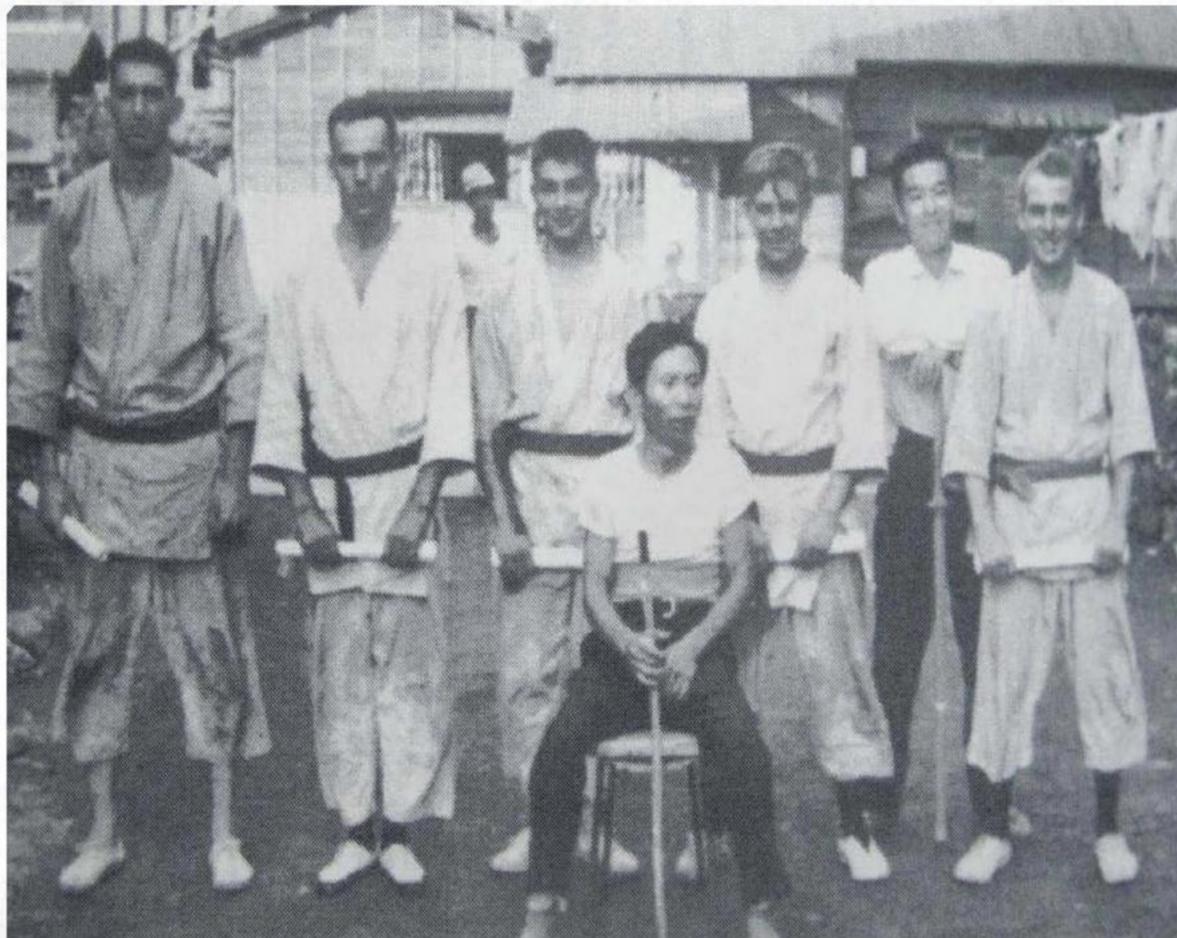
◀ *Left:* This street market in Yokohama is vastly different from the way it looked when Boehm was studying with Master Suzuki in the 1970s.

◀ *Above:* Barton Boehm poses in 1964 in his Navy uniform (this was before he met his master, Peter Suzuki).

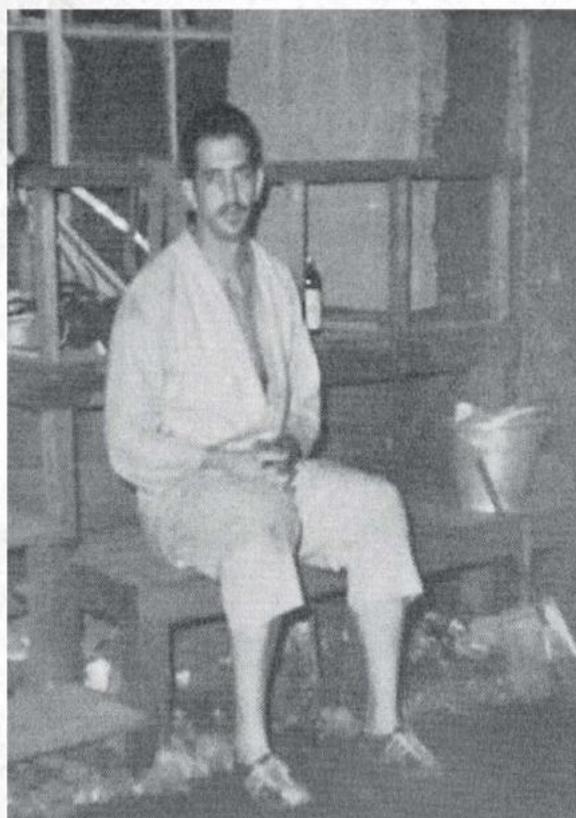
◀ *Right:* Master Suzuki is seated on Boehm's shoulders while in a group of some of Boehm's Navy buddies, who also trained with Suzuki.



› Master Suzuki is seated at the front, center. Boehm stands at the far left, along with some of his Navy buddies.



› Boehm takes a much-needed rest on a bench in front of the Suzuki household.



I met Barton Boehm in the late 1970s through my association with the nonprofit, WTI. Its founder, Richard E. White, introduced Boehm to me as a martial arts master. His path to becoming a master began a long time ago.

While serving in the U.S. Navy during the Vietnam War and on shore leave, Boehm inadvertently met a master living in Japan and eventually moved into his home, becoming his full-time student for five years. The story of their meeting and subsequent time together is remarkable!

As I got to know Boehm better, I became his student, taking classes in his home *dojo*. There, during my private evening classes, I learned about holds, getting out of holds, falling and punching, as well as all the ways to quickly avoid a fight—or to never start one in the first place. But, for me, the highlights of the evenings were always the discussions we had after each of the workouts. It was then that he would share his philosophy of martial arts, developed from his Japanese training.

MARTIAL ARTS ON TV

"You don't want to fight," Boehm would tell me. "People get hurt when you fight. You want to end a fight as quickly as it begins. You want to dispatch your opponent as rapidly as possible and get out of there."

"BOEHM THEN LIVED WITH SUZUKI FOR ABOUT FIVE YEARS, SLEEPING BARELY MORE THAN FOUR HOURS A NIGHT, SEVEN DAYS A WEEK—AND LOSING 50 POUNDS AFTER HIS FIRST TWO YEARS."



SELECTED BOOK EXCERPTS



Training Day

Perhaps it was the losing of his sight or maybe wanting to keep his knowledge from being lost, but either way, Peter seemed to enjoy me, his one student, to whom he could pass along all that he knew. There'd been others who had come to train but none lasted more than a few weeks. The harsh conditions were too much for all the others.

Nearly exhausted, hands on my knees, I stopped to take in one deep breath, but the stench (from the local pig farm) was overpowering, driving me to my knees ...

"Barton, why did you stop," asked Peter.

"Because I'm tired, and my legs ache!"

By the two-year mark, I had lost 50 pounds and had been taken to the hospital twice for exhaustion and dehydration. I didn't want to take a third trip. I tried to breathe in heavily through my mouth to avoid the foul odor ...

"Who—I tired?"

"I am."

"Barton, how many times do I have to say this? You are not tired, your body is. If your body needs a rest, then you tell it to rest. Give your body 10 or 15 minutes of rest, but your brain needs to be thinking of something else during this time. You have to stop identifying yourself with your body. They are two different things. You have to control your body, not the other way around ..."

I was on my hands and knees ... Unable to take a deep breath, I slapped the ground in frustration.

End the Fight

Each day, Peter would repeat, "You have to understand the purpose. The purpose of my system is: 1. shock the body; 2. break the balance; and 3. end the fight. Nothing more. You don't want to fight with people. Fighting is too dangerous. You need to end the fight, and you need to do it instantly. You need to do those three elements, all at the same time. The fight should end in 1.2 seconds. Give the enemy no chance. There is no doubt. You have to believe that this is going to work. That is the purpose. That is the purpose of my system."

The Makiwara

Under Suzuki's direction, Boehm made a "makiwara," a wooden post wrapped in coarse rope, which was used for punching. Boehm describes this practice, done until his hands were bloody and he

was exhausted.

"Hours later, as the family readied for bed, I made my way to the kitchen. I found a garlic bulb on a shelf next to all the other spices. I pulled one of the cloves free and cut the bottom open with a paring knife. I rubbed the garlic across my raw knuckles. The pain was sharp but not as bad as I thought it would be. It did tighten what little skin remained on my knuckles, while leaving a medicated film over my bare flesh.

Peter called me over to the dining table that had long ago been cleared of dishes and utensils.

"Barton, we must talk about this fear you have of pain. Pain and fear are two separate things. You must learn to separate them. Do you have an idea where this fear comes from? ... Don't let the pain control you ..."

Urban Training

We had taken the early train into Yokohama, getting off downtown, where the streets were always overcrowded with people rushing from one business to another and street vendors everywhere. This was the ideal location for some of Peter's training ... We had done this several times before ...

On the sidewalk in front of a large bank, Peter handed me a piece of chalk. I let out a sigh as I took the chalk and drew a 4-foot-diameter circle on the sidewalk. People coming in and out of the bank and those walking on the sidewalk stepped through the circle, taking no notice of it, but they would look at me: tall, with very long, scraggly hair and beard. My appearance must have been an oddity to the businessmen of the city, all dressed in black suits ...

When completed, I stood in the middle of the circle and took my clothes off. My shirt, my pants, my shoes—everything was handed to Peter, who was standing on the perimeter. Once I was down to my shorts, the training began. My goal was to keep people out of the circle while practicing my punching, kicking, avoiding.

The practice was generally enough to keep people outside of the circle, but, occasionally, someone would try to venture past the chalk line, and my job was to keep them from doing so ... The goal was to get them to move in the direction I wanted them to, around the circle. And to get over my embarrassment of training in public. It was Peter's opinion that peer pressure was controlling me, and I was not controlling it ...



◀ Top and above: Master Suzuki demonstrates a move during Boehm's training.



◀ Far left:
A wedding picture of Peter and Shizu Suzuki

◀ Near left:
Barton Boehm displays his first training certificate, earned while he was still in the Navy.

"I KNEW IT WOULD BE A BOOK LIKE NO OTHER, BECAUSE HIS FIVE YEARS OF DAILY TRAINING AND LIVING WITH HIS BLIND MASTER WERE UNLIKE ANY I'D EVER HEARD."

EXCERPTS FROM THE BOOK'S FOREWORD

BY CO-AUTHOR DON HOWELL

"Sitting motionless on the hard-packed dirt, legs crossed, facing East. In those few moments before the sun actually emerges from the ocean he continued his complete breath routine. Inhaling for over a minute, holding for a minute more, followed by a painfully slow squeezing of air out through the mouth ..."

"The small fishing village had been awake for over an hour. Weather-hardened men folding thick black nets into heavy wooden boats before pushing out to sea. The men had long ago come to ignore the sitting figure, his hair grown long down his back and his beard, several years ago. He was a foot taller than many in the village. In his own home they might call him a 'hippie,' but here, they understood the warrior tradition—no metal near the head ..."

"Several mornings a week Barton would *breathe* for 30 minutes, then meditate for 30 minutes more on a small hill overlooking the village. It was a quiet start to a 20-hour day filled with fighting theory, application and countless hours of physical training. Routine was the weapon and, for five years, routine had been his life. Living with the Master, Peter Kiyoshi Suzuki, had been life-changing, but deep inside, he felt a change. Somewhere in the separation of body, mind and spirit, he knew his time in Japan was about to end. He had come to Japan knowing nothing, and after years of training, he had found his *still-point*, always perfect, a merging of *feeling and desire* that was slowly returning him to *nothing*. The circle was almost complete; it would be time for him to leave."

Needless to say, he wasn't a fan of the martial arts movies, in which fights go on for 30 minutes, with actors flying from rooftop to rooftop, breaking bricks and continuing the battle in every possible position.

"Don't get your information about martial arts from watching kung fu movies," Boehm would tell me with a laugh.

When we discussed the popular *Kung Fu* TV series, which starred David Carradine as Kwai Chang Caine, Boehm pointed out that Caine often had many opportunities to avoid a fight; and when he did fight, it often went on way beyond what was necessary to end it. Even so, Boehm did say that he found the original TV pilot and some of the very first episodes of some value.

"They had hired a Taoist priest as an advisor to the show," he pointed out. As a result, the show actually had some of the pure philosophy. But, because TV is so driven by ratings, as soon as the ratings dipped, Caine fought more often to show off his skills (but not because he really *needed* to).

DISCUSSIONS

I particularly enjoyed the stories Boehm shared about his training with his master, Peter Kiyoshi Suzuki. I taped many of those conversations, because they were so full of insight. Plus, they were highly entertaining: Some were funny, some deeply profound, and all had a highly pragmatic nature.

I recorded those conversations with Boehm with the goal of working with him to one day produce a book of his experiences and insights. I knew it would be a book like no other, because his five years of daily training and living with his blind master were unlike any I'd ever heard. But, we never finished the book project.

Years went by. Eventually, my wife and I sponsored stick-fighting classes with Boehm in our backyard, where he shared the psychology of the samurai, along with ways to stop a fight before it gets started. More years went by.



THE SEIKEN CREED



The Seiken Creed calls for the use of one's hands—

- For devoted service to mankind;
 - For prayerfully seeking guidance in every daily activity;
 - For shaking hands in the spirit of selfless brotherhood;
 - For the spirited participation in projects that serve community and country;
 - And for personally performing good labor ...
- So that "by their works, ye shall know them."

—Composed by Richard E. White, associate of Barton Boehm



◀ A view of the clotheslines in the Suzuki barracks of Oppama, south of Yokohama, Japan

That was 10 years ago, and Boehm moved too far away for regular lessons.

BOEHM WRITES THE BOOK

Imagine my great happiness at receiving a package containing Boehm's book! He *did* it! The book is an incredible introduction to his master's system, Seiken. The book's full title is *Lessons from a 21st Century Samurai: Seiken Way, Completing the Circle, A True Story*.

During my on-and-off training with Boehm, I got glimpses of how he met his master during the Vietnam War. His book filled in many of the gaps of his story that I found insightful: Boehm had been in Japan and began asking around for a martial arts master with whom to train. Eventually, he found Suzuki and became his full-time student.

Boehm then lived with Suzuki for about five years, sleeping barely

more than four hours a night, seven days a week—and losing 50 pounds after his first two years. When Boehm described his ambitions to me, he said that he was seeking "power."

"But," he added, "I didn't know what that meant at the time."

Boehm's stories were filled with how Suzuki trained him to repeat certain exercises endlessly until a new technique was mastered and to always "feel" what you were doing—and focus on the goal—so you don't get lost in doing it by rote. His stories were also filled with a fascinating stream of people that he met through Suzuki.

Boehm's book fills in a lot of the gaps in his training that I never heard about, such as the early days of meeting Suzuki and how Suzuki's wife and two children responded to having a *hakujin*, or white man, living with them in their small barracks-like home in a low-income part of the town.

The book points out that the full system taught by Suzuki is not just for training the body; it's also for training the mind and

◀ *Bottom, left:* Boehm with his "friend": His walking stick serves as a sort of multi-purpose tool.

◀ *Bottom, middle:* Boehm, shown in his backyard, with an assortment of sticks, some of which are more "socially acceptable" than others

◀ *Bottom, right:* In his classes, Boehm teaches the students how versatile an otherwise simple stick can be.





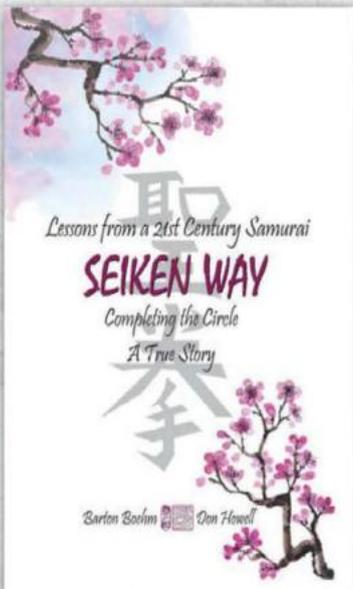
◀ Top, left: Boehm exhibits some stick movements in his backyard practice area.

◀ Top, right: Boehm cycles through some practice movements with a cane.

◀ Below: The cover of Boehm's book, *Lessons from a 21st Century Samurai: Seiken Way, Completing the Circle, A True Story*, is quite different from the typical martial arts book cover.



“THE BOOK POINTS OUT THAT THE FULL SYSTEM TAUGHT BY SUZUKI IS NOT JUST FOR TRAINING THE BODY; IT'S ALSO FOR TRAINING THE MIND AND THE SPIRIT.”



the spirit. Boehm's book explores all the major aspects of his training and how a blind man developed and mastered several entire systems. The book focuses only on *Seiken* (“kind hand”)—the system taught to Boehm. The full name of the system is *Wado Goshin Seiken Jitsu* (the “wide, deep, kind hand system”). Not only did Boehm have to learn his lessons, he also came to understand that he had to learn how to think.

“Frustrated’ is not a big enough word to describe how I felt during the first few months with Peter. Finally, I came to understand that he was trying to teach me how to think. In all my years of school in the States, I'd never learned how to think. I'd learned how to memorize data and how to do math problems, but I never learned how to think!”

If you're looking for a how-to book about martial arts systems, this isn't that book. In fact, *no one learns martial arts from a book*: You must learn directly from a teacher. Nevertheless, this book does show how the dedication of one man led him on the path

to his own self-awareness—to the point at which he ultimately realized he could, and would, even kill for his master.

A MASTER IN HIS OWN RIGHT

Eventually, Boehm saw that his relationship with Suzuki was unhealthy, and he came back home to the United States. He realized that he'd become a master in his own right.

He opened his own martial arts studio in Azusa, California, for a few years. Eventually, he turned his home garage into a *dojo*, in which he did private training for decades. His book is one of his ways to pass along the hard-earned knowledge he gained through his unique and painful experiences.

Boehm, now 71 and retired from an engineering career, continues to teach the few students who've stayed with him.

SIGNIFICANT BOOK

Boehm's book is highly recommended for anyone seeking an insight into the world of Japanese martial arts. I regard the book as both a standard and a classic.

Interestingly, in a disclaimer at the beginning of the book, Boehm states that it's biographical—based on real events—“but is a work of fiction,” because the actual conversations and details of the interactions were necessarily re-created from memory or imagination in order to re-tell the story.

This admission certainly doesn't diminish the book's quality or significance. **ASG**

SOURCE

Lessons from a 21st Century Samurai: Seiken Way, Completing the Circle, A True Story, by Barton Boehm, with Don Howell
Amazon.com

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Keeping the lights on and appliances functioning during power outages has long been the job of gasoline-powered portable generators. However, solar-powered generators are becoming more efficient and popular and are proving to be just as capable in most instances while offering several advantages.

A few of these are:

- No hazardous fuel to store or spill
- Almost zero maintenance
- Silent power-generation
- Always ready to supply electricity when needed
- Expandable as needed or as the budget allows

INVERTERS

A solar-powered generator uses solar panels to convert sunlight into electrical energy, which is then regulated by a charge controller and stored in batteries for later use. This low-voltage, direct-current (DC) energy must be converted into alternating current (AC) at a much higher voltage to power items designed to use utility power. This is accomplished with a DC-to-AC battery power inverter.



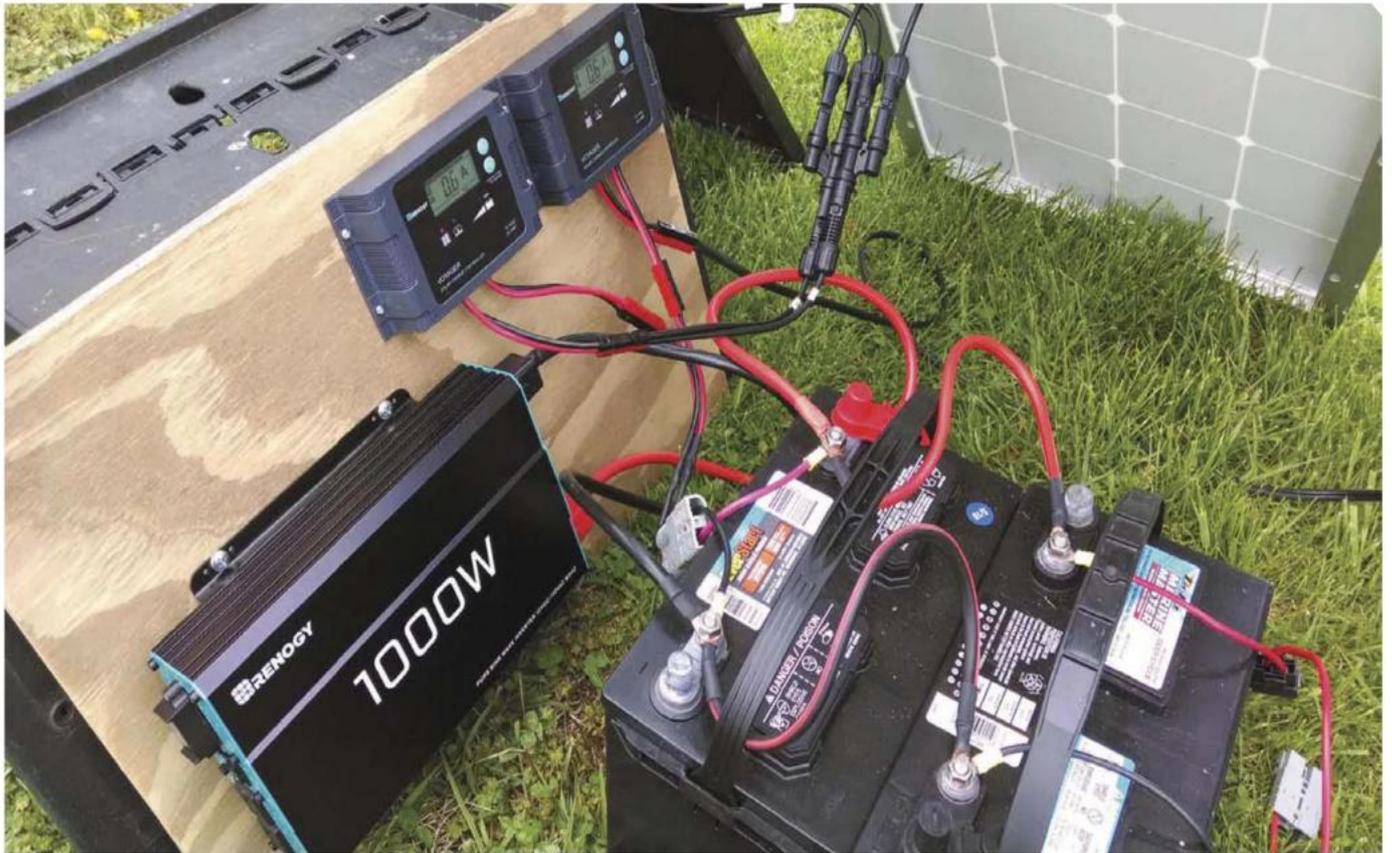
A person wearing a yellow and black striped shirt is looking into an open refrigerator. The scene is dimly lit, with the primary light source coming from the refrigerator's interior light. The background is dark and filled with green foliage, suggesting an outdoor or semi-outdoor setting.

◀ With the Renogy 1000W 12V Pure Sine Wave Inverter, the sun outside can keep the fridge going inside.

RENOGY'S 1,000-WATT DC/AC SOLUTION

THE RIGHT INVERTER TO POWER KEY ELECTRIC DEVICES

BY JIM JEFFRIES



Not all inverters are suitable for running home appliances or sensitive electronics. Inverters typically sold at auto parts or big-box discount stores are what are known as “modified” sine wave inverters, which produce a stair-step AC waveform that roughly mimics what comes from your home’s electrical outlets. This might be good

enough for charging a cellphone or laptop computer, but it might not satisfy the power requirements of other devices commonly used in the home.

Appliances that use electric motors to operate fans or compressors need clean AC power, and this requires something better: “Pure” sine wave inverters produce a clean, alternating sinusoidal waveform that’s more like that from your power company.

Pure sine wave inverters are more sophisticated and a bit more expensive. In addition, they’re often hard to find at local retailers. Having ordered several from online sources over the years, I’ve found most to be disappointing in terms of features or quality. Nevertheless, there are some that are exceptional, such as those from Renogy.

Renogy 1000W 12-Volt Pure Sine Wave Inverter

Specifications

- Model: RNG-INV-T-1000-12V-P2
- Output power: 1,000 watts continuous; 2,000 watts surge
- AC output voltage: 115VAC; output frequency (nominal): 60 Hz
- Output waveform: Pure sine wave
- Efficiency: Over 90 percent
- No-load current draw: Under 1 amp
- Operating temperature: -4 to +158 degrees (F)
- Dimensions: 13.0x7.0x3.0 inches
- Weight: 6 pounds

MSRP: \$189.99

RENOGY'S PURE SINE WAVE INVERTER

Available in output ratings from 700 to 3,000 watts, Renogy Pure Sine

Wave Inverters produce a sinusoidal waveform to power even the most sensitive electric appliance or

› *Top and far left, top:* Two 100 Ah deep-cycle batteries, along with 260 watts of solar input, ran the author’s air conditioner for two hours straight before the batteries discharged to 50 percent. Taking them any lower could shorten their lifespan.

› *Bottom, far left:* The Renogy 1000W Pure Sine Wave Power Inverter is a high-quality solar accessory that’s perfect for off-grid systems.





› Below: These are the components and basic connections of a solar generator setup.

› Right: Dual thermostatically controlled fans keep the inverter cool, and the shrouds over the 12-volt connection terminals ensure safety.



to connect it to my existing 12-volt, deep-cycle battery bank. I followed the instructions in the well-written manual, so it was a simple task. And, once powered on, testing began.

TESTING, TESTING

Because my intended use for this inverter is to power essential household appliances, that's exactly what I did.

Refrigerator: Extended power outages during warm months can lead to spoiled food, so the kitchen refrigerator/freezer was my top priority. Our full-sized fridge is 5 years old and likely represents what most people have in their home. Powered by the Renogy 1000W Pure Sine Wave Inverter, the appliance operated the same as it does on utility power. The energy consumption was identical—right at 100 watts while running. After a full 24 hours, the refrigerator had consumed 1.4 kilowatt hours of electricity, and the inverter never skipped a beat. Refrigerators don't run constantly, so this wasn't much of a strain on the inverter or on my small, solar-powered generator system.

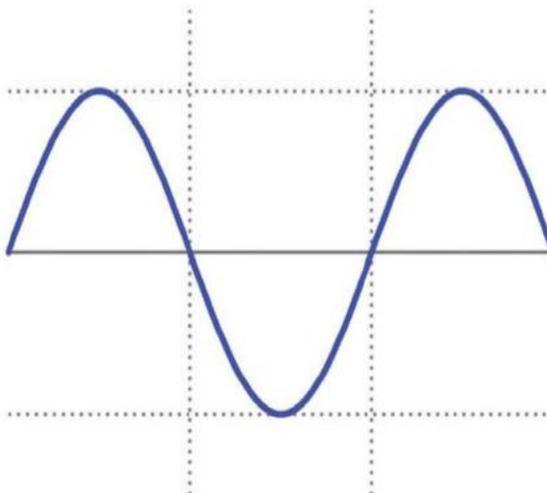
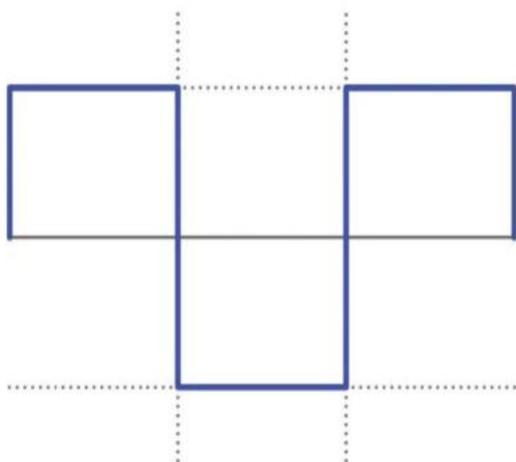
“THE RENOGY 1000W IS LOADED WITH FEATURES YOU'D EXPECT FROM A HIGH-QUALITY INVERTER. AND, WITH A RETAIL PRICE THAT'S LESS THAN \$200, IT'S AN OUTSTANDING DEAL.”

device. In this product review, we'll take a look at the Renogy 1000W model.

The Renogy 1000W is loaded with features you'd expect from a high-quality inverter. And, with a retail price that's less than \$200, it's an outstanding deal. Some of its features include:

- Overload protection for both DC input and AC output to prevent damage to the components and the unit
- Offers a high-quality waveform with little harmonic distortion (under 3 percent)
- LED indicators for under-voltage and over-voltage protection, over-temperature protection, overload

- protection and short-circuit indication
 - Ground-fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) protection
 - Thermally controlled, high-speed ventilation fans to help keep the inverter running at a low temperature
 - Built-in 5V/2.1A USB port for charging portable devices
 - AC hardwire port for direct-connecting, high-current appliances
 - Quiet operation with no static or humming noise
 - Wired remote control and heavy-duty 4 AWG (American wire gauge) input cables included
- The Renogy inverter included everything I needed



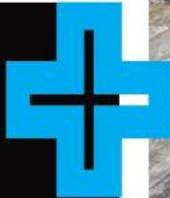
› Left: Modified sine wave inverters produce a staircase alternating current that's not suitable for many appliances. (Created by Omegatron/Wikipedia image)

› Right: This example of a sinusoidal waveform, like that from your power company, is what most electrical appliances and devices are designed to use. (Created by Omegatron/Wikipedia image)

› *Right:* The author's solar generator setup for the refrigerator test. An extension cord ran from the Renogy 1,000-watt inverter to the kitchen.

› *Below:* The included wired remote permits control of the inverter, even when it's installed in hard-to-reach places.

ABOUT RENOGY

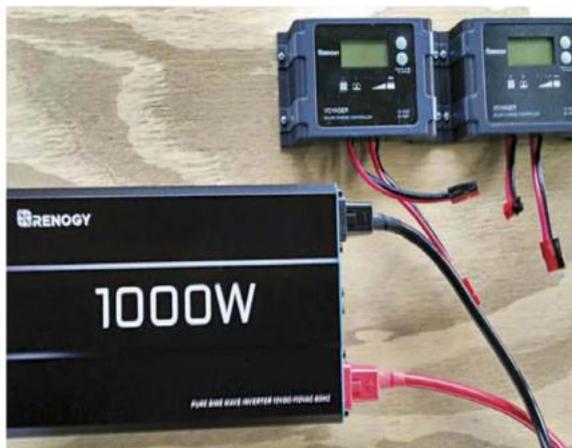
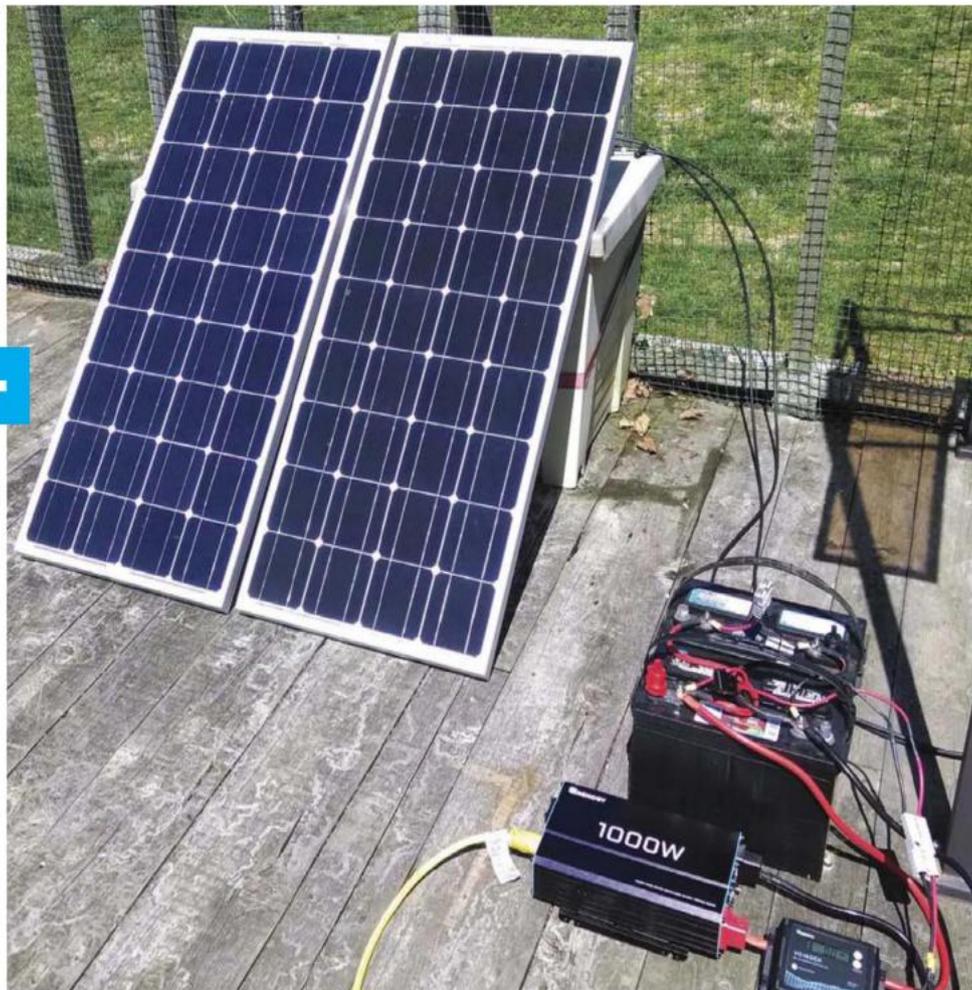


Renogy is a renewable energy company that prides itself on supplying the best solar products on the market today. Renogy offers solar products for homes, businesses, recreational vehicles, boating and virtually any application you can think of.

The company began as a small project by students at Louisiana State University. With the help and support of the Louisiana Business and Technology Center, Renogy has grown into a healthy and flourishing company. It's received numerous awards and recognition, including a spot in Inc. 5000's "top 500 fastest-growing private companies in 2016."

At its inception, Renogy sold a limited range of solar products through Amazon, eBay and a handful of suppliers. It quickly grew its product lines by creating innovative products to solve everyday problems. During the process, it was able to increase its presence by expanding the number of online marketplaces, suppliers and wholesale partners it worked with.

Renogy solar products can be bought directly from its website, as well as from its many retail partners. Complete kits are available for almost any application. Individual components are also available for you to design or expand the capacity of your DIY solar generating system. A library of how-to videos and educational resources is accessible through the Renogy customer portal (Renogy.com) to answer any questions you might have about solar energy production at home or away.



› *Above:* Here, the Renogy 1000W Pure Sine Wave Inverter is mounted on a plywood board, along with a pair of Renogy Voyager 12-volt, 20-amp charge controllers that are the core components of the author's solar power generator. These will eventually be installed in an underground storm shelter.

Then, it was time to move up a notch.

Air conditioner: Many people consider air conditioning a luxury, but for some, it's essential. It might not be necessary to run the central air conditioning during power outages, but a portable room air conditioner could come in handy.

An 8,000 BTU model was a good appliance for testing the Renogy inverter under more-strenuous conditions.

On startup, the air conditioner draws more than 10 amps at 115 VAC (approximately 1,200 watts), before settling down to around 700 watts while cooling the room.

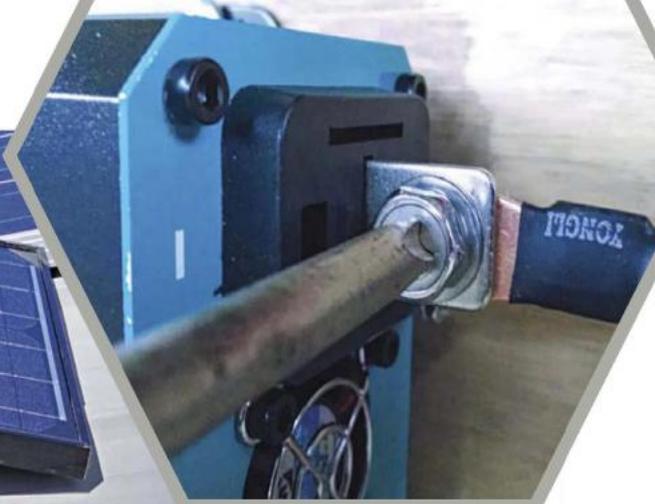
The inverter handled the startup surge without issue and, after a few minutes of operation, the internal fans came on. Although noticeable, the sound of the fans wasn't loud. This test was halted when the remaining charge in the pair of 12V, 100 amp hour, deep-cycle batteries reached 50 percent. With the air conditioner drawing more than 60 amps from the batteries and solar panels, this only took a couple of hours. However, the inverter was only warm to the touch at the end of the two-hour run.

Fan: If a fan is all you need to keep cool, the Renogy Pure Sine Wave Inverter isn't



› Left: Installing solar panels is the beginning of the process of turning sunlight into electricity.

› Top right: The 12-volt input connection must be tight and secure. Renogy makes that easy to accomplish.



“‘PURE’ SINE WAVE INVERTERS PRODUCE A CLEAN, ALTERNATING SINUSOIDAL WAVEFORM THAT’S MORE LIKE THAT FROM YOUR POWER COMPANY.”

overkill. In fact, it was an ordinary, 20-inch box fan that made me realize I needed a pure sine wave inverter to begin with.

While working in an enclosed area that was well away from utility power, I attempted to run a box fan off the modified sine wave inverter I keep in my truck. The fan complained (with a loud humming sound) and seemed to struggle coming up to speed.

Once back at the house, I tried running it off a larger, more capable inverter (also a modified sine wave model) and had the same result.

Nevertheless, plugging the fan into utility power, the fan operated quietly and normally (the problem had been the rough AC produced by the cheaper inverters). I ran that same box fan on the Renogy Pure Sine Wave Inverter for days on end, and it operated perfectly.

Without question, the Renogy 1000W was capable of running all the appliances tested ... along with a few LED lamps—and, amazingly, all at the same time! The only limit was the capacity of the batteries and solar panels I had on hand.

THE BOTTOM LINE

If you want to power household appliances and devices when or where grid power is not available, Renogy Pure Sine Wave inverters make this both possible and practical. Properly sized to the load, they can provide utility-grade power to appliances and devices that require a clean, smooth and stable AC source. As long as there’s sufficient battery capacity and adequate solar input, this can be done indefinitely. **ASG**

(Author’s note: For this review, a series of real-world tests were carried out over a three-month period. No specialized test equipment was used. The results are based purely on observation, voltage measurements and data from a commercially available P3 Kill A Watt test meter. Your results might differ.)

› Right, top: The included four AWG cables are capable of delivering full input power from the batteries up to the inverter’s rated output power of 1,000 watts continuously. One thousand watts at 115 volts equates to an electrical current of about 8.7 amperes from the AC output. However, the DC input is much higher, at around 90 amps.



› Right, bottom: An 8,000 BTU portable air conditioner that was set up inside a tent for testing on a hot day provided a good test of the Renogy 1000W.

SOURCE

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HOW TO BUILD A *QUAIL TRAP*

**THIS ANCIENT DESIGN CAN STILL
SECURE DINNER TODAY.**

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY CHRISTOPHER NYERGES

Native people in the old days would take care of much of their food procurement with passive methods of collecting small game. The reason for this is simple: In a given acre, there are far more small animals than larger ones.

Passive methods of taking animals include snares, deadfalls or methods such as a quail trap. Constructing a quail trap was taught to me by anthropologist Paul Campbell, who authored *Survival Skills of Native California*.

◀ *Above:* This finished quail trap is a variant of the type described in this article—and is shown without the trigger.

◀ *Right:* Outdoor instructor Jim Robertson shows a group of students how the trigger is made for a quail trap.







◀ *Top left:* Anthropologist Paul Campbell adjusts the location of the trigger as he sets up a quail trap.

◀ *Above:* Teacher Pascal Baudar shows his students how to set up the quail trap they just built.

◀ *Bottom left:* Students work at getting the right angle and tension for setting up the quail trap's trigger.



During our field trips, Campbell would demonstrate the simplicity of this trap. Once all the straight sticks were cut and ready to go, he could make a finished box trap in about five minutes. The trigger sometimes took a few more minutes to construct, and the setup took about a minute.

Although Campbell typically used the straight, thin sticks of mule fat shrubs to construct traps, any similar stick could be used just as effectively.

The quail trap is a bird trap, but it doesn't kill them; it captures them alive. With this trap, you can always release the birds if you don't need to eat them. This trap is primarily for birds and isn't effective for small mammals. However, as with all traps, you should never set it up just "for fun."

Campbell would always emphasize the necessity of scoping out an area to see if there were birds. He would do this by just sitting quietly, remaining somewhat motionless for a while and observing which animals began to make their presence known.

"You'd be surprised how much wildlife is in an area," Campbell once told me, "but people are too noisy to ever notice it." (He added that it's probably a waste of time to set up this trap in an area in which no birds are detected ... obvious, right?)



◀ *Left and bottom left: Baudar puts the finishing touches on a quail trap.*



“THIS IS AN EASY TRAP TO BUILD, SET UP AND USE, ASSUMING YOU HAVE A SUPPLY OF STRAIGHT STICKS AND SOME SUITABLE CORDAGE. IT JUST MIGHT HELP YOU IN AN EMERGENCY.”

EATING BIRDS



Anthropologist Paul Campbell enjoyed experimenting with various trapping systems, as well as with the methods of eating the birds he'd catch.

At one of our "Dirttime" event campouts, he demonstrated a preparation method that was utilized by many of the Southwestern tribes. He took a mockingbird that he'd captured in this trap and killed. He then put the entire bird into the coals of the fire, feathers and all, for as long as it took to singe off all the feathers.

Next, Campbell placed the bird on a flat rock and began gently pounding the entire bird with a small hand stone he'd found nearby. He explained that bird bones were very porous and could be eaten and that all the internal organs would add nutrients to the small snack a bird provided.

Once the bird was pounded into roughly a hamburger shape, he cooked it again in the coals. After retrieving it from the coals, he did some more kneading and pounding and placed the "bird-burger" on a hot, flat rock for some final cooking. Although Campbell raved about the flavor of the bird-burger, others found it a bit too crunchy for their tastes. Still, it was really far more palatable than anyone expected.



◀ Above, left: Campbell shows the trigger, which is in place and has now armed the trap.



◀ Above, right: Campbell is shown with the quail trap to indicate its size and to provide an idea of the size of the birds it can accommodate.



◀ Above, left: Francisco Loaiza, a local Boy Scout leader, shows the beginning of the quail trap. Two sticks with two cords are attached.



◀ Above, middle: The sticks are twisted so that the cords now form an X.



◀ Above, right: To begin, two sticks are placed under the cords, perpendicular to the first two sticks.

“AS WITH ALL TRAPPING AND HUNTING SYSTEMS, DON’T KILL ANIMALS ‘FOR FUN,’ AND EAT ANYTHING THAT YOU KILL.”

MAKING THE BOX TRAP

You need a source of straight sticks, such as those from mule fat, willow, elderberry, river cane or other suitable straight sticks. They should be approximately pencil-thick; no thicker than your little finger. You’ll need around 20 to 30 long sticks, perhaps more, depending on a few factors.

Begin with two straight pieces about 18 inches long. Tie the two sticks to one another at their ends. We typically use paracord for this because of its durability and longevity. In the old days, Native people would have used cordage from agave, yucca, dogbane or other materials.

When you hold the sticks apart, each cord should be the same length, and the sticks and cord together should roughly form a rectangle. Make sure the knots are tight (I sometimes cut into the wood a little so that the cords stay in place). Then, twist the sticks so that the cord forms an “X” and the overall shape is square.

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◀ *Far left and middle:* Francisco Loaiza continues to add two sticks at a time under the cords, making sure the trap remains square and tight. Sticks are laid perpendicular to the previous two sticks and closer together than the last pair of parallel sticks.

◀ *Near right:* The box part of this trap is nearly done. The cords tighten as each layer of sticks is added, ensuring the trap will stay together after a bird has been captured.



◀ *Near right:* The box part of the quail trap is finished.

◀ *Far right:* Francisco Loaiza checks the spacing of the sticks and the trap's rigidity before he gets ready to add the trigger.

“... THE BEAUTY OF THE QUAIL TRAP SYSTEM I’VE DESCRIBED HERE IS THAT YOU SIMPLY PULL OUT ALL THE STICKS FROM THE CORD WHEN YOU’RE DONE AND WRAP THEM UP IN A COMPACT BUNDLE FOR TRANSPORTATION.”

Now, begin building your box. Insert two sticks between the cord, perpendicular to the two original sticks.. You now have a square of four sticks. Add two more sticks under the cord, perpendicular to the previous sticks. You’ll add several more courses of two sticks, each pair perpendicular to the previous sticks and an inch or so closer to the center of the trap than the last pair of parallel sticks.

As you build the box trap, it will begin to form a somewhat pyramid-like shape, and the sticks you need can be shorter and shorter. Because of this, I typically harvest a load of sticks, all more or less the same thickness, and then trim them to length as I build the trap.

The key to making a good trap is to keep the shape square as you proceed—and keep the square tight. If you don’t keep it square, it won’t have good balance. Additionally, if you don’t keep it tight, it’ll all come apart too easily.

Your “mantra” while building the cage should be, “Keep it square; keep it tight.”

When you’re done adding as many sticks to the top as required to ensure there are no large openings in the top, your box trap enclosure is done. To test its durability, you can prop up the front end with a little twig that’s a few inches long. A well-constructed box will stay tight when you prop it up and won’t contort or rotate from lack of balance and lack of rigidity.

Now, your trap needs a trigger.

THE TRIGGER

Although I suppose you could connect a string that goes from your trigger all the way to your tent some distance away, you probably don't want to sit all day and wait for a bird to walk into your trap.

Let's make a proper trigger. You can actually use



◀ The scarf trigger can be cut of any wood of a similar length and thickness as the sticks for the trap.

many other trigger mechanisms, but I was taught to use the "scarf trigger" for a quail trap.

To make the trigger, start with a straight twig 6 to 8 inches long and about 1/2 inch in diameter. Lay it on its side and measure roughly a third of the way from one end. Make a perpendicular cut there to just about halfway through the stick. Roll the stick over so the cut is facing down and measure the same distance from the opposite end toward the center of the stick. Make another perpendicular cut about halfway through the stick. Then, with great care, split the stick down the center from the bottom of one cut to the bottom of the other.

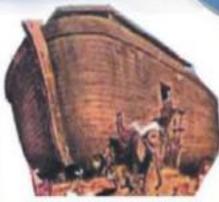
If you did it just right, the two pieces will fit back together after you split the stick. See if you can, indeed, put those two pieces back together. Lift one end of the box trap and support it with the reassembled stick. You'll have to get the balance just right for this to work.

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Once you've figured out that step, now's the time to add one more cord.

Tie a small loop on each end of a cord that's long enough to go from each far corner of the trap to the trigger, allowing for some cord to be wrapped around the trigger as well. Each loop goes over the back corner ends of the trap, and the middle of the cord is wrapped around the bottom of the scarf trigger.

“THE QUAIL TRAP IS A BIRD TRAP, BUT IT DOESN'T KILL THEM; IT CAPTURES THEM ALIVE. WITH THIS TRAP, YOU CAN ALWAYS RELEASE THE BIRDS IF YOU DON'T NEED TO EAT THEM.”

It takes a bit of experimenting to get just the right length of cord for this to work. When the cord is attached, you want it to be tight. Usually, it takes three hands to do this, so if you're by yourself, you'll need to be creative.



◀ *Above:* The trip cord is attached to the scarf trigger and also to each of the rear “legs” of the trap. This cord should be kept as tight as possible so it will “break” the trigger when a bird disturbs it.

◀ *Left:* The box part of the trap is balanced on the scarf trigger to create the entry for the prey.

You're now ready to capture some quail.

SETTING UP THE TRAP

Set the trap in an area where birds might feed on the ground. You should scatter some seed inside the box trap, along with a few seeds on the outside to induce quail or other birds to enter. When birds go inside, they'll invariably eat the seed—and will eventually touch the cord, which will pull the trigger and drop the trap.

Paul Campbell reported to me that sometimes the Mojave Indians would catch so many quail at one time that the trap would nearly lift off the ground as they tried to fly away. In my experience, I catch one or two birds that are in the area (such as mockingbirds, scrub jays or woodpeckers).

Campbell sometimes made another variation of this trap, for which he tied a knot at every intersection of the sticks. Obviously, this would be a far more time-consuming way to create the box trap. Besides, a trap created this way is now solid, not compactable and much less portable. However, it would be more rigid and durable.

By contrast, the beauty of the quail trap system I've described here is that you simply pull out all the sticks from the cord when you're done and wrap them up in a compact bundle for transportation.

This is an easy trap to build, set up and use, assuming you have a supply of straight sticks and some suitable cordage. It just might help you in an emergency. And, as I advised earlier in this article: As with all trapping and hunting systems, don't kill animals “for fun,” and eat anything that you kill. **ASG**

PLANT

PREPPER PLANT ADVISOR

MORE THAN JUST A DECORATION, WILD CHERRIES ARE TASTY AND VERSATILE.

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY CHRISTOPHER NYERGES

Name: Wild Cherries

(*Prunus* spp.)

There are about 400 species of *Prunus* worldwide. Their common names generally include cherry, chokecherry, almond, apricot, plum and other fruits known as “stone fruits” because of their large seeds.

Description

These can be large bushes or trees. Some are evergreen, and some are deciduous (meaning that their leaves drop in the winter). Wild cherries can be found throughout North America and in diverse environments.

One way to identify this plant is to crush the leaves, wait a few seconds and then smell them. They’ll have a distinct aroma of bitter almond extract—your clue that the leaf contains cyanide (hydrocyanic acid).

These fruits are very much like cultivated cherries, except the color is darker red—almost maroon—and sometimes even darker. The flesh layer can be very thin in dry years and thicker in seasons following good rains. As with domestic cherries, there’s a thin shell and the meaty inside of the seed.

Some of the common species include chokecherry (*P. virginiana*), bitter cherry (*P. emarginata*) and western chokecherry (*P. virginiana* var. *demissa*).

Where Found

Wild cherries are found in canyons, lowland forests, hillsides, farmland, urban areas and chaparral areas and are widespread throughout North America.

Uses

The fruit of wild cherries makes a great trail nibble. I usually see them in August, when they ripen and when the trail is hot and dry. The fruit makes a refreshing treat (if it’s not too sour). But don’t eat too many of the raw fruit, or diarrhea might result.

The wild cherry also has a hint of bitterness. The fruit can be cooked off the seeds and the pulp made into jellies, jams and preserves by following any standard jam or jelly recipe. You can also make a fruit “leather” by laying the pulp on a cookie sheet and drying it.

In the old days, Native people enjoyed the flesh of the cherry, but they considered the seed to be the more valuable part of the fruit. The seeds were shelled, and the inside meat was cooked to reduce the cyanide. The cooked seeds, once



ground into mush or meal, were then used to make a sweet bread product or added (like acorns) to stews as a gravy or thickening agent.

Processing

To be used, the flesh needs only to be eaten raw or cooked.

Considering that at least half of the bulk of the collected fruit is the seed, you should at least try processing the seeds if you’ve collected a reasonable volume of the fruit.

I wash the seeds, let them dry and then shell them. I boil through at least three changes of water—this takes about 20 minutes—and then eat the seeds as is or grind them to a mush on a *metate* (grinding stone). Typically, I add the cherry seed mush to acorn flour to make pancakes. The cherry seeds give the acorn pancakes a sweet, almondy flavor.

When to Harvest/Availability

Wild cherries typically begin to mature in late July and August. In some areas, they’ll be at their peak of ripeness around September. This can vary by a month either way, depending on the local seasonal weather variations.

Medicine/Nutrition

Native people boiled the cherry bark and then used it as a cough and sore throat remedy, as well as for treating diarrhea and headaches.

Here’s an interesting excerpt from notes made during the Lewis and Clark Expedition (the spelling discrepancies are most likely his). On June 11, 1805, Meriwether Lewis became sick and wrote,

“I was taken with such violent pain in the intesten that I was unable to partake of the feast of marrowbones ... I directed a parcel of the small twigs [of chokecherry] to be geathered, striped of their leaves, cut into pieces of about 2 inches in length and boiled in water until a strong, black decoction of an astringent bitter taste was produced.

“At sunset, I took a point [pint] of this decoction and abut an hour after repeated the dze. By 10 in the evening I was entirely relieved from pain and in fact every symptom of the disorder forsook me; my fever abated, a gentle perspiration was produced and I had a comfortable and refreshing night’s rest.”

Other Uses

The long, straightest shoots and branches of wild cherries have been used for making baskets and cradles by Native peoples. The wood has also been used for many other crafts, such as spears and atlatls.

Advice for Growing

Cherry seeds are very easy to sprout and grow. After you eat the fruit, plant the seed in good soil right away.

Cautions

If you crush the leaf, it will impart a sweet aroma that's similar to the bitter almond extract used in cooking. That's the telltale aroma of cyanide—so *don't use the leaf for tea!*

If you eat a large volume relative to your body size, you could have stomach pains or diarrhea, so exercise caution.

Recipe

WILD CHERRY JELLY

- 3½ pounds ripe wild cherries
- 6½ cups sugar
- ¼ teaspoon almond extract
- 1 box powdered fruit pectin
- 3 cups water
- Jelly straining bag

Clean the cherries and cook with the water in a covered pot for 15 minutes. Pour into the straining bag and collect the juice in a bowl without squeezing the cherries. Combine the strained cherry juice and sugar in a pot. Stir constantly as it comes to a boil. Then, add the pectin and bring the mixture to a rolling boil for one minute while continuing to stir. Remove from the stove. Stir and skim for 5 minutes. Thoroughly stir in the almond extract. Divide evenly into canning jars and process the jars per the manufacturer's instructions.

About ASG's Plant Advisor

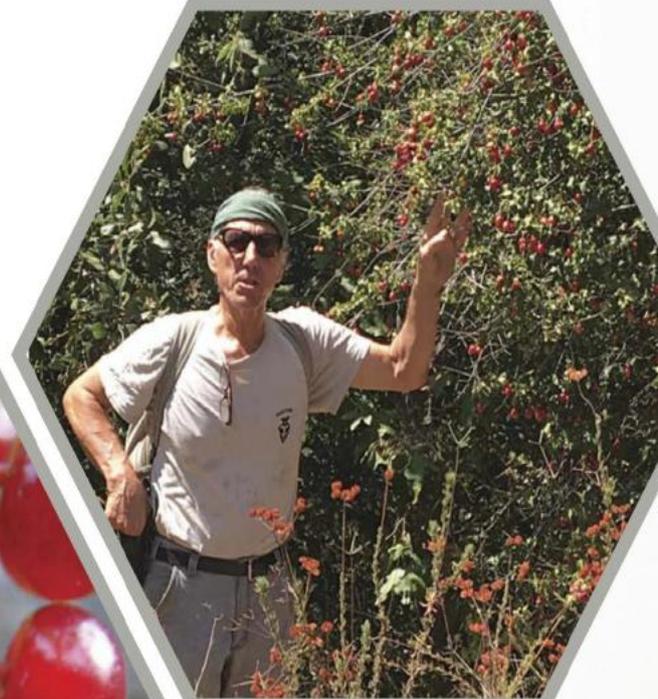
Christopher Nyerges has been teaching ethnobotany since 1974. He is the author of *Guide to Wild Foods and Useful Plants*, *Foraging Wild Edible Plants of North America* and other books on the uses of wild plants. He can be reached at SchoolofSelf-Reliance.com.

› *Far right:* Author Christopher Nyerges explains the benefits of wild cherries while standing next to an evergreen cherry tree that has ripening fruit. (Photo: Jackie Kuang)

› *Near right:* The fruit of the choke-cherry, a fruit that's common in much of North America (Photo: Louis-M. Landry)

› *Bottom right:* These shelled and cleaned cherry seeds are ready to be ground into flour.

◀ *Below:* A view of the ripe fruits of Catalina Island cherry, which are common in the American West.



WORDS

LAST

SEPTEMBER IS NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS MONTH

Considering all the potential threats to our health and way of life, being prepared for every type of disaster and emergency is virtually impossible. Face it: If there's a sizable meteorite out there with Earth's name on it, all bets are off.

But that doesn't mean you shouldn't prepare yourself and your family for at least the most likely adverse situations you could face. To a great extent, your list will depend on where you live, because most disasters are the result of natural events. True, man-made catastrophes are not uncommon or without dangers, but the vast majority of lost life and property in the United States is caused by extreme weather.

While natural threats are related to specific weather or seasons—both of which are predictable to a large degree—we believe that proper planning and preparation requires weekly, if not daily, attention.

Living in northern Georgia, we're rarely affected by serious winter weather. However, "black ice," and even minimal snowfall, are enough to paralyze the populace and send the unprepared slipping and sliding to the nearest supermarket for milk, bread and "adult refreshments."

This always saddens me ... for a couple of reasons. First, many, if not most, residents in the Atlanta area grew up in places much farther north and should know that the "-ber" months (i.e., September through December) signal the possibility of wintry weather. Second, stories about 2014's "Snowmageddon" are often retold on cold, dark nights when the faintest threat of sub-freezing temperatures taints the weather forecasts. Folks should know better (bless their hearts).

Because so many people around the country fail to prepare—which often equals *preparing to fail*—the federal government has declared each September as National Preparedness Month. Every year, FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) works with other government agencies and private-sector partners to make Americans more aware of potential threats and ways to be ready for them. The fact is, through Ready.gov, FEMA makes this information available 24/7/365, so there's no reason *not* to access this valuable resource. Even though we sometimes disagree with the information FEMA provides, we still think you're better off taking some steps to protect yourself and your family rather than ignoring the risks.

More than just advice for goods you should store at home, this site covers areas many people don't think about. It suggests ways to introduce the topic of preparedness to children, provides planning documents so you can create your own plans and record important information, and explains how to determine if your childcare provider is prepared for disasters.

I think many of us have learned important lessons about preparedness over the last several months. Large numbers of people are new to prepping as a result of their experiences with the COVID-19 pandemic. The term, "prepper," has become more mainstream, and I believe this will continue into the future. More than just realizing the value of having a month's supply of food on hand, Americans set the record for the most firearms purchased in March—an estimated 2.5 million. Because a GSW has not been proven to terminate the COVID-19 virus, one has to assume that more people are of the belief that firearm ownership is a useful way to increase their chances of survival from *human* threats.

For our part, *American Survival Guide* will publish our *Fall/Winter Prepper's Emergency Survival Manual* in late September. In addition to its traditional categories of water, food, shelter, security, communications and health, this issue will feature new sections dedicated to fire, navigation, transportation and energy. We're looking forward to bringing a wider variety of information and advice to you and welcome your thoughts on other improvements we should consider.

The *Prepper Manual* will be part of your annual subscription, so there's no need to try to find an open newsstand. If you don't have a subscription, now's the time to sign up! It's quick and easy at <https://engagedmediamags.com/outdoor/american-survival-guide/american-survival-guide-subscription>. You'll save a ton of money off the cover price; and, so you can always keep ASG in your pocket, you can also sign up for a digital subscription.

Don't wait until September! Take care of business today—and every day.

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Mike McCourt

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