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Sawvivor

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- Gear reviews and tests - Edged tools - Saws -



Publication: Friday 6 September 2002

Description :

A survival light saw.

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Other pages introduce a heavy machete and hatchets. This one is just the start to a comparison with a very light saw - the Trailblazer Sawvivor. At this point it'll just be to generate discussion as there will obviously have to be months of trying out the tools in various situations to see how they compare in identical situations.

This one has been done to death over and over on the survival forums, but the person reading all of that stuff is likely to get lost in the trees rather than study the forest. Let's see what I mean by this:

1. A survival tool is something that's available all the time. It's OK to have some expensive tool - but it may not be with you when you need it because you just don't leave it in the vehicle, pack, etc for fear of theft. You might be travelling in someone else's vehicle when it dies, and so forth. The sawvivor cost me \$31 (CAN) and really should be compared to a large knife/machete costing that much, and the same for a hatchet. I'll be comparing to a cheaper hatchet and blade. In with this comes durability - how much durability can one expect from a cheap light tool.
2. Weight and size are a big consideration too. Again if something is left in camp because of weight/size it really doesn't count. You simply have to look at what weight you can consider carrying all the time and compare cutting tools (or combinations) for the best deal.
3. Certain jobs will favor certain tools. It's pretty obvious that digging a hole with a saw is pretty desperate. At certain times here, splitting dead lower conifer branches fast is pretty vital to getting a fire started and that favors a hatchet above all else. At other times and in other conditions other tools will be favored.
4. Safety might be a big issue. Hatchets really are dangerous even to people who have used them a while. You might need a tool that everyone in your party can use safely despite lack of experience.
5. There's cutting efficiency and making efficiency. Can the tool(s) you choose make other things such as a shovel, spoon, trap.

You are probably getting the idea that all of this comparing isn't as simple as it first looked. Like I said though, this page is just to generate ideas which you can then try with a set of tools to see what suits you. That's why I mostly promote inexpensive tools!

A First Look at the Sawvivor:

Sawvivor



[image]



This is a well thought out piece of equipment. Despite the looks it's very simple to assemble and the blade tightening screw is fixed so there's nothing to get lost. You just extract the blade from the handle, put it into place and tighten one thumb screw. Then you have a workable saw. In use it's quite rigid if you tighten the blade well and very light

which is sure an advantage if you use a saw in awkward positions. It'll cut through wrist sized green poles in a very few strokes.

There's a trick to cutting poles though. If you go to an alder thicket, then the young trees have very few lower branches - you just cut the poles and then cut them to size. If you have to do much limbing of small branches with a saw then you'll soon find that it's not the most efficient tool. Anyway in cutting poles the Sawvivor easily keeps up with a top notch hatchet like a Gransfors Wildlife or a heavy machete. Your cheap tools of these types will have to be well sharpened to show such efficiency. Notice that on the first trial I used tools that I am familiar with - the hatchet being twice the weight of the saw and the machete over three times the weight. I don't see how you have any chance of keeping up with the saw with a 10oz knife (even with baton) or very light hatchet.

If you are smart - you sure won't be setting up camp in an alder thicket, so you'll be taking the poles somewhere better. Then of course you'll be needing to sharpen some ends to drive some of the poles into the ground if you are constructing a lean to or fire reflector. The saw doesn't come close to the hatchet or the machete/knife for that. The saw won't be the greatest for cutting browse either unless you cut large branches to drag back and strip.

Where the saw does shine is in cutting dead wood which is harder. In order not to get glancing the hatchet and machete have to be very acute edged and sharp. They also have to be well balanced for efficiency. The saw just cuts well, and anyone can use it. With the saw being easy to use, branches can be easily cut into short lengths and so are easy to split with even a wide bladed knife and baton. As you'll see in the picture above, I cut some 4 1/2" driftwood that was pretty hard - knots included. That's just the size that was handy. The Gransfors WL had a pretty difficult time because of the way the wood was positioned and its hardness. The saw made easy cuts and varied 30-50 seconds to cut through. I'd sharpened half the teeth as an experiment and it was clear that a big improvement is forthcoming with sharpening all the teeth. Notice how little sawdust there is - due to the narrow kerf of the blade. I didn't want to get into real chopping on a beach which is where I was having coffee and taking photographs - but with a few chops I'd estimate 4 minutes or so to get through that hard little piece of wood with the hatchet. Really definitive cutting tests later..

There are a few specific points with the Sawvivor which are well worth thinking about:

1. The blade is thin compared to a regular bow saw. I make it 0.6mm as opposed to 0.9mm. this could lead to binding or wandering of the cut unless you take care to keep the adjuster tight. The blade is certainly strong and durable enough.
2. You'll notice right away that the Sawvivor makes a thin cut because the offset of the teeth is less than with a regular bow saw (1mm kerf as opposed to 1.5mm). This is a pretty efficient little saw if used properly.
3. You can put more than one blade into the handle for storage, but you'll have to remove extras before folding out the handle. There seems to be some rubber inside the handle to stop the blade(s) from rattling around - handy!
4. Mine (and the rest that I examined at Canadian Tire) wasn't very sharp. You'll see a big difference in performance with a few minutes (OK an hour) careful sharpening. I just fold some fine emery cloth around a hacksaw blade and carefully hone. I use a lens to see that I'm keeping to angles at first then soon catch on to the correct angle. Just go gently - it doesn't take much. No expensive files and jigs required.
5. There isn't very much clearance between the blade and top of the frame for putting an arm through to avoid cuts to the back of the hand if the blade slips out of the cut. It is possible though. With a saw this short and light you'll be holding it into the cut so the danger is reduced.

The bottom line for this saw has to be that if it holds up in my use for a while it's got to be one of the best cutting tools, for its weight, out there! That's going to become pretty obvious when comparing to a shaved down hatchet or a 10oz knife. I guess that I'm going to have to pick up the 15" version of the Trailblazer to see how it compares to the Sawvivor. All the saws come with a lifetime warranty so it appears that the manufacturer has a lot of faith: in addition a search of newsgroups hasn't come up with any breakage stories.

Sawvivor

My take on the saw might be a little different than most. I don't go with the one multi-purpose tool for survival concept. I'd much sooner have a toolkit of inexpensive light tools that complement each other. This isn't a new idea either being practised by long passed on outdoors people like RM Patterson. Let's see: a 10oz saw, a lightened 10oz leuko, a small 3 oz Mora, a 2oz crooked knife. Twenty five ounces isn't so much, as the space wouldn't be - and there wouldn't be much you couldn't do. If one had the new lightweight hatchet from Gransfors instead of the leuko, then you'd really be set for a few ounces more - but of course for much more expense. Grinding away on regular hatchets and drilling them full of holes is a cheap alternative but time consuming and requiring a few special tools. Without hatchets and putting a handle onto a light leuko blade from Brisa will run saw-\$30, leuko-\$30, Mora-\$15, crooked knife-\$15. All in all a total of about \$100 CAN including some cheap sharpening supplies. Lots of work of course - there's always a catch.

As I said I've just started with the little saw. I'd appreciate information from people who have used one for a while. I'll be updating the page with cutting tests later.

Post-scriptum :Original article at [OldJimbo's site](#).