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Wetterling long hunting axe VS Gränsfors Bruks small forest axe

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- Gear reviews and tests - Edged tools - Axes and hatchets -



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Description :

A test about two very similar axes. And light axe discussion.

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Introduction

The Wetterlings long hunting axe (LHA) was sent to me by our sponsor Jack from Woodland Organics, for testing purposes, you can find a link to his site at the bottom of the page.

The Gränsfors Bruks small forest axe (SFA) is mine.

Presentation



Three axes Wetterlings LHA, Gransfors SFA, Roselli LA

LHA original sharpness The secondary bevel can be seen

The LHA poll Slightly assymetrical.



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The Wetterlings LHA comes with a nice thick leather sheath. The head is hand forged [1]. The edge presents a secondary bevel, and is not extremely sharp, the poll which is rounded, is not exactly symmetrical. The head and handle were varnished, the handle grain almost vertical on all its length. 845 grams, 50 cm handle. The bit profile is that of a V terminated by a thin convex edge.



GB SFA A very well finished axe.

The Gränsfors SFA comes with a quality leather sheath, a very sharp state, The head is hand forged, the poll is polished, it showed some rusting traces on the head where the steel is darkened. The poll is well finished, and flat. The handle is linseed oil soaked, and the grain is also almost vertical. 875 grams, 49cm handle. The bit profile is hollow, terminated with a concave that is quite pronounced.

There is a little less edge on the LHA than on the SFA (like 5mm less) and the head is more compact .

So both axes needed some work. I had the SFA for some time, and did the work long ago, cleaning the rust with a steel brush and a rust remove. The head would still rust by just looking at it, specially inside the forge marks, so I had to varnish it. The poll was also flattened and polished.

For the LHA, the sharpening session took 15 minutes, to make the edge symmetrically convex and as sharp as the SFA. If one is not ready to sharpen an axe , he should not buy one, that is my view on the question. So yes the SFA comes Sshaper, and it is a nice touch, but it is not important. I also made the poll more symmetrical. One day, I may remove the varnish to treat the handle in tung or linseed oil, but really the axe works fine like it is, as you will discover reading by the rest of this article.

Testing

Hard wood



Three axes again Here on the stack of processed olive wood.

I had this pile of olivewood branches to cut into smaller chunks.



Three axes. Here during the tests on olive wood, cutting a good sized branch, you can see the test cuts behind each axe edge.

I, for the occasion, also took with me the Roselli axe tested in [Gränsfors Bruks Small Forest Axe VS Roselli Long Axe](#)

At work and on different tasks, the following appears:

- ▶ *Cutting a log:* The LHA is very efficient in terms of penetration and control. It is easy to penetrate deep in hard wood, cutting big chips, but also the axe does not glance. A wide varieties of angles works very fine. The SFA has a tendency to glance after 30 degrees, and its precision because of that is less, whether used with one or two hands. It

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also penetrates less. The Roselli is lighter by a 150 grams than these, and still shows the same level of performance but needs a wide angle for the V, its precision is just marginally better than the SFA, but it tends to glance a bit less.

- ▶ **Cutting branches** The LHA is the big winner, because of its unequalled penetration and precision. This axe makes me think of a Survival golok from Valiant in terms of wood penetration, it just cuts through branches some one and a half time better than the two other axes.

Everything has a price, so the LHA is also the axe that has the most tendency to stick, but this is also because it penetrates deeper. Nothing bad anyway a little shaking and it releases, but it does stick more. The thin convex profile of the LHA is certainly very efficient.

Soft Wood

So, interesting so far, this needed more investigations, I went to the woods, with only the Gränsfors and Wetterlings this time, and had a go at cutting trunks and limbing.



Cutting a log The two axes and their performances. The Wetterlings can cut a thinner V, the SFA cannot.

The Wetterlings cut A very precise axe, both for positioning of the cut, and for control of the cut itself.

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The GB cut. Not very easy to cut precisely.



But they did it Good work for both, even if the performances are different, it is very relative.

- ▶ *Cutting logs:* The LHA here really reveals itself even more, a pleasure to use, very precise, very powerful and fast. The SFA is still suffering of a relative imprecision in comparison, as even if you control the point of impact and direction it is not obvious the axe will go straight. Using both or simply one hand, the LHA just is the best log cutter, because it can cut a narrower V, and because it in the same time penetrates deeper.



Some limbing work Let's work this tree.



Two axes Limbing done.

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- ▶ *Limbing*: The LHA, also due to its better penetration and control also beats the SFA for this task. Both are good axes to do this.
- ▶ *splitting* : (a remember for me to update this after I do some splitting).



More limbing And still our two axes.

All these measures are relative, both are excellent axes, but when you use the LHA, you do discover, the SFA is not as easy to use, and therefore not as efficient. Both have exactly the very similar dimensions and weight, so how comes?

Deeper analysis

Both axes kept their edges at the same rate all a long the test.



Two axes superposed. You can check the differences, specially on the bit, which shows the LHA bit smaller.

The LHA has a smaller bit, it gives less edge [2], but is also less prominent, maintaining the edge more in the line of the hands, this is certainly a factor of stability when cutting, as it works against glancing.

The LHA has a V profile, when the SFA has a hollow profile, and if you check [Bush Craft: Outdoor Skills and Wilderness Survival](#), page 74, you will discover that everything is explained there, a flat convex edge is described by Kochanski as "*Staight - glances least*", when a more convex edge is described as "*General purpose*". One must reckon though that the SFA is a mix of a limbing axe (hollow bit) and a general purpose axe (convex edge).

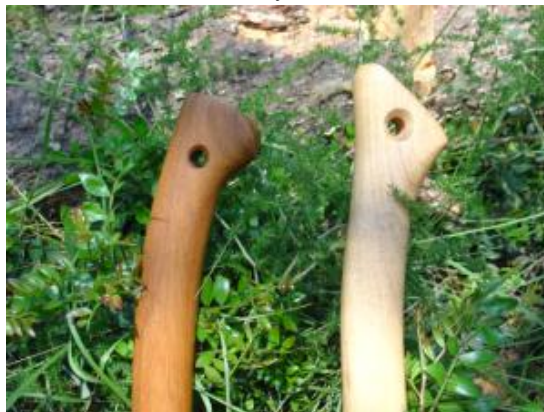


The SFA balance and profile The bit is too heavy compared with the poll. Note the hollow bit with a rather pronounced convex edge.



The LHA balance and profile The balance is perfect by Kochanski's test. Note the thin and reasonably straight profile.

Now, still at page 75 of the same book, you discover the Kochanski balance test, in order to determine if an axe is properly balanced, and it is just what I did to check these axes. The LHA is balanced OK, and the SFA is out of the acceptable limits describes by Kochanski. Now that would explain the lack of precision after impact. I remind however that the Roselli is even less balanced than the SFA and is yet more stable, and less prone to glances.



Handles The recurve under the palm of the wetterlings seems to allow better precision.

The last thing was about the difference in precision in placing the blow at the right place, which was also obvious, and I think it comes from the lack little recurve at the hand of the handle of the SFA. This little recurve, as insignificant

as it might look, seems to allow guiding the axe with the palm of the back hand, at the last moment, but also the most important, just before the blow hits the wood.

It is not one parameter that makes a good axe, but a set of parameters, as far as efficiency is concerned, the Wetterlings makes no error, while I am very surprised that the SFA results are not better, specially considering all the good I heard about them.

Conclusion

The Gränsfors Bruks has a better finish than the Wetterlings, however, with a very little work, the Wetterlings is an axe of the same class in terms of efficiency and control. These axes are using tools, so the finish is only valid when the axe is hanged to a wall, for decoration, and really does not matter in the field, or once the axe will have ridden a year in a car trunk. The Wetterlings is cheaper [3], and at least as efficient without a doubt. I am affraid that I have to say that the Gränsfors SFA has a slightly overrated reputation [4]. It would be interesting to test some other models of the respective ranges the same way. But I can tell you something, if I need to choose an axe of this size, for light forestry work, the Wetterlings is the one I would choose. [5] Over the years, we have heard the same problems on both brands, so, wether GB or Wetterlings, but a bit truer for Wetterlings, I recommend to either pick one in person, or buy it by a place where it can be hand picked for you. If you chose one, take care to read first the article [Advanced axe selection](#).

Post-scriptum :

All tests presented here were led on dead trees (or branches that were cut for maintainance), as I do not like the idea of felling a living tree unless there is a good reason.

The Wetterlings for this review was provided for free by courtesy of Woodland Organics in exchange of a banner to their site in the article. But the whole test is totally independant, and has in no way been censured or altered because of this. Jack does sell both brands in this test.

<http://outdoors-magazine.com/ads/adview.php?what=zone:8&n=acbe6451>

[1] Handforged for both axes means that a smith manipulated the different power hammers and dyes.

[2] which has not been a problem to me

[3] and often by a lot

[4] Probably the effect of Gränsfors marketing which is to claim the tradition, and old fashioned item, and also publicity by people like Mears

[5] The Roselli handles different needs, is more polyvalent, and is also lighter, can be used to shape wood, the LHA or SFA cannot really do this.