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# Whistles

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- Gear reviews and tests - Emergency and survival -



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## **Description :**

Testing some emergency whistles.

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**Everyone in the outdoors needs a signalling device. It's surprising how little a voice carries when you have the sound of running water from a river in the background - or even the wind.**

We found that on a quiet night a whistle can be heard distinctly up to 600M - we didn't have anywhere to try at further distances. What surprised me was that the light from a cigarette lighter or match can be seen clearly at that distance too. An old referee's whistle actually beat out the Fox 40 being of lower pitch and more distinct - well for a couple of old guys it was. Later, in testing of a Fox40 against a Scotty Lifesaver #1, and in a further test of a Fox40 against an Acme 649, young people believed the Fox to be **much** louder. Being old I didn't hear it that way..

Alberta Ed has the warning that some of the high pitched wavering tone whistles might act as a varmint call to bring in bears. That is a distinct possibility as I have had them come to varmint calls. Just the idea of using a whistle that has a similar sound to a varmint call while lying injured with the smell of blood in the air - well that's not pleasant to contemplate!

The work to see how far the whistle sounds carry with regard to background noise - and to find some observable predators is waiting until late in the year since we don't want to bring out search and rescue to find the cause of whistle sounds... **Note** This had to be put off as I had delays getting a gun license. I wasn't too confident on standing down bears at close range without a gun.

For most purposes a whistle should be loud, work after being wet (OK - dumped in the river!), and cheap. It should be cheap so that you can have a few handy - otherwise it'll always be at home when you want it. After a quarter of a century of teaching I have a neat collection of whistles, some plastic some nice chromed metal. None are that loud, certainly not waterproof, and with strong lanyards as likely to strangle me as help. Proper refs' whistles might not have these shortcomings - as with the one we tested of 25 years' vintage.

I had put off getting a good whistle because I couldn't find one locally, and because of shipping charges in getting one from the US. The signal whistles in the camping section of stores were worse than I already had. Eventually I found that the whistles I was looking for were in the hockey section of Canadian Tire since they are used for refereeing. The Scottie and Acme were found in the local hardware store.

## The Fox 40 Whistle

This comes in 3 colors here, (red, orange and yellow) that have good visibility - many other colors are available. The whistle sells for \$4.40 CA so you can afford a bunch. It's extremely loud, and we'll try some tests to see

just how far it can be heard under various conditions. Most important it comes

with a lanyard that has a plastic "break-free" clip so that you won't get

strangled by it. The whistle is pea-less and works well after being soaked. Yep

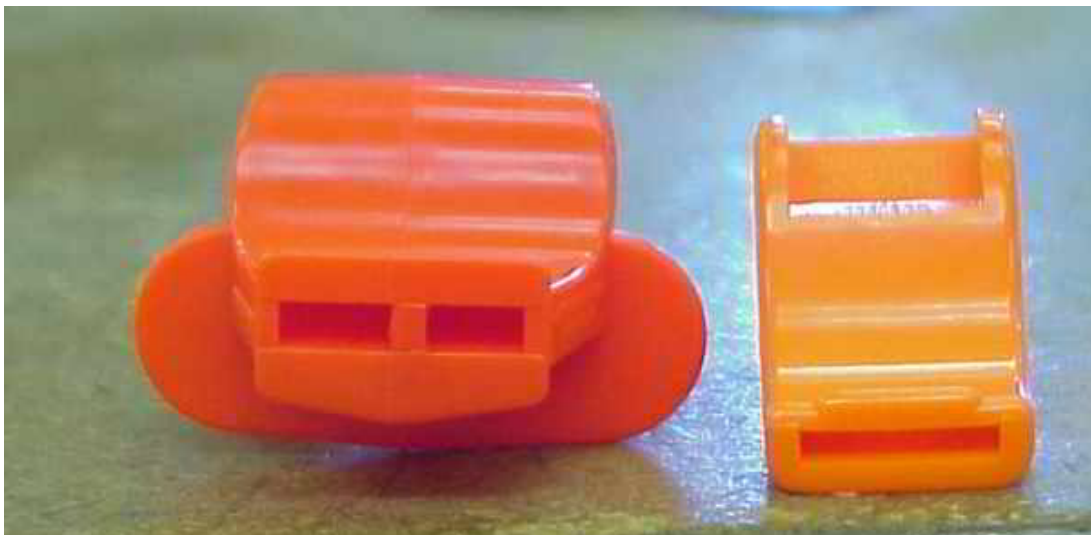
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it even works under water, though you'd probably want to save your breath

there.



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[The Fox 40 Webpage](#)

[href="http://www.equipped.com/soundoff.htm">](http://www.equipped.com/soundoff.htm)A Review

## The Scottie Lifesaver

As you can see above, this is a pretty bulky whistle. It has synthetic peas but seems to work under all conditions and is durable. It's Coast Guard approved as are the others.

## the Acme 649

This is a pretty decent whistle, sounding much the same in tone (single lower tone) as the Scottie. The advantage of this one is the flat profile - being much the same size and shape as a bic lighter, so it fits easily into pockets. Same story - old people will hear this as being louder and so hear it further than a Fox40. Opposite with young people. Mine didn't come with lanyard or snaps, but the price was only \$5.00 CA.





## Others

Marion David Poff sent me some whistles to test a while back. More on them later as I get chance to test further. For now the Storm really does sound 50% louder at half a kilometre, but all the whistles work at that distance.

Here's a picture for comparison of sizes. From left to right, Acme 200, Acme 649, ACR, Storm and Fox40. (Naturally I'm missing some he sent as they were in my other jacket!!!!)

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Here's a comparison between the Acme 2000 and Storm



And here a closer look at sizes comparing Storm to Fox 40

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I'll fix this up in a little while - Marion!

Here's an interesting piece of information I got from Phil:

" I have numerous FOX40's and the one I have found that works the best and seems to have a slightly lower audible range than any of the rest is one that FOX40 produces for animals handlers! It's basically made for people with pets to use to either help train their dogs and/or warn others of the dog. It seems to produce a tone that either carries further or is heard slightly easier by our ears. I'm not sure if there is any other info on the whistle around, but it came in a blister package, and out of the 10 they had(Local Pet store) they were all a black/purple mixture. The only diff I could see as far as the structure of the whistle was that it was missing the lower chamber(did not have part of the chamber where the bump on the bottom is). It also has a VERY distinctive sound verses any other whistle on the market, such as a policeman's whistle, ref's, fox40, storm...etc. It has what sounds like a lower-wavering tone and pitch, although the decibel range still appears the same."



## Conclusions:

Since whistles are excellent signalling devices and a \$5 whistle will last many years - a whistle is a pretty good deal. Getting two of different pitch might be a good signalling strategy too. I wouldn't make too much of what I found - for the cost involved I recommend you get a few and run your own tests with the people you are in the outdoors with. Any of the whistles shown so far are excellent value, durable and really work.

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