

The Walther Tomahawk, left, and Multifunctional Axe are serious outdoor tools for campers and hunters.



Walther's Tomahawk and Multi Functional Axe

by Dick Eussen

Tomahawks or hatchets are small hafted axes that have a long history, being the earliest axe that ancient man designed from stone. Most likely the first originated from a stone club with a handle fitted that was used for combat and hunting. Later it evolved in a ground cutting edge that initially saw light in the Mesolithic period 6000 years ago and ended in the Neolithic 4000 to 2000 years ago when metals such as bronze and iron became the standard. When the First Fleet landed in Botany Bay, the indigenous people they encountered were armed with stone axes and spear tips.

Axes are well versed in ancient

mythology. For instance stone tomahawks were believed to be thunderbolts that were used to protect people against lightning strikes. Early steel axes could thwart a hailstorm, or were deposited with the blade sticking up to protect crops against bad weather. Others were buried beneath house sills to keep witches away, while an axe under the bed would guarantee a male child.

But most of all, axes in each of their variations were tools of war and work. They were fearsome armaments when enemies met at close quarters and are one of the oldest combat items known, along with clubs and spears. When Europeans settled

in other continents, like the Americas and Australia, they encountered people who had never seen iron objects. Soon, small hand axes, that the first Americans called 'tomahawks', replaced their traditional stone axes. The word tomahawk is believed to have been derived from the Lenape Indians who called them 'tamahak'.

Stone tomahawks or stone axes were widely used by indigenous American and Australians and are still employed in parts of New Guinea. There are many different uses for the tomahawks and they have evolved to a stage where they don't resemble the original stone tools anymore.

Outdoors people still use tomahawks

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- some in preference to a survival knife - for hunting, camping and hiking, trail-blazing and fishing. I have used them for years and carried a long-handled Estwing tomahawk to remove the horns from scrub bulls and buffaloes when living in the Top End years ago. These days, I carry a tomahawk for the easy removal of trophy pig tusks and have found it to be a handy tool for chopping bones when butchering deer and goats and cutting fire kindling to a manageable size.

I have been testing a pair of such tools from Walther, the Tomahawk and Multi Functional Axe. The Tomahawk is reminiscent of a fireman's axe that I carried years ago when I was a team leader in the Jabiru Mine emergency services team, where fire fighting was part of the job. In line with today's tactical and paramilitary mindset, the color does not matter - providing it is black.

The Walter Tomahawk is a black-coated bush tool handy for splitting and halving kindling for a fire, removal of tusks and horns, branches from a track, trail-blazing or clearing an area for a tent site for the night. It has plenty of heft for the job as the handle is longer than normally found on similar tools. Instead of having a flat back, the Tomahawk has a 90mm-long spike or pick that can be used as a wedge or puncture tool. The sides of the blade have a flat non-grip surface suitable as a hammer. The 420 steel blade length is 123mm.

The 380mm-long synthetic handle has a non-slip grip on the end, which gives it plenty of heft and power when wielded. The Tomahawk's total length is 520mm and it has a weight of 732g. When not in use, it is protected by a nylon pouch with a belt loop for easy carrying.

The Multifunctional Axe is a black-coated

traditional heavy-duty tomahawk with a non-glare 123mm-long blade secured by a synthetic 280mm-long curved non-slip handle with a lanyard hole for a wrist loop. The total length is 365mm for a weight of 875g. The flat-topped rear of the blade can be used as a pommel or hammer tool, as can the sides of the blade. A nylon sheath with belt loop completes the outfit.

Workmanship of the tomahawks is outstanding and nothing is spared to detail as they are designed for a lifetime of use and abuse. The steel is 420 stainless. My mate Neale and I gave them a good workout on both live and dead timber in thick rainforests and scrubs on the far north end of Cooktown's Starcke Track. Edge duration is excellent and it took only a few swipes with a Lansky axe and machete sharpening tool to bring them back to razor sharpness.

Tomahawks are very much a personal choice and depend what one will be used for. With decades spent in the bush, I have found them to be a handy tool indeed. The Walther edged tools are extreme heavy-duty tomahawks that will keep you happy for years if you have use for a handy mini-axe. The handles are chemically bonded to the head, ensuring that they will not wear loose. The synthetic handle material absorbs shock and gives a cushioning effect in use.

However, because tomahawks are small, kids think that they are just made for their own use. Make sure you keep them out of children's hands; they are a serious outdoorsman tool, not a toy. I still bear the scar when I drove a tomahawk into my upper right foot when I was about 10 years old. When it is not in use, sheath it to protect the blade and keep it away from the kids.

Sharpening a tomahawk or axe is a two-stage job if it is very blunt. You need a fine metal mill file for the initial process and a round carborundum pocket whetstone - or a purpose Lansky axe and machete sharpening tool. Anchor the blade in a vice if you have one, start with the file first, pushing it from toe to heel (top to bottom) on the blade and hone away any dents in the



The belt axes are easy to carry.

blade. Do one side with a down stroke and the other the opposite way. The same as is done with a knife blade. Keep the angle at a consistent 25/30 degrees.

Some new axes may have too much shoulder and you need to hone it away until the correct taper has been achieved. If you have a Dacron fish filleting or butcher's chain-mesh glove, wear it in case you slip.

The next stage is to hone the blade with the whetstone in a circular motion until it is razor sharp. Turn it over and repeat it on the opposite side. The whetstone is held in the palm of your hand. This is not the safest method to sharpen a blade, but there is no other way unless you have a proper tool. That is why I recommend a filleting glove. With practice, this can also be done in the bush without a vice to hold it. In comparison, the Lansky tool is quicker and much safer to use than a pocket stone and does the same job.

Both the Walther Tomahawk and Multifunctional Axe fill the need for a small axe and they will last a lifetime, being rugged to the extreme. The Tomahawk has a recommended retail price of \$135 while the Multi Functional Axe retails for \$165. For more information, ask at your local gunshop or visit www.frontierarms.com.au to find your nearest dealer. ■



A bastard file, honing oil and pocket honing stone, or a Lansky axe and machete tool sharpener - an excellent alternate to the stone.