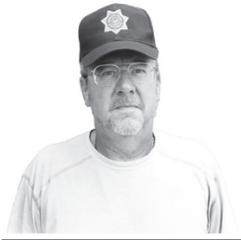


The multi-purpose Swiss Army Knife



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

My first experience with a Swiss Army Knife was almost a century ago, or so it seems. It was during my brief and tumultuous tenure as a Cub Scout. The Cubs had their own version of a knife, specifically designed to meet the needs on the trail. That knife quickly ended my career with scouting.

The knife had a flat-head screwdriver blade, a bottle cap opener, a dull punch or awl, and a 2 ¼ inch knife that was so dull, you could not cut a slab of peanut butter with it. I tried for hours to sharpen that blade, but the manufacturer knew that a sharp knife in the hands of eager 10-year-olds, would not end happily. Basically, the knife was useless to a country kid.

The real Swiss Army Knife is a multiblade pocketknife that evolved from knives issued to Swiss soldiers somewhere around 1886. The first knives were made in Germany until Swiss cutler Karl Elsener began making knives for soldiers in 1891.

The first knives were equipped with a blade (presumably sharp), reamer, screwdriver, and a can opener. An officer's version came with a second blade and a corkscrew, to open those pesky wine bottles often encountered on the battlefield. These knives were manufactured by 2 manufacturers still around today, Wenger and Victorinox.

The multitool/knife idea apparently dates back much further than the late 1800's. A team of international scientists discovered a 65,000-year-old tool in southern Africa. This tool nicknamed "an ancient Swiss Army Knife," provided scientists



The two bigger knives and the Leatherman EMT tool are what I carry everyday. The small Swiss Army knife was carried by my Dad for 30 plus years. (Courtesy photo)

with proof that the ancestors of modern homo sapiens were communicating with each other.

These early multitool knives were made in enormous numbers across southern Africa, and all the tools look the same, indicating they were made to a similar template across great distances. The tool was used for numerous things, including cutting, drilling, and skinning. I can only assume the early knife had a sharp blade, not like the dull one provided to us cubs, or mankind would have ceased to exist long ago because there would be no way for him to open those pesky plastic blister packs everything is packed in these days.

The standard Swiss Army knife of today has not changed much in a hundred plus years. It still comes with a knife blade, bottle opener, nail file, can opener, corkscrew, and an awl. It is the standard for every day carry for millions of men and women around the world. My own Dad carried a small, micro model, for over 30

years. His was equipped with a small toothpick, nail file, small blade, tweezers, and a pair of tiny scissors.

Recently, I purchased a Leatherman multitool specifically designed for first responders. It has a fantastic EMT cutting shear, seat belt cutter, and a couple other features, in a compact carrying position, easily opened. Much like the actual multitools manufactured by Leatherman, Gerber, SOG, and others, there is a Swiss Army knife for just about every application as well. Victorinox makes one called the Rescue Tool, designed for first responders.

If you are the type of person who feels bigger and more of, is better, stand by. The term "right tool for every job" doesn't apply to multi-function tools and knives, because there is always a tool you wish it had, until now.

Wenger is currently making the world's largest Swiss Army knife, packing 141 functions into 87 implements. It measures 9 inches wide and weighs a

whopping 32 ounces. You don't want to carry this beast in your pants pocket unless you have suspenders and a truss.

I won't try and list everything this knife has, but there are 3 flathead screwdriver bits, a saw, wrenches, shoe spike wrench, choke tube wrench for shotgunners, fish scaler, a golf club cleaner, and a bunch of other seldom needed tools. Before you run out and ask for one for your birthday, know that the suggested retail price is \$2100.00.

The standard Swiss Army knife is probably perfect for the average person, in a urban environment. The little things that need fixed, opened, cut or trimmed, are easily handled by the knife. For more robust chores, or for outdoor and survival needs, I still recommend carrying a quality multitool, like a Leatherman.

My personal every day carry does not include a Swiss Army knife. Being a first responder, the multitool works better, along with 2 separate

pocketknives. I do keep a Swiss Army knife in my pack though, as a back-up to the multitool, and for an extra blade.

Speaking of blades, if you jump into a Swiss Army knife for your everyday use, be sure to find one with the locking blade feature, as it is not standard on all of them. My primary digits are full of scars from knife blades that do not lock open, so if you get one without that feature, be sure to pack extra gauze to stop the bleeding, because you are eventually going to get cut.

Like everything else quality made, there are cheap knockoffs. The Wenger and Victorinox are made with quality steel, and pretty much a precision instrument, operating smoothly and reliably. The knockoffs do not have that quality built into them.

Like traditional multitools, the multifunction knife has a tool to do everything, but does nothing well. It is great in a pinch repair, cutting open a box, or tightening a loose screw, but you won't

want to work on your expensive rifle or bow with it. Know the limitations of the tool.

If I would have had a Swiss Army knife when I was a Cub Scout, (modern scout knives are made by Victorinox and Wenger) I might have stayed longer. Probably not. By mutual agreement, I left because of knot tying class. Apparently, a hangman's noose is not an approved scout knot.

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Fishing is Fun grants available for projects that improve angling opportunities in Colorado

SPECIAL TO THE CPW

Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) has announced the 2025 round of funding opportunities for the Fishing is Fun Grant Program. The goal of this program is to provide funding to projects that expand fishing access across the state and provide more angling opportunities. CPW awards around \$700,000 in Fishing is Fun grants annually.

The Fishing is Fun program supports projects such as stream and river habitat improvements, access improvements, perpetual easements for public access, pond and lake habitat improvements, fish retention structures, development of new fishing ponds and amenity improvements such as shade shelters, benches and restrooms. Recent projects include



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ADA fishing pier installations, habitat improvements, river restorations

and dredging projects. This program provides matching grant funds an-

nually to local and county governments, park and recreation departments,

water districts, angling organizations and others for projects to improve

angling opportunities in Colorado.

"CPW is always looking to empower partners to take steps to increase or improve fishing access," said CPW Grant Manager Travis Long. "For more than 35 years, the Fishing is Fun program has supported 375 angling improvement projects across the state, from the smallest towns on the Eastern Plains and the West Slope to the largest cities along the Front Range."

A fillable application form and additional program information can be found at: cpw.state.co.us/fishing-fun-grants. The completed application form must be submitted by Jan. 31, 2025.

Contact CPW Grant Manager Travis Long at travis.long@state.co.us with additional questions about eligibility, program guidelines and any other related questions.