



Industry insider:

The sharp edge of survival

Scott Heiman

Attach the knife to a pole to help harvest fruit that's out of reach.

Think about how many times you handle a knife on any given day. Buttering toast in the morning; cutting cheese and bread for sandwiches at lunch; peeling, slicing or dicing fruit, herbs, vegetables. A good knife makes day-to-day chores a lot easier.

But the implement you use in the kitchen is probably not the knife (or knives) you take hunting. Chances are you have a drop-point general purpose hunter blade and a favourite Skinner. Quite probably you also have some kind of multi-tool hanging off

your belt or quiver, or in your gun box. Added to these, perhaps you also carry a machete for around camp.

Each of these blades have intrinsic differences that make them well-suited for the defined assortment of tasks for which they were designed.

So what's the best knife to have when you're facing an emergency situation? The short answer is that the best knife to have... is the one you have on you. But optimising your chance of survival doesn't happen by accident. And it involves more

than picking up the tool you've seen used on TV, the one that costs the least or the one with the gung-ho packaging. Instead, you should be thinking about all the things you may need your blade to do if the situation takes a nasty turn and then tailor your purchase to meet that identified need.

So, think about it. If you're somewhere remote and needing rescue, what tasks could your knife make easier? Could it help you make shelter, traps and snares? Could it help you chop, skin, dig, saw, pry or slice? Would you be able to use it as a screwdriver, a batten,



Available in Tac Black or Rescue Orange.



Butchering is made easy with a cleaver.



Blaze orange passive signalling aid for when you are down and almost out.

hammer or more? If not, then you need something more than a basic knife. You need a tool that's a cross between a knife, machete, spade, an axe and maybe more.

As a bushcraft and survival specialist, this is certainly the conclusion I reached. However, when I searched the market, I found there are many knives which promise the world but fail to deliver as a true 'survival tool'. Certainly, there are many blades marketed as survival and utility knives, while militaries have strapped implements like these to their ejection seats and lifeboats since the dawn of modern warfare. But I couldn't find one that offered a purpose-built single implement that could carry out a truly diverse array of tasks. So I thought I would make one.

Looking for inspiration, I focused on my experiences as a hunter, fisher and my service in the Army and Federal Police. I also turned to my time on duty in South-East Asia and Melanesia where people remain intrinsically connected to the land and where blades are a daily necessity in all walks of life. Further, I drew on my knowledge of my rural forebears' experiences.

The result is the Heiman Hatchet. This is handmade in Australia by a leading bladesmith and manufactured from high carbon steel that's hardened and tempered. It is rounded off with a coating of Cerakote, leaving a smooth and functional finish, minimising the likelihood of corrosion while increasing the blade's durability. And I reckon this blade has what it takes.

Functionally, it has three blade surfaces designed as a machete, axe and a spade. The spine of the blade has a notching saw. This isn't for cutting off tree limbs (use the axe blade for that). Instead it's designed to assist in trap and shelter making when you need to cut a groove.

The cheek of the blade has a slot in it. Taking advantage of the blade's wide cheek, this can be used with parachute cord, fencing wire or a commando saw to act as a ground anchor. Meanwhile, the handle of the Heiman Hatchet has three common-sized hex heads to help scavenge materials and gain access to bore pumps through locked cages.

While in most other situations, you shouldn't use the pommel of your knife as

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Use it as a windlassing bar.

a hammer, the Heiman Hatchet has been designed and strength tested to do just that. Being 5mm thick, you can also use it as a pry bar and for battening large pieces of wood into two. As big as it is, I use the Heiman Hatchet for skinning and butchering too.

The blade is weighted and balanced with a bent spine much like a kukri. This allows for maximising the kinetic energy of the strike before your unconscious slows down the thrust/strike. It also means you can throw it with a high spinning action, which helps in hunting small game like rabbits or birds. Consider it is like a boomerang that won't come back!

The Heiman Hatchet comes in two colours – Tac Black for minimal visual impact or Rescue Orange for high profile. Rescue Orange has the added benefit of making the Heiman Hatchet easy to find around camp – and simple to locate if you have thrown it at game. The bright colour and size also means you can use the Heiman Hatchet as a passive signalling aid to make you easier to find in a search and rescue situation.

I put a lot of thought and effort into the design and manufacture of the Heiman Hatchet. So I'm encouraged when I receive orders by military operators, pilots in PNG and hunters young and old. Sure, it costs a bit more than the mass-produced items you'll find in outdoors stores, but that's what it takes for Australian hand-made quality. And, think of it this way: the Heiman Hatchet is your survival blade for life. So what's your life worth?

RRP: \$350. Available from

heimanhabitat.com.au ■

Can your knife be used as a ground anchor?



Grab yourself a custom-made sheath and you will be ready for anything.



Harvest some honey without being stung.



Optional wooden scales are easily removed to create shaving to help make fire.