

Multi-tools for the Trail

We test four knife-gadgets for your pack



The Buck X-Tract has a burly knife, pliers and an optional LED light. It's a great choice for anglers.

BY ALLISON WOODS

Since the advent of the Leatherman tool in the 1980s, the multi-tool has become ubiquitous. We use them at home, in our cars, and of



course, on the trail. There are a huge assortment of knives and multitools on the market, too many for any one article to discuss. This month we take a look at four tools that might interest you while you're out on the trail. Remember those ten essentials you're supposed to throw in your pack? No, a corkscrew is not one of them, but a knife or multi-tool is. So grab one of these at your local gear shop and be prepared, as they say.

Buck X-Tract

\$50 (\$65 with optional LED)

The Buck X-Tract is a pretty fancy knife that just happens to have some other tools wrapped in the same package. The emphasis is definitely on the knife. It's impressive and burly, with a blade that's partially serrated and partially smooth.

Buck X-Tract tools

Knife
Needlenose pliers/wire cutters
Screwdriver
Phillips screwdriver
Can/bottle opener
Lanyard loop

locking blade (good) but the locking mechanism is a leaf spring that is released by putting one's fingers very close to the blade. This "liner" style lock is pretty popular, but it seems like an accident waiting to happen, especially if there are any youngsters around. The X-Tract's little pliers lock into place and are fairly functional given their Lilliputian proportions. Flip the tool over to find two locking screwdriver bits and a can opener. Also included, a

lanyard loop, and an optional LED light that seems well worth the few extra dollars. The X-Tract's housing, while a bit bulky, fits well into even fairly small hands due to its thoughtful shape. This would be a great tool for a fishing enthusiast.

The blade is beveled just on one side, so this knife is for right-handed people only. On the other minor nit-pick: It has a

Leatherman Juice S2

\$60

The Juice is a nice little tool with all of the great features we've come to expect from Leatherman, the Cadillac of multi-tools. Its petite size will make it a favorite among backpackers who feel the need to carry more than a simple knife. None of the many tools are outstanding

on the Juice, but there's one for nearly every situation you might encounter in the backcountry. The scissors, while not spring-loaded as in larger models, are serrated and grippy, and are a favorite tool on the Juice. Extra points for cleverness in including a lanyard loop that folds in with the tools. The Juice S2 would be worth its weight in gold if the blade and

Leatherman Juice S2 tools

Knife
Needlenose Pliers/wire cutters
Tiny Screwdriver
Small Screwdriver
Medium Screwdriver
Phillips Screwdriver
Scissors
Can/Bottle Opener
Lanyard loop



The Leatherman Juice S2 is packed with tools, including scissors, pliers and several screwdrivers.

For hikers on a budget, the Gerber Crux is a great choice: a lot of tools, relatively sturdy construction, and a price between \$30 and \$40.



tools somehow locked, and we did find it a bit tough to pry some of the tools out of their storage positions. Such are the tradeoffs for such a wonderfully compact tool. The Juice is a good choice for the hiker who wants to carry a multi-tool that doesn't weigh a lot and has "the works." Sixty dollars may seem like a lot of money for a small tool such as this, but it's a quality piece made right here in the Pacific Northwest.

Gerber Crux

\$30-40, price varies

The Crux is a substantial tool at a great price. Its heft is impressive, though it might be bit big for people with smaller hands. The pliers are spring-loaded and

Gerber Crux tools

- Knife
- Serrated edge knife
- Needlenose pliers /wire cutters
- Small screwdriver
- Medium Screwdriver
- Phillips screwdriver
- Saw
- Can/bottle opener
- Scissors
- Lanyard loop

are by far the best of the bunch. All of the other tools lock into place and release with a clever mechanism on the side of the Crux. The screwdrivers are a bit on the wimpy side but the compact saw has

a nice bite to it. The scissors don't really hold a candle to the scissors on the Juice, but then the Crux costs about half as much. The serrated blade similarly is not the nicest we've ever seen, but this tool packs so many features in at such a

reasonable price that it seems wrong to be too critical. The Crux is a great choice for a hiker on a budget.

Spyderco Byrd Harp Tool

\$32

What in the heck is this thing? Spyderco calls it the Harp due to its unusual shape, we just call it darn cool. An outer ring of metal contains tools when not in use. They then swing open when you need them. The tool fits quite comfortably in hand. Many of the tools are things a person might use in the woods, including a saw, a small file. The Harp would be even better if the tools locked into place, and we wish it had a regular old knife on it. Still, at \$32 it's a great value and a pretty neat tool to boot. ♦

Spyderco Byrd Harp tools

- Saw
- Awl
- Gimlet
- Corkscrew
- File
- Screwdriver
- Phillips Screwdriver



The unusual design of Spyderco's Byrd Harp lets all the tools fold flat. Cool design and a reasonable price make this a good choice, although it doesn't include a knife.

NEAT STUFF!



Outdoor Research DryComp Summit Sack

\$59

OR's Drycomp Summit Sack is, as advertised, an incredibly versatile piece of gear. It works as a compression sack for sleeping bag, then doubles as a day or summit pack, works great as a bicycle pack, and has seen time in the back of a float tube where it served time as a dry bag. This is the kind of pack you can just leave in your car in case an adventure should cross your path. We love how the roll top allows the pack to compress to the size of the load, and found the addition of an optional sternum strap (\$8) made the DryComp carry well even on a curvaceous female tester. A pair of deep water bottle pockets hold bottles snug and easy to reach.