

Stretching Your Survival Potential: Elastic Band Tools/Weapons

By Kevin Estela



The author and his father practicing using slingshots and spending quality father and son time together.

I highly doubt many children had a childhood like mine. With a father who survived in the jungles of the Philippines during the Japanese occupation of WWII, I learned first-hand about practical self-reliance and survival skills my family used to evade the enemy and survive until the return of General Douglas MacArthur. I can vividly recall my father showing me how to turn an ordinary umbrella into a game getting arrow launcher. It is a simple process involving taking the tines out of the frame, sharpening and barbing the ends, inserting



Here the author demonstrates how to hold the Paray dart shooter to eliminate the need for cordage attaching the elastic to the pipe.

them in the hollow tube of the body and using an elastic on the end to propel the homemade multi-pronged arrow. It worked to catch fish during the war and during my childhood it worked to keep me entertained for hours. You can imagine my delight in playing with this admittedly dangerous toy, the hours of entertainment shooting Styrofoam targets it provided, and the inspiration it created in me for a lifelong interest in studying, practicing and teaching survival skills.

With the right know-how, ordinary objects take on a whole new role in a survival situation. Even though you most likely will not have an umbrella in your survival kit, you may have other objects (commercial slingshot bands, bungee cords, elastic drawstrings) capable of game getting with some minor tweaking. For this article, I will focus on the use of bands with elastic properties to create three very potent tools.



Here are three types of elastics, surgical webbing, a bike inner tube with paracord string attachment and a commercial sling shot band.

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Here the author has a young friend using the dart shooter practicing hitting dandelions. Demonstrating even a child could use it.

Slingshot with commercial bands, Silicon tube or condoms

I think everyone can remember when they played with their first slingshot. My father made me my first and it was more of a toy than anything else. I doubt I could have killed a fly with it. My father probably deliberately made it with weak bands to protect me from myself. Over the years, I came to love slingshots and now own a half dozen or so. From homebrew cut tree branch models to the commercially available with heavy-pull bands to the high end British imports, slingshots can provide food for the table or recreational fun. Using inner tube, surgical tubing, commercial bands, or even condoms in quantity, one can affix them to a forked branch (that doesn't have to be a perfect Y shape). Roughly cut or stripped off bark, sanded and coated with wood finish, any slingshot frame will do. I prefer a whipping knot for all attachments including bands to fork and leather pouch to band. This knot is very aggressive in its hold and I've never had a properly tied whipped end come free. Using marbles, pebbles, steel or lead shot, a slingshot can be fired very inexpensively, discreetly and regularly. Look at the gurus of slingshots and watch their ability, it is awe inspiring. You can do the same with practice! If you

don't want to spend hours hunting down your ammo, suspend a wool blanket behind your target and put a tarp down at the base. The projectiles won't puncture the blanket and will fall down where you can recycle them.

Hawaiian Sling with Slingshot band or Inner Tube

Using an old bungee tie down cord, commercial slingshot band, or any of the above listed elastic bands, a homemade version of a Hawaiian sling can be constructed. These slings are popular with skin and scuba divers for their ease of use, slim profile, and light weight. They can thrust a spear (forked is preferred if metal tips aren't available) to pin or impale aquatic critters. To make a Hawaiian sling at home, all that is needed is a long shaft such as an old ski pole, wooden dowel, cut branch, or arrow shaft. A length of elastic cord is looped and attached at the end with the same whipping knot. Arrow heads can be made out of the aluminum lids from canned food or other metal objects. To use, loop the elastic loop around your hand where your thumb and index finger webbing is and the shaft is pulled back into your hand while stretching the band. When you release pressure with your fingers the sling will send the shaft rocketing forward towards



The author demonstrating the Paray at a pond.

your target. These slings are highly effective because they have less profile in the water than an arm moving quickly to thrust a spear. Let the elastic do the work for you and you'll find your day's catch fill up quickly.

Umbrella or Tube Arrow Launcher

Perhaps the most effective tool (and the most fun) one can create with an elastic band is an arrow launcher with a tube my father calls in his native Filipino dialect, "paray." This is fashioned by taking a tube of one inch diameter and holding it at the end in one hand. In the same hand both ends of an elastic are held. A spear or arrow is placed inside the other end of the tube and the non-pointed end of it comes in contact with the elastic. You don't have to create an arrow nock but it does help. When the arrow is pinched and the elastic drawn back it is aimed and fired by releasing the grip. Barbs can be made out of coat hangers pounded flat and cut at sharp angles with a multi-tool. This tool is very accurate and extremely potent. It can be used at distances or used underwater. If used to catch fish keep the "muzzle" of it under the surface of the water. Refraction will make shots difficult if you can't judge location and by having the arrow under the water more hits will be recorded. By the light of a lantern, this is how my family caught fish in the darkness of the jungle. His

variation included a wooden frame with a trigger but considering his young age at the time and years past, he doesn't recall the exact way the trigger mechanism was created.

The creation or possession of the tools/weapons described above may be illegal in your state. I highly recommend consulting with someone about the laws in your area if you attempt to make any of the above; certainly if you plan on actually using them. I also recommend wearing eye protection and exercising extreme safety in handling and using these. Broken elastic bands can easily blind if they hit an exposed eye. Make sure to inspect bands before each draw to ensure they aren't cracked or showing serious signs of wear. These tools can send projectiles farther than expected and with deep penetration potential. Also, elastic-type bands have varying strengths (literally and figuratively) and weaknesses. Find the bands with the most pull and stretch. With that being said, look around your house, your garage, your local hardware store. You will start to appreciate seemingly benign objects for the deadly potential they have. Get creative and see what you can make with objects in your desk or office (see picture of the coat hanger dart launcher made out of a pen and some elastic band) You'll find you can "stretch" your survival potential.



Here the author shows how to grip the sling band of the Hawaiian sling to have it ready for use. Note the refraction in the water (the shaft appears to have a bend in it).