
Backing into tree climbing

Posted by MarkF - 10/27/2005 05:41pm

OK, this forum's been dead for a while; I'll poke in with a narrative of how I got started in this sport.

I'm a forest ecologist, and one of my research questions involves getting a measure of the light in the unobstructed sky to compare with measurements within the forest. Sometimes I work in the middle of the forest where there isn't a nearby clearing for the unobstructed sensor. A student and I worked out a way to do mount a sensor on a pole attached to a tree, but we were using ladders and deer stands to get into the trees. After a few nightmares (we never fell, but I still get the willies about how lucky we were) I decided to figure out how one gets into a tree safely. A few Google searches, and I'd found TCI, TCC, New Tribe and a bunch of the arborist websites.

I got hooked. I've now been climbing since mid May; basically self-taught until I took Dick Flowers' course in Michigan in early October.

This fall I've been back in the canopy with a couple of students doing light measurements again. We have some preliminary results indicating that the "paired light sensor" method can actually be improved by getting the unobstructed sensor more nearly directly over the sensor within the forest. In other words, you need to climb trees to get it right.

So why don't canopy researchers listen to tree climbers more? Often they don't know anything about rope-assisted tree climbing and don't even know they can ask. That's changing fast due to Joe Maher's and other's efforts, not to mention websites like this.

Why don't they hang out at forums like this more? Mostly, they're really damn busy teaching, writing grant proposals, analyzing data, and trying to publish. I know enough about tree climbing now to get up and down for research purposes in reasonable safety, and if I hadn't "caught the bug" I probably wouldn't read this stuff much.

Cheers,
MarkF

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