
Backed-up free climbing

Posted by moss - 01/03/2006 04:48pm

I've done several climbs lately freestyle, that is depending on arms and legs and not using a rope to aid in ascent or descent. For future climbs of this sort I plan to wear a saddle and use a short lanyard to remain tied in while climbing. This requires a tree that has branches close enough to the ground so you can get in to the tree and branches closely spaced enough that they can be reached climbing in the tree. I found that I was getting muscle demands and body movement different from DdRT. I'm beginning to think that there is a place for this type of "backed-up" free climbing in the world of rec climbing. Maybe the tree equivalent of bouldering in the rock climbing world. What do you think?
-moss

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Posted by crtreedude - 01/03/2006 06:20pm

I am definitely intrigued. I have also wondered about doing "top roping"

This of course should be done with Dynamic rope but could be a lot of fun.

The biggest issue that I see is that when you come loose - you will swing and that could ram you into something sharp - like a broken branch.

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Posted by moss - 01/03/2006 07:09pm

Top roping in a tree is problematic because you could only climb on the route that the rope follows down through the branches. With DdRT you can move laterally or at an angle upwards by setting new TIPs with the other end of the rope. Once you get more climbing time in you'll start to see where rock climbing concepts might hold up and where they cease to be applicable. Take a look at Jepson's Tree Climber's Companion for a practical description of basic climbing technique.

The problem (or benefit) of swing is always present with any roped technique in a tree.
-moss

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Posted by Electrojake - 01/03/2006 09:42pm

Originally posted by moss

I've done several climbs lately freestyle, that is depending on arms and legs and not using a rope to aid in ascent or descent. . . What do you think?

-moss

Ya know moss...

I'm glad you brought this free-climb issue up.

The need to free-climb (Bareroots style but with shoes on) arises for instance, when using tall thin trees to mount stabilizer lines onto when setting up a treeboat.

One large mature tree holds the treeboat's main support lines but I often string a stabilizer line or two into neighboring trees. Frequently these neighboring trees are very tall and thin. The only practical way to get up in these tall skinny's is to free-climb them. A climbing saddle & line only complicates this type of climbing. You're much better off stripping down to the bare minimum and doing a free-climb.

The only set-up that might help when climbing above a worthy tie-in-point would be a fall-arrest harness.

http://mysite.verizon.net/vze34r7e/fall_2_140x212.jpg

http://mysite.verizon.net/vze34r7e/fall_1_140x206.jpg

A deceleration lanyard will help keep your eyeballs in the sockets should you take a fall. :D

http://mysite.verizon.net/vze34r7e/decel_140x99.jpg

My Son occasionally free climbs an incredibly tall pine on the back of my property. Seems to me that a fall would be somewhat cushioned by the massive web of pine branches that the tree has.
Then again... maybe not :(

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Posted by crtreedude - 01/04/2006 05:26am

Looks like I have a few books to buy...

What else is new. Of course, the problem is that shipping them here often costs nearly as much as the books.

I can usually figure out a way to get them eventually.

There are disadvantages to living in paradise. ;)

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Posted by moss - 01/04/2006 08:17am

crtreedude, check your U2U messages, the link is at the top of the main message board page.
Thanks,
-moss

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Posted by moss - 01/05/2006 10:02am

Page 37 of Jepson's Tree Climbing Companion describes "Alt Lanyard" technique which is a perfect way to climb backed-up with hands and feet on closely spaced branches. Thanks to Deitley over on the TCC board for mentioning this.

Jepson describes using two short adjustable lanyards which can be alternately placed over branches as the climber ascends.
-moss

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Posted by Electrojake - 01/05/2006 09:01pm

Yes. When doing steel tower work, a similar system is used. http://mysite.verizon.net/vze34r7e/pine3_169x220.jpg
Simply clipping bar over bar as you ascend the structure. If you "oops" there will always be at least one hook clipped-in to hold you.

Doing steel work has a tendency to look more macho than climbing a tree but a tree is always a more frightening climb. .

On steel I know my fall arrest gear will not fail, I know the tower will not fail (unless its old infrastructure), I know it's O.K. to feel safe... But when in a tree, you never know the true health of the branch your tied into until you get into the tree and inspect it. I am always a tad leery when on a high climb (50+ feet) in a new tree.

A tree has NO safety rating, None, Nada!

I know I am not the first climber here to get up into a foreign tree and do a close inspection on the TIP and shudder upon realizing that it was partially hollow on its blind side. As usual I digress, sorry. Back to the meat of the topic. . .

As for the "incredibly large pine" I spoke of earlier, it turns out that it measures at a not-so-incredible 60 feet tall. But it is still much too dense to attempt a roped climb.

http://mysite.verizon.net/vze34r7e/Pine1_260x195.jpg http://mysite.verizon.net/vze34r7e/Pine2_260x195.jpg
Seems that tying-off after you get to your working height is the only practical option on such a tree.

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Posted by MarkF - 01/05/2006 09:47pm

Hmm. Looks like a fir or a spruce. If it's a fir then 60 feet tall is pretty respectable. I used to climb an arborvitae in my yard in Connecticut that looked like that; from the top you could see about 10 miles down to LawnGuyland Sound. We have balsam firs around here with that kind of form, maybe should try an alt lanyard climb on one some day. Maybe in the summer; if you climb one now you're likely to get a neck full of snow...

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FREE CLIMBING !!

Posted by slingshot - 01/24/2006 10:02pm

I like the sound of this discussion... would love more info on the possibilities and limitations on this style.. I'm freeclimbin' anyway still but would love to find out more about this :D

cold in Iowa
slingshot

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Posted by moss - 01/25/2006 12:12am

Originally posted by slingshot

I like the sound of this discussion... would love more info on the possibilities and limitations on this style.. I'm freeclimbin' anyway still but would love to find out more about this :D

cold in Iowa
slingshot

Freeclimbing is the way we all first climbed trees as kids. It remains the most accessible form of climbing. But... you are limited to trees that have close enough branches so you can reach them with your hands and feet. This means that most of the trees on the planet are not available for you to climb because you can't get to the first branch or once you do you can't move from there. Most importantly without any rope back-up you can get into a life threatening situation very quickly.

I started this thread because I'm interested in looking at "free climbing" technique with secure rope back-up. As I mentioned previously freeclimbing style uses different movement and technique than strict rope climbing style. They are complementary but distinctly different ways of climbing.

If you search on Bareroot in the TCI message board you might find some pretty interesting photos of freeclimbing pushed to the limit. I think there is a way to find a middle ground, experience the reliance on your arms and legs and yet have a safety back-up. It is best to be tied in at all times whenever you are in a tree.

Free climbing is very limited compared to the kind of rope and harness technique usually practiced by rec climbers but it is an interesting niche in the world of tree climbing.

-moss

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Freeclimbing

Posted by slingshot - 01/25/2006 06:04am

I hear what you are saying that's also why I was looking at this thread.. I think there has got to be a way to experience the "freeclimbing" style with the added safety of back up. The chances of me going all over to climb are slim anyway, and

most tree's in my area would be easily accessable by even a short length rope, but not always totally needed when in the canopy. I wan't to be safe and my kids to be as well when doing this but still love the "FREESTYLE!!" :D

At work.. not climbin'
slingshot

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Freeclimbing

Posted by slingshot - 01/25/2006 07:52pm

Almost forgot... I don't go barefoot though a good pair of light weight running shoes or sandles

oh yeh, and no rope's..... yet :D

slingshot :D

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Posted by Tom Dunlap - 01/26/2006 07:48am

Instead of inventing another word to describe what rock climbers have done for years why not use a common term. In rock climbing this is called 'free solo climbing'. There is a very high 'Oops Factor' when free soloing.

In another thread a little while back there is a discussion about 'direct aid or aid climbing. The lead climber sets anchors or slings and moves up the climb.

If anyone is going to lead climb it is necessary to use rock climbing dynamic rope to dissipate the fall energy.

Using Jepson's 'Alternate Lanyard Technique' works. For a refinement on the system, search for information on 'Double Ended Double Adjusted' lanyard or DEDA. The rope has a snap/biner on each end and an adjuster attached to each side d-ring. The rope is clipped through a swivel snap or biner on the middle, back of the saddle. My DEDA is about 20' long and I use it all of the time in routine climbing.

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Posted by Climber020 - 01/26/2006 04:24pm

The are still ways to get into a tree that doesn't have branches that you can reach from the ground, but it is very difficult. Just put your arms around the tree and then your feet, move your hands up a little and then your feet. It is pretty much doing it like a bear would. The only down side to this is you can't wear a saddle or carry anything into the tree with you and you can only climb this way on trees that you can put your arms about 3/4 the way around the tree for grip. Your best bet would be to tie and peice of rope to your belt loops and just tie whatever you want onto the rope.

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Posted by Climber020 - 01/28/2006 09:18am

The painful part is coming down. You use the tree like a firemans pole and just slide down and when your shirt comes up and you don't pull it down you have some beauty marks to show off.

Climb high,
climb safe.

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Posted by slingshot - 02/10/2006 08:09am

Would it be safe to say that if I had two lanyards on my saddle or fall arrest harness and could tie off to any branches safely in reach and of size that is good, would be safe way to "free solo" any tree?

slingshot

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Posted by moss - 02/10/2006 11:37am

Yep, that would work. the idea being that you're always tied in with one lanyard while you're moving the other to a new branch.

-moss

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Assisted Free Climb

Posted by Ajakz - 08/29/2006 01:08pm

Since I was about 9, I have use my "tree hook" technique for getting a "leg up". 30 feet of rope, tied in the center of a 1.5 foot hard wood stick, about 2.5 inches thick. I toss it up into crotches, the high ones it's used SRT, (hand over hand), shorter but still to high to grab, let the stick come down, sit on the stick and pull your self up (not like pulley, kind of like a vertical scoot, while taking in the slack)

Now since I'm older (more breakable) and getting back into climbing, I'm revising my skills of youth. With ascenders and a harness, foam covered steel pipe (bike handlebars) reinforce with stiched webbing for a good tie off point. Admittedly it's not as fool proof safe as a DRT, (the old up and over), but set right it wont come down untill all weight is off the line and then you still have to shake the bejeezus out of it to bring the "hook" down.

Being padded it wont hurt the trees easily, and using two, give me a chance to place multiple pitches in fast order. Like I said I've done this for years, first over the wooded marshes of Southern Florida (tree to tree), then in the BIG trees of Northern California. Now i'm working on "two hook" techniques, It takes practice to set and clean, but you can toss one in to, one tree, set the other in your first tree and slide across nice and slow, with a figure eight on the back line and ascenders on the lead line. Unlike using one and "tarzaning" tree to tree, Like when I was young and stupid and had that as a good aliby.