
tree climbing with no branches...

Posted by awicks11 - 07/15/2006 06:13pm

Hello all. So i was present with a great oppurtunity. go to costa rica where my friend has a nature/reforestation preserve in the cloud forest. Many scientists and researches go to this place for research and projects. My project is to set up a rope system and place where scientists can easily study the canopy and animals and such in the canopy. They want me set up 4 locations wiht permanant ropes. The problem is some of the trees are huge oak, or im told they're oaks with no branches for a good ways up. How can i get to those branches and set up a rope that can be climbed with prussiks or jumars? And are porta ledges okay for trees? ive used them in climbing but is it okay for trees, i cant think why not. but if anyone could help me with this dilema that would be awesome..

Thank you so much
Adam

Posted by moss - 07/15/2006 07:05pm

There are a variety of rope placement techniques usually involving throwbags and thin but strong line to create a high tie-in point (TIP) in a tree.

Experienced climbers can hand throw a weighted bag somewhere between 8-12 oz into the 80 ft. range and some even higher. The rest of us mere mortals will use a slingshot, crossbow, compound bow or other projectile launching device to put a thin braided line or monofilament over a target branch. After a light line is over a branch the climbing rope is attached and pulled into place to form the TIP. With fishing line it has to be two-staged, first get the monofilment over the branch, then pull a heavier throwline over the branch and finally the climbing rope.

I've written a rudimentary summary of tree entry technique for high branches. I'd recommend picking up Jepson's Tree Climber's Companion, it has a good overview of tree entry/throwbag technique. I'd also recommend working on your hand-throwing technique on lower branches before going for the really high stuff. There's plenty to be learned about managing a throwbag in the canopy of a tree which needs to be acquired through practice. this applies to hand-throwing or device assisted throwing.

Keep asking questions, there is plenty of expertise on this message board.
-moss

Posted by awicks11 - 07/15/2006 07:16pm

so ill practice doing all that. but is there a way to climb really big trees with out throwing anything? like ive seen repairmen climb telephone poles where they sort of put a rope around the tree and flip it up and walk up aittle and keep flipping it up. ya know? any other techniques because id ont know how practical throwing a bean bag or getting a crossbow is although it could work ive just never done it. but would love to try

thanks

adam

Posted by NickfromWI - 07/16/2006 08:46pm

It will be a lot easier and faster for you to learn how to thowball than it would be for you to learn how to climb up with just a flipline!

To do the technique you mentioned at the end, you pretty much have to wear spikes/gaffs. Not good for the trees.

Just get a throwline and start practicing.

I'm not trying to be condescending here, but if you don't know how to do all this, is it appropriate for you to be the one setting it all up for others to rely on?

Where in costa rica are you going?

love
nick

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Posted by Ron - 08/30/2006 03:54pm

I just joined the forum and am new to tree climbing but I love it. This particular thread caught my eye because I have this exact problem - a bunch of pine trees in my yard that would be great for climbing, but many of the taller trees have no branches except in the top of the tree - about 50 or so feet at least.

Because the limbs are so high, I can't really evaluate them and hence can't trust them to hold me, so line throwing etc. is just not a feasible solution. Plus, these trees shed good sized limbs occassionally so that's even more reason not to trust the limbs.

I've tried two methods and a variation of one. The first was to use 1" tubular webbing in girth hitches around the tree. one anchored my double foot loops and the other, higher hitch, my seat harness. That method is sloooow and hard!

The next method is to use two hitches made of short lengths of PMI 11 mm Pit rope for the hitches around the tree. With this method, I actually climb the rope until my CMI Ultracender attached to my harness comes very close to the loop of the hitch. I then take the second piece of rope and form a hitch above the one I'm on by standing on the foot loops to gain just a bit more height. I then take a third CMI ascender (one is on my harness, the second on my foot loops) and attach my harness to the "new" rope. I raise the ascender as high as I can. I am now suspended by two ascenders, one on the lower rope and one on the higher rope.

To release the ascender on the lower rope that's attached to my harness, I first transfer my foot loop ascender to the higher rope. I stand in the foot loops, raise the harness ascender, sit on the harness and move the ascender that now has no weight on it to the higher rope.

I then remove the lower rope from the tree, hang it around my shoulders, and climb to the loop of the higher rope and repeat the process.

As complicated as it sounds to describe, the method actually is pretty efficient. I tried it for the first time yesterday and was surprised at how quickly I went up the tree. The real secret is SRT using three ascenders. I know that's expensive, but I need all the help I can get and this really worked well. The "pitches" are quite short -3 - 4 feet, but you get to rest while you transfer and overall I thought it worked fairly well.

Edited to add:

The efficiency of the method above relies on the ease of moving ascenders from rope to rope, hence, unfortunately the method becomes quite inefficient if implimented with prusiks instead of ascenders.

I tried a more agresive variation last weekend and it worked well also but it requires more equipment and it's kind of a hassle to implement. This method is the same as described above except I used two telescoping paint roller handles (4 ft to 8 ft) to advance the rope about 9' at a time. In the time it takes me to manipulate the the extensions and rope, I think I could have covered the same distance by the previous method and not have to mess with the extensions.

If anyone has any suggestions, I'm all ears!

Wow! I didn't mean to "talk" so much, sorry guys.

Thanks,
Ron

Posted by moss - 08/30/2006 05:55pm

Photos? I can sort of imagine by your description but a photo of you rigged up would be great.

You can assess the high branches for strength from the ground. Use binoculars to examine branch attachment to the trunk and then follow the branch out to the end to look for splits, fungus, rot, peeling bark etc. and of course are there needles on the end? Once you have a line in place and you're tied in do a bounce test.

-moss

Posted by Ron - 08/30/2006 06:31pm

Moss thanks for the response.

Maybe it's just me, but considering the effort we go to to try to keep a 10:1 safety margin (some promote 15:1) in our climbing system, it seems binocular inspection and bounce testing is not in line with a 10:1 safety margin concept. But I'm new to this so maybe that's the way it's done.

Another part of the problem I didn't mention was that when the limbs start, there's a bunch of them. It would be very difficult to isolate one limb in order to use the dynamic DRT, even with a Big Shot, cross or compound bow to do the throwing.

Photos, hmmm, I can do that, but how do I post a digital pic here?

Posted by NickfromWI - 08/30/2006 07:07pm

Ron, with very little practice, you WILL be able to isolate those branches. Also, with little practice, you'll be able to identify what makes a GOOD (compliant with 10:1) branch to tie in to, and what might not.

To add a picture, store them online somewhere, and give us the links, or look below when you're typing in your response for something that allows you to Browse for attachments. Make sure the photos are scaled down so they aren't out of wack!

love
nick

Posted by moss - 08/30/2006 07:14pm

Yep, pines can be tough especially with the dead branches blocking the good ones. You can isolate, takes a little work. Some tricks to be learned there. SRT is easier for this situation, you don't need to isolate when you anchor the line at the base of the trunk.

One way to post a photo is to find a free photo hosting site like Flickr and then link the URL for the photo with the "Insert Picture" button when you're editing your post. Many of the photo hosting sites don't allow image linking to a second location (TCI board) Flickr does. You can also place a single image directly from your hard drive by using the "Browse" button below the message edit window.

-moss

I see Nick and I are tag-teaming you on the response :-)

Posted by Ron - 08/31/2006 10:30am

LOL! Tag teaming is good in this case - I get a double dose of advice and I appreciate it.

It sounds like it comes down to limb isolation or SRT. And, I have seen that to be the case in my limited experience.

It looks to me like that limb isolation takes a lot of practice and some luck. SRT is easier to "install" but doubles the weight on marginal branches. I guess nothing is perfect.

I'll try to get some pics posted, but I'll have to take them first, so next time I climb, tomorrow I hope, I'll make some pics of how I currently climb without using limbs.

Climbing on pines w/o low branches

Posted by Oldtimer - 08/31/2006 10:53am

Hello Ron, Welcome to the TCI Board, From your descriptions I gather that you have all the important gear for an efficient SRT set up climb. If the lowest branch is only 50 feet tall. It should not be very hard to reach that elevation with a regular throw weight (10 oz) slickline and some practice. I can regularly throw about 60 to 70 feet up with the straddle throw method (in between your legs). Look in Sherrills Ascend Catalog page 6 for a picture of it. There is not need to isolate the branch route and you tie the rope to the base of the tree and bring the other end of the rope with you to change to DRT while moving higher in the tree. A handy lanyard is helpfull while doing the change overs SRTto DRT and back again to stay tied to safety at all times. You have two great advisors on Moss and Nick A. Lots of good ideas there.

Climb High!

Posted by Ron - 08/31/2006 12:03pm

Thanks for the input Oldtimer. I think my problem is that I'm new to this and I really have NO confidence in pine limbs, well the limbs in my trees. They may be larger than they appear to me, but they look pretty small to my inexperienced eye.

As you noted, I do have equipment for SRT and that's really my favorite method where possible. I have been using the SRT on a tree that I can install a friction saver on and then install my rope. I do anchor it to the base of the tree using 1" nylon flat webbing in a girth hitch.

But, again, due to lack of experience, fear, or whatever, I am very reluctant to do this on a pine limb. Tying the rope to the base of the tree puts double my weight on the limb the rope is across.

Posted by Ron - 08/31/2006 12:41pm

If I may impose further on you guys, could I get your thoughts on my post in this thread:

<http://www.tci-forums.com/viewthread.php?tid=663&page=2>

Thanks once again,
Ron

Posted by Electrojake - 08/31/2006 07:00pm

Originally posted by Ron

Maybe it's just me, but considering the effort we go to to try to keep a 10:1 safety margin in our climbing system, it seems binocular inspection and bounce testing is not in line with a 10:1 safety margin concept.

Bingo!
You purchase the finest equipment.
You adhere to every ANSI standard.
You follow all the rules.
But. . .
The one part of your climbing equipment that does NOT have any rating or comply to any safety standard is the tree! You can climb on 8100# Arbormaster and use the finest carabineers money can buy but the rating of the tree is always a guess. To be fair, I must say that the safety record of recreational tree climbing is very good, but it's normal to be uneasy on rope until you get to "know" the tree your climbing in.

By Ron
But, again, due to lack of experience, fear, or whatever, I am very reluctant to do this on a pine limb. Tying the rope to the base of the tree puts double my weight on the limb the rope is across.

Ron, I agree with both of your above points.
As compared to a healthy, mature, deciduous hardwood, why would you even bother with a pine? Then again, I guess we climb on what's available, and if I was in tall pine country, I'd be foolish not conquer the pines. No?
Anyway, pine tree climbing is indeed a different sport than bouncing around in your typical oak or maple canopy (Me, stating this as a fellow novice of course).

Your statement about going single line and doubling your weight on the branch fits the "safety" dialogue perfectly! If your a tad uneasy doing DRT on a new, untested tree, using a tie in point that unfortunately has not been stamped with an ANSI rating, then you best be doubly worried if you single-line it and expose the limb to double the weight.
(Shows an understanding of good neophyte survival skills!) :)

By the way, what part of the country will you be climbing in?
Regards,
-Ej-

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Posted by Ron - 09/01/2006 08:20am

Electrojake,

Sounds like you've got a pretty good picture of where I am. I tend to err heavily on the safe side. I simply can't afford to risk life and limb on something I don't feel like I've been able to evaluate adequately. And, I guess the greener you are at something the more it takes to convince you.

You guessed it, I've got big pines everywhere in my 1.75 acres and a few other trees, but the pines intrigue me for some reason - I think it's the challenge of climbing a tree without the benefit of limbs.

I'm just outside Chattanooga, TN.

"(Shows an understanding of good neophyte survival skills!) "

LOL!!! That's certainly a kind way to put it; the short version is fear! :(

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Posted by Wild Bill - 09/01/2006 11:23am

Ron,

I am in Dawsonville, Georgia, which is only two hours driving time from Chattanooga. If you want to see how we do it, I

have a climb scheduled this Sunday, Sept. 3, from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. at my farm for some boy scouts, etc. You have my personal invite to come join us at no charge. In addition to the kid-sized equipment, I have a couple of adult-sized harnesses, etc. also. If you would like driving directions, e-mail me.

Have you hugged your trees today,
Wild Bill Maher from Dawsonville
wcmaher@alltel.net

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Posted by Ron - 09/01/2006 11:58am

Wow, what an offer! I can't turn that down. Thanks, that may be just what I need!

E-mail on the way.

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Posted by Electrojake - 09/01/2006 05:49pm

This opportunity is exceptional.
Ron, as a new climber you probably don't realize just how special an opportunity you have here. This is a modest group so I'll take it upon myself to inform you. . .

Your time with Bill will be well spent.
You'll probably learn more about "the right way to climb" in one afternoon with Bill than most people could learn on their own in 5 years.

Make the trip, It'll be great!:)
www.treeclimbercoalition.org/whoswho/biography.cfm?WhosWhoID=6