
Sunday Afternoon Climb

Posted by Sitka - 04/15/2007 08:45pm

Today I had the chance to take my niece tree climbing for the first time. She rock climbs so was able to catch on fast and seemed to have a good time. Although, it wasn't the best tree. Oregon white oaks hold so much biomass and dirt on their limbs that its hard not to knock stuff into your own eyes, much less the person climbing below you. Also, I forgot several significant pieces of equipment, including my throw line and helmets. I had to Ddrt to the top from the lowest limb in order to set her line and we had to play it extra safe since we didn't have our brain buckets.

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Posted by Sitka - 04/15/2007 08:48pm

Here's her starting up the tree. I had her go SRT while I hoofed it up Ddrt for a second time.

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Posted by Sitka - 04/15/2007 08:52pm

Here she is again, obviously feeling pretty comfortable!

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Posted by Sitka - 04/15/2007 08:59pm

Ach! Our fearless leader slips on a branch. Will his brute strength alone be enough to hold him?

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Posted by Jim W - 04/16/2007 12:38am

No matter how I say this, it's going to sound judgmental, so I'll just plow ahead: I'm not exactly well known for bighting my tongue.

It truly was risky to make that climb without helmets. One slip could have disabled you or your niece . . . not pleasant to have to live with that. Were you really that far from home that you couldn't have gone back after proper gear?

Also, neither of you were wearing safety glasses, even though you knew there would be so much "biomass and dirt on their limbs that its hard not to knock stuff into your own eyes." Please think about how easy it is to lose an eye.

Oh, I might as well go on and really leak people off at me: How on earth could you "forget" helmets and throw lines?! And safety glasses . . . and what else?

I'm really am glad you both had a fine time.

Please be aware, though, that the next time you might not have luck on your side. No professional would have done what you did.

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Posted by Wild Bill - 04/16/2007 08:31am

Unlike Jim, I can't offer any particular complaints that Sitka and his niece were unsafe. A lot of people know that I occasionally climb without a helmet, and I lost my most recent pair of safety glasses a year or so back. I do wear helmets

in certain situations, such as when there are a lot of dead or brittle limbs directly above my rope or when I'm helping to facilitate a youth climb (hey, I like to set a good example for the kids). (I also try to wear one when there are cameras in the area -- I don't want Peter Jenkins getting on my case for having an "unsafe" photo appear in the local media.)

And, I know several professionals who routinely climb without helmets and safety glasses -- particularly when they are not doing any chainsaw work in the tree. They do like for their ground crews to wear helmets, though.

I also think the fact that Sitka left his throw line at home is a very minor issue. Trees with a lot of lower limbs can easily be climbed with monkey fists. even though it takes a little longer (and more effort) to reach the upper canopy. In fact, I personally recommend that climbers go out and climb this way from time to time, for the practice and the experience. I know several professionals who don't even carry throw lines in their equipment bags.

While I personally think younger climbers should wear brain buckets, Sitka's niece appears to have a reasonable amount of experience in vertical pursuits and seems to understand the risks, and he was apparently being extra careful not to drop anything on her head.

It obviously would have been better if they had been wearing helmets and safety glasses, but I congratulate them on taking a difficult situation and turning it into a successful climb.

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Nice Photos

Posted by Oldtimer - 04/16/2007 10:20am

Well, Sitka, it is nice to include a younger person into the fun of tree climbing . Yes proper gear should have been used at every occassion but sometimes we have to do with what we have available or go back and stay indoors permanently affraid of getting hurt. I just finished facilitating /teaching my first group of volunteers how to safely climb in wild trees in Venezuela. Everyone had a great time, I took every precaution to be safe and stay within the limits while sharing one set of gear including a helmet but not gloves or safety goggles. It would have been a long flight back to Texas to get the extra gear ! We showed the basics to 6 six new begginer climbers and they are all looking forward to get more gear including children harnesses and extra ropes etc. It was fun. My gear will stay with them while I have to return home to work and buy new gear ----Yeahh! New Tribe and Sherrills be ready!

Hey Tengu I hope you have a great time in your jungle adventures in La Gran Sabana. I am a long distance in Merida (close to Colombia) from were you are going closer to the Brazil border Everyone be safe, stay in touch and keep posting your reports. Thanks

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Posted by Sitka - 04/16/2007 11:03am

Jim, I accept the criticism and I appreciate that you offered it in a constructive rather than accusatory manor. Obviously, by posting the pictures I opened myself up to such condemnation from the world of tree enthusiasts. However, I don't think that I have ever gone to climb a tree and not forgotten one thing or another, even when at work. If you think about it, there's at least 15-20 pieces of equipment a person must remember to bring for each climb, often times more, so the possibility of forgetting something is great. In fact, you might notice that I forgot my gloves as well! All tree climbing is dangerous. Having glasses and a helmet only make it a little less dangerous.

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Posted by Jim W - 04/16/2007 08:35pm

Thank you, Sitka. My intentions indeed were, and are, honorable.

As an adult, Bill can choose whether to wear a helmet. I know of at least one place where he is told to wear one. Natural selection will see to it that if Bill makes good choices, that capability will (may) be passed on. If he makes bad ones (early enough in life), well, you know. (BTW, I'm glad you're still with us, Bill!)

Honestly, I can't for the life of me understand why someone would choose not to wear a helmet. Not wearing one is like

choosing not to buy insurance for your health, your car, your house The cost of NOT having it is just too high.

Ditto for safety glasses. Turning your head toward a branch and poking your eye would be no fun. Yes, I know, I know: "It won't happen to me. I've been climbing for 729 years and"

As I said, the cost is just too great.

I took a moment to consider what I might say if I had to call from the hospital and tell my niece Holly's parents that she had lost the sight of an eye because I didn't have her wear glasses while we were climbing. I couldn't think of anything. Do any of you have any suggestions?

As for "the professionals" I mentioned, here's an anecdote: Two days ago I was at an ISA competition. I am in the market for a new pair of safety glasses, so had my eyes open for some that I liked. I saw some and asked three different men what brand they were wearing. As they were telling me, two of the three told me that whatever I got, to be sure to check for the proper ANSI Z87.1 rating.

That's what I mean by "professionals." Yes, there are professionals and then there are those who know how to start a chain saw and put on gaffs. I'm talking about employees of companies like Care of Trees.

My sincere apologies for hijacking this thread, but this topic is just too important for me to ignore.

I hope that none of you ever has cause to say that you wish you had listened to silly ol' Jim.

I do disagree, Sitka, when you say, "Having glasses and a helmet only make it a little less dangerous." There's no doubt in my mind but that it makes it significantly less dangerous. I may be wrong, but I bet we could find a bunch of people with only one eye who would violently disagree with you.

The chances of falling are extremely slight. The chances of unexpectedly bumping into something are pretty high.

Rant complete.

Sitka: Great pictures!

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thanks for sharing

Posted by 3CLIMBR - 04/19/2007 10:29am

That looks like a really fun climb. I've been wanting to take my younger brother up. I've even got a second set of gear from graduating up in quality. He said he's game.

I wonder if I can adequately train him.

Anyway, thanks for sharing. Oh, and I don't remember if anyone mentioned this...but you should have worn helmets.

<grins> It's just the right thing to do.

Stay cool.

Robert

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