
The Everest of Tree Climbing?

Posted by michaeljspraggon - 01/19/2008 07:08am

Something to consider:

Following the death of Sir Edmund Hillary a week ago, I was pondering the following question: Can the first ascent of Hyperion in 2006 be compared to the first ascent of Everest in 1953?

Obviously from a courage and physical achievement perspective it would be ridiculous to compare juggling up a 380ft mast to climbing a 29000ft mountain.

However, could one argue that being the first human to reach the top of the tallest living thing on the planet has a similar significance to being the first human to reach the top of the tallest mountain on the planet?

An argument against this might be the temporary nature of trees: Hyperion may only remain the world's tallest tree for decades or centuries at most before another Redwood or even a Douglas Fir surpasses it, whereas Everest will remain the highest point on the planet for at least tens of millions of years before another point on the Earth's crust is pushed higher.

(It is also worth remembering that the achievements of Sir Edmund Hillary's Himalayan Trust working with the Sherpa People of Nepal and the continuing research of Professor Stephen Sillett and his colleagues are both far more important contributions than the climbs themselves.)

Anyone else have any thoughts on this?

Michael

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Re:The Everest of Tree Climbing?

Posted by mdvaden - 01/20/2008 06:37pm

They wouldn't compare.

One reason, is that on Everest, you can't just bail-out in a matter of minutes and descend. If you are on the mountain and weather changes, it's a whole different deal.

Hyperion, or trees like that, are far from a piece of cake, but it's the ease of removing a climber from the situation that seems to make the two incomparable.

One danger with big trees that could be as uncertain as climbing a mountain, are unknown variables like how strong or weak the limbs are, or if any deadwood is ready to fall down.

It seems to be the time on Everest, the lack of oxygen, and being so far from help, that makes the two different.

Each might be better thought of as being unique and challenging in their own way.

What would be more monumental than climbing Hyperion, would be descending 10 feet into the ground below it. That would be notable. The soil beneath the living Redwoods is a more unexplored frontier, and likely impossible to get into while they are still alive.

A side note: if about 1 in 10 die climbing Everest, it seems that we would need to see near 1 person die per 10 ascents into a giant redwood, for comparable danger.

M. D. Vaden - Redwood Hiker & Oregon Tree Guy

<http://www.treeclimbing.com/images/fbfiles/images/redwood400.JPG>

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Re:The Everest of Tree Climbing?

Posted by michaeljspraggon - 01/21/2008 07:17am

Nice photo! Being from England I've never even seen a Sequoia of that size (yet)!

I appreciate your points, having climbed both trees and mountains myself and as I said, it would be ridiculous to compare the physical challenge of climbing a tree with Everest. However, could the historical significance be compared?

Michael

Re:The Everest of Tree Climbing?

Posted by moss - 01/21/2008 10:27am

michaeljspraggon wrote:

Nice photo! Being from England I've never even seen a Sequoia of that size (yet)!

I appreciate your points, having climbed both trees and mountains myself and as I said, it would be ridiculous to compare the physical challenge of climbing a tree with Everest. However, could the historical significance be compared?

Michael

For tree climbers it is the theoretical Everest but then again the Hyperion story is about much more than tree climbing. The biggest challenge was finding the tree and knowing that it was a very tall one. It could be said that the Hyperion ascent was the result of 10+ years of dedicated bushwhacking and tree measuring in redwood forests. It is historically and scientifically significant to a small group of people. To the general population it's probably just an interesting bit of trivia.

-moss

Re:The Everest of Tree Climbing?

Posted by mdvaden - 01/21/2008 11:47am

michaeljspraggon wrote:

Nice photo! Being from England I've never even seen a Sequoia of that size (yet)!

I appreciate your points, having climbed both trees and mountains myself and as I said, it would be ridiculous to compare the physical challenge of climbing a tree with Everest. However, could the historical significance be compared?

Michael

Sure, I'd say that the historical significance would be a good way to look at it.

The tree in the image, is what we call a "redwood" here, although it's genus name is "Sequoia". We call the Sequoiadendron genus "sequoia".

I only live about 1.45 to 2 hours east of the largest coastal redwoods. The tallest, are a bit farther south. But the actual largest ones, are way up north in California, almost to the Oregon border, in Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park.

The one in the image is not one of the largest, but it is in that park, at the Simpson Reed Discovery trail.

A few days ago, I went on a hunt for the "Del Norte Titan" and "Grove of Titans" discovered in 1998. I spotted them from a short distance, but didn't take photos because it was getting dark, and I expect to go back. After over a dozen hikes there last year, I was fairly certain I could find them. Not for climbing of course B)

Personally, I enjoy a lot of the smaller forest elements just as much. Most of my images are at this album...

http://www.mdvaden.com/album_Redwoods.shtml

It may be years until tree climbers can have fun in the redwoods, due to the climbing permits required, and restrictions due to certain birds.

Private owned lands may be the best option for redwood climbing, although the trees won't be giants. But even some

that are only 100 years old are very big trees.

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Re:The Everest of Tree Climbing?

Posted by michaeljspraggon - 01/22/2008 09:27am

Thanks guys. I like your photo album Mario - especially the weird & wonderful bracket fungi! I've climbed a Sequoiadendrum Giganteum near my home in England but at 127ft it was just a baby really. I think they are some of the most enchanting trees to climb in.

Moss, I've read The Wild Trees (the artwork's pretty impressive isn't it ;)). For me the most powerful part of the book is the story of Michael Taylor and his unwavering belief that he would eventually find the tallest trees on Earth. It must have been a lonely time for him over the years but he never gave up.

Michael

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Re:The Everest of Tree Climbing?

Posted by mdvaden - 01/27/2008 03:42am

So... I was back in the Jed Smith redwoods again today. Rained, but that did not stop us. Made the ferns look great.

We took a ton of photos of many things. I posted a new page, and added a couple of images of the Del Norte Titan on it with myself for size comparison.

http://www.mdvaden.com/grove_of_titans.shtml

Added a few more "this and thats" to the redwood album indicated in earlier reply.

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Re:Great Post and photos

Posted by oldtimer - 01/27/2008 10:43am

That is a great set of photos that you posted on the threk to see the Giants.

Thanks

http://www.mdvaden.com/grove_of_titans.shtml

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Re:The Everest of Tree Climbing?

Posted by michaeljspraggon - 01/27/2008 12:06pm

It must be like looking up at a skyscraper! One day I'll have to see these titans for myself...

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