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## Climbing Ol' Coon

Posted by sadams - 02/01/2008 05:20pm

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Joe Kennedy and I went out with Jim Cortese to climb a big Northern Red Oak tree over on the UT Campus that is in a fairly remote location. I've seen this tree from a distance and have wanted to get to it for a while. We finally got our chance and MAN, what a tree! It has a 62" diameter at breast height, is 80' tall with a 70' spread. Several low limbs were close to 2' thick! The canopy is very healthy and therefore very dense and I ended up using a Big Shot to get a line set in the top at about 65'. As I footlocked up through the canopy and approached the first limbs I began to smell something kind of foul and found several of these large lower limbs were covered with piles of poo! So I discovered to my surprise this tree is a daytime raccoon resting tree. I've found stuff in trees( golf balls,ham bones and skulls and of course evidence of wildlife). I've had flying squirrels jump out of holes at me and grey squirrels run across my body to get away from me. I've found snake skins and screech owls, but this was something totally different. Some of these piles were extremely fresh and I wondered if I was going to find an angry raccoon startled out of his afternoon slumber. It turned out I was alone and I didn't have any trouble, but it was briefly exciting!

We named the tree Ol' Coon. It turned out to be a great climbing tree albeit very wild in more ways than one. Some of the dead limbs were 15' long and as big around as my waist! I cleaned out a route for Jim and Joe and removed any of the hangers and loose deadwood in the climbing route. I assessed the large dead limbs to make certain that these would not get dislodged, then I set a trunk climb for Joe and a branch climb for Jim both at about 50'. They both ascended and we had a nice hour or so hanging out before we had to split for more pressing things. Like work for me and Jim and school for Joe.

Our fear is that this tree might be affected by a construction project that the University is about to start. We may end up being the first and last people to ever climb this tree. I hope not. We are currently the University's Arborists so we hope we'll have some influence on some of the decisions.

No shade, Blame not the sun but yourself- Chinese Proverb.

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## Re:Climbing Ol' Coon

Posted by oldtimer - 02/01/2008 05:29pm

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Thanks sadams for sharing your climb. I hope that you guys have some weight with the decisions the university will take make about this tree and its surroundings.  
Take care and Enjoy more stories about your trees.

P.S. I got confused when you mentioned "UT" and was thinking University of Texas Instead of Univ of Tennessee.:silly:

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## Re:Climbing Ol' Coon

Posted by sadams - 02/04/2008 09:08am

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Of course I meant the Real UT!But thanks for the clarification.

As for the influence with tree preservation: I think we'll have some as we're the designated pruning and removal contractor and also considered their consulting arborists. That having been said, UT is a large beaurocratic organization that has a way of getting ahead of itself despite it's best intentions.

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