
Bogachiel Spruce reclimb in 2008

Posted by Oxman - 02/22/2008 03:35am

5 climbers ascended the Bogachiel Spruce last Tuesday. This tree had been climbed by 25 people the week prior to the 2002 ISA conference in Seattle. A veritable convention. Several of the members of this board know this tree intimately, top to bottom. There is a bit of shocking news, which is addressed below.

The event was named the Hoh Rainforest Super Bowl TREE Fun(d) Climb, because it was a benefit for the Tree Research Education & Endowment Fund, and was originally scheduled for the week of the Super Bowl. The TREE Fund is a non profit foundation that provides grants and scholarships for university tree research. The climbers donated auction bids for gift certificates that bought their way onto the climbing team.

Winter is a good time to climb on the Olympic Peninsula because there is little hiker traffic and few mosquitos. Because there is an average annual rainfall of about 160 inches, climbing is on a rain or shine basis. This day was bright and sunny, adding to the enjoyment.

The climbers convened at Kalaloch Beach, 200 miles west of Seattle, on the coast of the Pacific Ocean. After a fine meal at the Kalaloch Lodge, in Olympic National Park, we spent the nite camped just a few feet from the surf.
http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Kalaloch_Campground&action=edit

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Re:Bogachiel Spruce reclimb in 2008

Posted by Oxman - 02/22/2008 05:18am

The Bogachiel Spruce tree itself is a Sitka Spruce that has a trunk diameter of about ten feet. When we first climbed it, the height was measured at 250' tall. A dead spike top has broken off in a storm, and the tree is now only 225' tall. But that is not the dramatic news.

The spruce was one of a pair of trees, standing side by side in the forest. The second tree was slightly smaller, but about the same height. It leaned toward the Bogachiel Spruce at an angle, not quite touching. A person could step from one tree into the other at the very top. 8 portaledges and hammocks had been suspended in the space contained between these two nestling arms, with 8 climbers hunkered down during the night of the 2001 Moonlight Madness Climb.

When we arrived at the site last Tuesday, we could see the leaning tree had fallen over in a storm very recently. The tree is lying full length on the ground. The root wad sticks up 12 feet, like a sail on a sailboat, and there is a pond in the crater where the roots had once gripped the soil.

A trail crew has cut a slab off the trunk, creating a footbridge where the tree crosses the creek. Steps have been carved into the wood, and a crude rope handrail is strung up for hikers to grab on to as they balance on the massive span.

The difference in the stark remaining half of this prior pair took a while to get used to. I had actually climbed halfway up the now missing spike top, well past the current terminus, to install a weathervane pinwheel way back when.

The methods of climbing during this excursion were varied. The initial line was launched halfway up the tree with a crossbow shot from the approach trail on the hill. For those who have seen the Beranek video called "Bogachiel Spruce", available from Sherrill Tree, the shooting platform was the rappel landing pad on the trail under the zipline escape route.

Zack Blomberg, from Flower Mountain Tree Service on Lopez Island, Washington blazed the trail up the tree on his ascenders. Zack rerouted the line that was perched over the ends of several live and dead branches. While he was climbing, I used Zacks Nikon D70 SLR digital camera to capture his ascent, then tied the camera on his line, which was hauled up for more picture taking in the treetop.

Next up was Kreg T, also from Lopez Island, who benefitted by Zacks placement of his climbing line in the top of the tree. Meanwhile, Dan Kraus used the crossbow to shoot a line into another spruce tree, about 50 feet away, and almost as tall, but not quite as fat. This tree, dubbed BS 2, is completely hollow at ground level, and a basal cavity suitable for a bear den allows a person to see all the way thru the tree.

Dan pulled a pilot line with the micro-dyneema line on the fishing reel. We replaced that with a 400' static line. Dan anchored one end of the climb line to a small Hemlock tree, and climbed the other end with his ropewalking system.

Upon arrival at the 150' line setting, Dan called down to me to untie the rope from the anchor Hemlock. The rope was pulled into the very top of BS 2, and one end was anchored securely.

Simultaneously, a third climber, Ethan Tucker from Orcas Island, Washington, joined Zack and Kreg. So, we had 3 people in the big tree, and one person in the adjacent treetop. What kind of entertainment did I have to look forward to while watching them from the ground?

Well, Dan Kraus tossed a throwline over to the other tree, and tied on an extra climb line to make a dual tight line traverse. The rope wrapped around the big tree and went up to the next whorl, and then it was hauled back over to the first tree. This was cinched down with a 3-1 come-a-long and secured. One strand was a tightrope at foot level, and the other strand was stretched piano wire tight at shoulder height.

Dan then proceeded to amaze everyone watching by attaching his saddle to the upper strand, and balanced on the lower strand of rope while walking horizontally from one tree to the other. He joined the crew of three, then Ethan took his place on the traverse and went on over to the BS 2 tree.

After capturing these two making the 180' high traverse on video, I donned my climbing gear and ascended BS 2 to join Ethan. We had a great time shooting photos across the chasm at each other, then began our descent. To ensure safety, we checked out each others descender systems visually and physically, while we still had flielines on. One at a time, we all went down the ropes. The last climber down from each of the two trees had to derig the jug lines on their return to Earth.

The 400' rope was too short to double down from in this tree, and I had to retie about 50' from the bottom. I got a chance to capture my own 200' rappel with the \$500 Archos helmet cam. I was actually able to watch my own descent on the TV screen while rappelling.

This lipstick cam is wired to the 30 gig hard drive Archos model 605 Wifi. It has a 4.3" touch sensitive wide LCD screen, with 420 lines of resolution at 800X480 pixels. This means it can surf the internet at full screen width, without having to scroll sideways. The camera has an inline wired remote control, with a microphone mounted on the combination lapel clip/on & off switch. A smaller unit, called the Archos 405 Wifi, would be better for treeclimbing. It has a 3 1/2" LCD display, and is much lighter.

No wireless internet connection was available out here in the woods, otherwise I could have posted videos and this verbal account while still up in the tree. That's next.

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Re:Bogachiel Spruce reclimb in 2008

Posted by oldtimer - 02/24/2008 12:13pm

Mr Oxman, I have enjoyed viewing the original video you produced and I look forward to see the production of this climb. For those of us that love climbing trees but do not have the opportunity, gear or resources to enjoy these adventures these videos are a great alternative.:)

Thanks again for the report posted above, sounds like you guys really enjoyed taking this revisit to the Bogachiel Valley Trees.

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Re:Bogachiel Spruce reclimb in 2008

Posted by Oxman - 02/24/2008 01:13pm

Dan Kraus shooting BS 2 with the Barnett Wildcat 150 crossbow with a 3.3 oz. solid fiberglass arrow. 30 pound Berkeley Fireline Micro-Dyneema line is used on the fishing reel mounted under the forestock.

In the background is the Bogachiel Spruce. Just barely visible on the ground is the horizontal trunk of the former twin spruce tree. <http://www.treeclimbing.com/images/fbfiles/images/aKrausWeb2DSC07613.JPG>

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Re:Bogachiel Spruce reclimb in 2008

Posted by Oxman - 02/24/2008 01:24pm

Dan Kraus in the first ascent of BS 2. This tree is 'small', but almost as tall as the Bogachiel Spruce. The cavity at the

base of the tunk smelled like a bear had spent the winter there.

Re:Bogachiel Spruce reclimb in 2008

Posted by Oxman - 02/24/2008 01:32pm

The website image size restriction has resulted in the detail being stripped out of these 8 photos.
<http://www.treeclimbing.com/images/fbfiles/images/aKrausWeb1DSC07641.JPG>

Re:Bogachiel Spruce reclimb in 2008

Posted by Oxman - 02/24/2008 11:02pm

Here's Kreg <http://www.treeclimbing.com/images/fbfiles/images/aKregWeb3aDSC07654.JPG>

Re:Bogachiel Spruce reclimb in 2008

Posted by Oxman - 02/24/2008 11:04pm

Kreg again. <http://www.treeclimbing.com/images/fbfiles/images/aKregWebDSC07661.JPG>

Re:Bogachiel Spruce reclimb in 2008

Posted by m_morgan - 02/24/2008 11:08pm

Great pictures Ox!! Looks like a great climb. Any pictures from the top?

Re:Bogachiel Spruce reclimb in 2008

Posted by Oxman - 02/24/2008 11:15pm

Dan Kraus, way up at the top of the photo. Can you see him?
<http://www.treeclimbing.com/images/fbfiles/images/aKrausWebDSC07644.JPG>

Re:Bogachiel Spruce reclimb in 2008

Posted by Oxman - 02/24/2008 11:17pm

Thanks. Yup.

Here's a zoom view of that last shot. Sort of.
<http://www.treeclimbing.com/images/fbfiles/images/aKrausWebCropDSC07644.JPG>

Re:Bogachiel Spruce reclimb in 2008

Posted by Oxman - 02/24/2008 11:29pm

Zack in the very top of the Bogachiel Spruce.
<http://www.treeclimbing.com/images/fbfiles/images/aZackWeb1DSC07674.JPG>

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Re:Bogachiel Spruce reclimb in 2008

Posted by Oxman - 02/24/2008 11:35pm

Long view of Zack from that last closeup. <http://www.treeclimbing.com/images/fbfiles/images/aZackWeb2DSC07676.JPG>

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Re:Bogachiel Spruce reclimb in 2008

Posted by Oxman - 02/24/2008 11:48pm

Ox in BS 2 with the 4 ascender system.

1-Right hand Jumar to saddle.

2-Left hand Jumar to left foot stirrup & saddle.

3-Croll at chest harness.

4-Pantin on right foot.

5-Helmet Cam above right ear.

Photo by Ethan Tucker <http://www.treeclimbing.com/images/fbfiles/images/aOxWeb1DSC07691.JPG>

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Re:Bogachiel Spruce reclimb in 2008

Posted by Oxman - 02/24/2008 11:57pm

As we ride off into the sunset, here's the view from the top. As requested.

The Bogachiel river, at 15X zoom. <http://www.treeclimbing.com/images/fbfiles/images/aView1DSC07697.JPG>

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