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## Hitch Tending System - ever try it?

Posted by rboreal - 05/07/2008 09:43am

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Hithc Tending System, as shown in the Sherrill's 2008 Arborists Supply Catalog.

Well, it happened again. Sherrill's latest catalog introduced me to a climbing trick that blew me away, and I'm almost pissed I didn't think of it myself. Just as their 2007 Master catalog taught me quite a few valuable lessons and techniques (flipline with hip prusik-HUGE) the 2008 cat illustrates a technique that I experimented with yesterday, and it's awesome. Here's the idea: You use a piece of utility cord tied in an endless loop, tie it with a prusik to your working end, and then clip it into your carabiner of your advanced friction hitch, or using a little leash snap you can attach it to a pulley under your Blake's hitch. The end result is, this will auto-advance your friction hitch every time you make progress upward. This is illustrated on page 33, in the "Split Tail Action" section. Variations are also on pp. 44 and 49, showing use with an advanced friction hitches and a hitch climber pulley. These latter two actually were in the 2007 catalog, but at the time I didn't realize the significance of what I was looking at. My bad!

I mean, c'mon! I'm predominantly a rec climber, with cutting and pruning making up only about 40% of my arboreal activity. When I'm recreational climbing, which is mostly about the peace and the exercise/cardio of the climb, I just want a smooth and cool experience. Or a tough challenge ... whatever. But, **THIS IMPROVES CLIMBING EFFICIENCY BY ALMOST 50%!!!!** Do you understand the significance of what this little rig does? You **NO LONGER HAVE TO ADVANCE YOUR FRICTION HITCH EVERY TIME YOU "HUMP THE AIR"** as one of our contributors so eloquently describes the climbing cycle. You just **PULL** on the running end, and the whole damn thing (including you) goes up like an elevator. How cool is that!! From a standpoint of cardiovascular exercise, this makes for a more uninterrupted cycle of physical activity. From a standpoint of working and efficiency, **WOW!**

Let's face it - as climbers, we love testing gear, new ideas, new trees, new knots. It's all part of the fun. If my blathering on and on introduces even one novice to this idea, it will have been worth it. Just remember to work it in "low and slow". Because you never want to take any brand new idea past 6 or 7ft. until you've rigged and un-rigged yourself 5-10 times and come to know all the "hassles" you didn't see coming.

IF you are ascending on a DdRT climbing system, there are only a few disadvantages to rigging your system this way. I ran into a few negatives, such as, the hitch advance cord prevents your running and working ends from spreading very far. So if you have a lot of obstacles (read: branches) in your way after installing your line, it takes getting used to. Also, you may need to slack your lines to unhook the utility cord, because it can be quite a ways over your head. So make sure you have a flipline or some alternate means of support that allows you to release tension on your lifeline, and reach up and grab the utility cord. I disconnect the hitch tending system once I am in position, if I've work to do. But it makes getting there way, way faster.

There are some rather difficult climbs I have set up, like where there is a natural redirect over a large branch or thru a tight crotch. Previously the only way I was able to make it up was to time myself as I swing away from the branch I'm sandwiched against, quickly advance a little bit, and then try to capture a pitiful little bit of progress before I swing back into a tight situation. Even advanced friction hitches do not always "set" in these really weird instances where you are pushing from the pulley, and your hands cannot reach the knot or the braid, and you are only progressing a few inches at a time. This system makes difficult climbs like this much easier, because if I can pull, I'm moving up, baby!

Certainly no one uses a DdRT climbing system to enter a tree if you've a long way to go and are in a hurry. Speed climbing with or without gaffs (if the tree and/or job permits), secured footlock, mech ascenders... lots of better ways when time is money.

BTW, I entered my first ISA competition this year, and after watching professionals ascend using secured footlock, I am psyched about practicing this technique until I am smooth and fast. I learned so much from entering and observing, it was certainly a valuable part of my tree lessons. Let me take a second to thank both the judges and the fellow climbers I met there. Everyone was very encouraging to me, the only walk-in, apprentice-level participant, with nothing but good cheer and valuable advice the whole time.

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## Re:Hitch Tending System - ever try it?

Posted by oldtimer - 05/07/2008 11:11pm

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Self Advanced hitch.

Been There, Done that!

I always learn something new from the Sherrill "Magalogs" and some of the other Arborist Suppliers have more photos or diagrams of nice climbing and working techniques.

Glad you are having fun with it!

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## Re:Hitch Tending System - ever try it?

Posted by TreeTramp - 05/08/2008 05:31pm

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I showed Peter Jenkins my self-advancing system in 1998 that is still better than the Sherrills rig by one point.

You need to have your friction hitch/device positioned at a point "higher up" the rope so your pulling down stroke is with your best power.

By adding a length of webbing loop runner on your center harness attachment and then attaching your climbing rope/device/split-tail place it where you can still reach the hitch/device to descend.

This added distance will still let the hitch/device self-advance but now with a double foot loop on the down rope you can use both hands and both feet to ascend.

See you at the top,  
Dan

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## Re:Hitch Tending System - ever try it?

Posted by treeweasel - 07/27/2008 07:20pm

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TreeTramp,

I'm not sure I understand the difference you are suggesting between the one illustrated in Sherrill's catalog?

Do you have an illustration or picture you could share.

Thanks,

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## Re:Hitch Tending System - ever try it?

Posted by TreeTramp - 07/28/2008 07:57am

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I have replaced the Blakes Hitch with a mechanical ascender called USHBA (silver) made out of titanium. As you pull down and stand up in the foot loops attached to the black CMI ascender the down rope pulls the biner up (gold). The USHBA has a toothless cam that secures itself as you release the down rope. As the biner rises it raises the climber via the web tubing (yellow) attached to the harness.

In this I am using a web loop sewn with lots of loops (Etier?) To descend you slowly rock the USHBA back to disengage the cam to loosen its grip on the down rope. Very important to belay the down rope to slow your descent or if needed you can scream down and to stop push up the USHBA.

[http://images.kodakgallery.com/photos2387/4/42/34/41/66/6/666413442405\\_0\\_ALB.jpg](http://images.kodakgallery.com/photos2387/4/42/34/41/66/6/666413442405_0_ALB.jpg)

Anyway I have also set a VT in the place of the USHBA. To make the system perfect you need to add a loop runner web between your center attachment point and the friction hitch of your choice; just adjust it so that you can still handle it to release for decent but high enough that you can get the most length of pull down on the down rope in the stroke that has your most power. My power stroke is when my arms are fully over my head to down to when they are about level with my chin.

See you at the top,  
Dan

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## Re:Hitch Tending System - ever try it?

Posted by treeweasel - 07/28/2008 09:24am

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TreeTramp,

Thanks for the info., unfortunately the photo isn't showing on my PC. Rats! That figures. I'm not sure if it is something wrong on my end or not. If you have any suggestions to get the pic to show up let me know. Right now there is an empty box for the picture with a red "X" in it???

TW

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## Re:Hitch Tending System - ever try it?

Posted by moss - 07/28/2008 01:26pm

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Here's a completely different paradigm to consider. Tie the bridge (or your split tail) to your Blake's fairly short. You will need to footlock the down rope with this method. There are many options to do this:

1. Ascender with footloops on the down rope
2. Footloops made from 9mm rope attached with prusik to the down rope
3. Single foot "loop" footlock on the down rope (no gear required)
4. Double foot footlock on the down rope, same as doubled rope secured footlock except you're just locking the single down rope (requires the most practice to develop this skill).
5. Pantin, foot ascender on one foot on the down rope

Ok whatever way you choose to use your legs to provide power on the down rope now tie in and start climbing. Your bridge is nice and short. Lock the down rope with your ascender, feet, whatever. Grab the down rope above the hitch with one hand and below the hitch with the other. Get your feet under your butt, stand up on the down rope. As you stand, regrab the rope with your upper hand higher on the down rope. Then move the hitch up with your lower hand. Depending on how much rope you grabbed with your feet you might be able to move your upper hand up again and continue moving the hitch up with your lower hand. The only limit to stroke length here is how much you grab with your feet or ascender on the down rope. It's most efficient hanging away from the trunk. If you're on the trunk put one foot on the tree to keep you steady, the other foot/leg does the work.

If you get this very efficient ascending motion down I don't think you'll want or need a hitch advancer. Hitch advancers are most optimal for body thrust technique. Body thrust is not sustainable over the course of a rec climb and is rough on the arm joints and tendons. I save body thrust for making short movements in the tree to get around obstacles etc.  
-moss

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