

## *How about the TREES?*



A friend recently wrote to New Tribe pointing out that our website doesn't say much about our values concerning the welfare of trees and forests. We talk about our operating values, which have to do with how New Tribe does business. But it's an important question...How about the trees?

In our philosophy, in our training courses and guided adventures, and in our personal climbing activities, New Tribe and friends pay keen attention to the impact we have on trees. Here are some of the points we consider, and the steps we take to avoid damage:

### **--Protecting the root zone**

Soil compaction can injure the tree's feeder roots and weaken the tree. We add mulch inside the drip line to soften the impact of foot traffic and protect soil conditions. For wilderness trees, we advocate restricting foot traffic to a narrow path, and restoring the forest floor to its pre-climb condition before leaving the area.

### **--Protecting bark**

Friction caused by a loaded climbing rope moving over a branch can erode bark and expose the tree to sunburn and insect or fungus infection. We use rope sleeves to take this heat and prevent abrasion damage to the branches.

Climbing spurs damage a tree, creating puncture wounds that expose the cambium to disease from microbes and insects. It is a primary value among recreational tree climbers to always rely on top-rope

climbing techniques and never use climbing spurs. Top-rope techniques are safer for people as well as for trees.

Some tree species have thin tender bark that would be damaged even by minimal contact with ropes and climbers. We avoid climbing such vulnerable trees.

**--Protecting the tree's associates**

Moss, lichens and other plants make their home in trees and provide habitat for other creatures. They are integral to the balance and health of the forest overall. We avoid disturbing these epiphytes by staying on rope and keeping our feet off of branches. In most cases, we will avoid climbing trees that host epiphytes.

**--Respecting the tree's surroundings**

We avoid climbing in trees that host nesting animals and birds. We avoid all climbing during nesting season in forests that vulnerable species depend on.

We pack out litter and restore the area to the condition we found it in, or better. We avoid damaging neighboring trees and plants.

We have seen that, even with the precautions mentioned above, impacts can build up for a tree that receives climbers again and again. We watch for this in our favorite trees and retire them before they are harmed.

In our 26 years working with tree climbers, we find a strong vein of respect and love for trees and all nature. Climbers are motivated to care for the trees they love. With that spirit, and good protective practices, we are building a culture for tree climbing that keeps the trees safe.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sophia Sparks". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Sophia Sparks, President  
New Tribe, Inc.  
Grants Pass, Oregon  
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