



Bears are not the only reason to bear bag. On one of our v-e-r-y first trips with the club in 1977 we arrived at Maupin Field in the wee hours near midnight on a chilly 18° October night. Not knowing any better, we simply erected our cheap tent and crawled into our sleeping bags, leaving packs leaning against a nearby tree. About three in the ayem a young lady, who shall remain nameless but goes by the initials SGA and sometimes leaves messages in shelter logs from Monica Lewinski, giggled a bit as she shouted up to us “You folks in the red tent, you have a skunk in your pack.” I got out of the sleeping bag and tent as the skunk started to depart. Mr. Skunk did a “U-turn” back to the pack, and I did the same to my comfy bag and tent. A while later Mr. Skunk departed for good. In my undies I hung seven packs in the trees, receiving numb toes, fingers and ears in the process. No, Mr. Skunk did not provide perfume, damaged naught but a wee bit of pita, and my extremities soon recovered in the warm bag. Lesson well and harmlessly learned.

A bear bag is what you put things in to hang in a tree above the reach of small and large critters that would like to taste your goodies. In the bear bag should be your food, duh, your garbage, used TP (double bagged), toiletries, lip balm, toothpaste, and the like.

Most folks use a simple bear bag hang such as **Figure 1**. The only problem with this is that the rope, as you pull it over the limb with the weight of the food bag, will girdle the limb. The result - a dead limb and no place to hang your bag next year.

A simple remedy is shown in **Figure 2**. The first rope (the pulley rope) holds a very small pulley or carabiner. This holds a second rope (the bear bag rope) which carries the weight of the bear bag. You toss the pulley rope over a likely limb, then

fasten on the pulley or carabiner. You then thread the bear bag rope through the pulley or carabiner. Using the pulley rope, you pull your bear bag rope up in the air. The bear bag is then attached to the bear bag rope and hauled aloft. No damaged limb, and an easier haul. Note: Both ropes must reach from the ground to the limb, and back to the ground. When removing ropes, pull the pulley rope down by the pulley or carabiner end so that the hardware does not snag on a twig or branch.

An added feature of using a pulley or carabiner is that you can pull the bear bag away from the first tree. If you use a fairly high limb and let the bear bag hang several feet below the limb, you can then pull it to one side with the bear bag rope, getting it further from the tree as in **Figure 3**.

In any case, be thoughtful and considerate of our forests and our neighbor critters. Get that bear bag at least 15-feet off the ground and 8-feet away from the nearest tree. And hang it 200-ft from the campsite. In areas populated by other than the black bear, follow local guidelines for protecting your food and other articles.

An old American Indian saying goes: “A pine needle fell in the forest, the fox saw it, the deer heard it, and the bear smelled it.” Put all that bear appealing stuff in the bear bag.

In some camping areas bear bag poles or wires are supplied. In other areas bear proof food canisters are required.

See figures at end of handout.

Also refer to the TATC Education Handout titled: “BLACK BEAR NEWS - READ AND HEED (PLEASE !)”

Notes:

1. Know the rules & regulations, and etcetera, in the area in which you will be traveling or camping. They do vary from place to place dependant upon, in part, the species and number of bears in that area. For instance: In some places bear canisters are required.
2. Keep that bag 8-feet out from the tree and 15-feet above the ground.
3. Other bear bagging methods include the ‘M’ hang between two trees, the Marrison Haul System, and the Counterbalance Method. The latter two bear bagging methods are described in “The Backpacker’s Field Manual” by Rick Curtis, Director, Princeton University Outdoor Action, © 1998, Publisher - Three Rivers Press, ISBN 0-517-88783-5.
4. One brand 1/8-inch nylon Para-Cord has a recommended working load range of 23 to 54-lbs. Reduce this by 40 to 50% if you use knots !

WARNING:

Do NOT exceed the weight capacity of the rope or the pulley.

Injury may result.

When nylon rope is knotted, strength is reduced 40 to 50%.

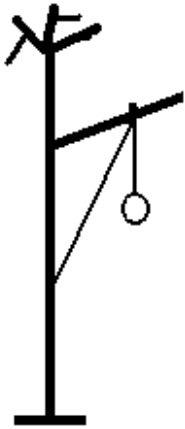


Figure 1.
Don't do this.
It girdles, then kills,
the branch.
Next year there is no
branch over which to
hang your bear bag.

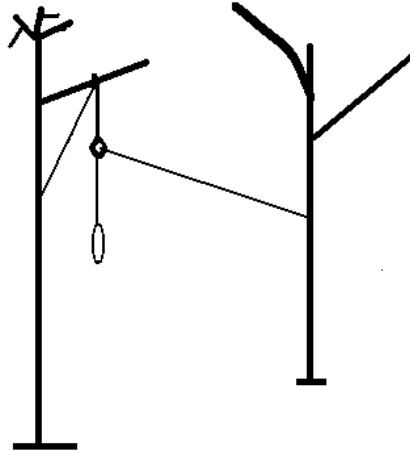


Figure 2.
Do this.
Using the pulley saves
girdling and killing the
branch. Keep that bear
bag 8-ft out from the
tree trunk and 15 ft off
the ground.

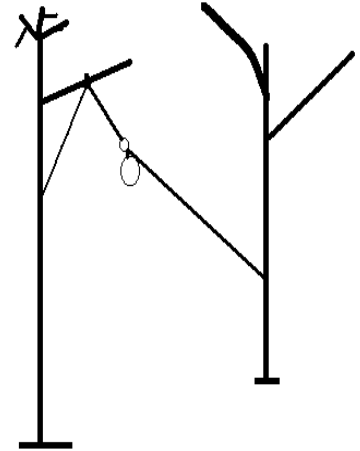


Figure 3.
If you can leave the bag
a bit down from the
branch, and tie off to the
front, it will pull your
bag further out from and
away from the
tree trunk.