

TIS THE SEASON TO DECORATE WITH TREE STANDS



Bowhunter in tree stand, Photo by Ron Snow

By Guy D. Perkins

In 1977 I took a bowhunter education class from an individual who'd moved to the west from the east. Not only did he bring bow ed with him but he brought a tree stand. In the outdoor portion of the class one afternoon, I found myself some 30 feet off the ground, tied to the tree with barley a safety restraint, wondering why? The stand consisted of a ½ inch piece of ply board, some metal teeth from a mowing machine in a cut out v, carpet, a swing arm to level the stand and a seat belt to fasten it to the tree. From the very beginning I felt limited. While my bowhunting experiences were also limited, I wasn't sure this was an advantage because I seemed to be at the mercy of the animal's movement.



As soon as someone figured they could make a buck, they started manufacturing stands. It took a few years before they became an accepted method of hunting in the west but now they are almost as popular as they are back east. Tree stands can offer some advantages if used properly, they are not a cure all for fighting off the signal of scent to the animals pursued. A badly located stand can actually spread your scent farther and broader and the animal will leave long before they are seen. Then there is the issue of arrow placement. Too high of a stand narrows your shot placement. Since you are elevated the arrow must enter the animal's body cavity on the high side and exit on the opposite side low,

how high it enters is determined by the angle or how high you're elevated. Similar challenges are shooting up and down hill from the ground in steep terrain. It is important when shooting down to get an exit hole so you have a blood trail to follow. Tree stands can also send a signal to other bowhunters who stumble onto the location that something good may be happening in the area.



To the Forest Service they became an eye sore. Many permanent stands were erected in the early stages of its growth to popularity. It is unlawful to construct a permanent structure on Forest lands without a permit. This rule can be enforced under the Code of Federal Regulations title 36 261.10 under Occupancy and Use, it reads. The following are prohibited: (a) "The constructing, placing, or maintaining any kind of road, trail, STRUCTURE, fence, enclosure, communication equipment, or other improvement without a permit". An individual can also be sighted for abandoning any personal property because the lumber was theirs before

they attached it to the tree. Under title 36 216.10 (e) "Abandoning any personal property" Those are still on the books today and can be enforced to the tune of a minimal fine of \$200.00. What about portable stands? If you put your stand up a week before the hunt and leave the area guess what? That can be considered abandoned by definition of the rule. I guess you'd leave the rest up to the judge (something I want to spend time doing).

In the old days people just pounded in spikes to get that cat bird seat. But today we have screw in pegs readily available to launch us into the air. Not so fast, Spiderman. Under Title 36 261.9 Property; the following are prohibited: (a) damaging any natural feature or other property of the United States. I think a tree is pretty natural and while it does belong to all of us on public lands it could very well be "judged" as "property of the United States". But here is the... should we say, "nail in the coffin" or "tree" as it were. Title 36 261.6 Timber and other forest products; the following are prohibited: (a) Cutting or otherwise damaging any timber, tree or other forest product, except as authorized by a special use authorization, timber sale contract or Federal law or regulation.



Private lands I would assume may have their own guidelines. If you get permission to hunt a place don't screw up your chance to be there because you damaged a tree without the landowner's permission.

There are products on the market now to help you get in the air, against a tree if that is where you want to be without damaging it. Ladder stands are a good option, climbing ladders, and strap on climbing steps. I'm never amazed at the number of trees I find on the forest that finally died and tipped over with a permanent stand attached to it. I know of other trees where portable stands were used and screw in pegs ten years ago that are either dead or dieing. The holes from the steps



make the trees more susceptible to insect infestation. Some trees are heartier than others but over time can die. Aspens are very fragile. Maybe it is the best tree in the local of where you hunt and it is effective, so take care of it.

It is not worth a confrontation but you can print this off, stick it in your pack and if you see someone out of line just remind them of the regulations. You may save them enough money that they can continue to afford to hunt.

Note from the BLM on Ground Blinds--

"No blinds are to be constructed out of native materials on public land. A person can bring a portable blind with him to hunt as long as it can be picked up and removed at the end of the day. Blinds

are not to be left on public land, even for as short a period as overnight. Blinds found on public land will be destroyed and the responsible party cited for trespass and/or for littering.

Any questions, please contact Mike Nelson, JuLee Palette, or Randy Griffin"