

Vertigo Tree Rappel Anchor Proposal



Information from Applicant

The following information was received from the applicant:

I propose to install a bolted rappel anchor at the top of the Upper Ramp on Redgarden Wall to replace the anchor currently around a tree at that location. The roots of the tree have loosened considerably in the past few months, resulting in significant movement of the tree and its root system in high winds. This is a dangerous situation that should be fixed soon. The possible locations of the proposed anchor are shown in the attached photos.

Option 1: Lower Anchor Near the Tree

The proposed anchor is about 5 feet left of the tree in a solid slab of rock.

There is a good ledge to stand on. The anchor is easy to get to either by down climbing next to the tree, or coming in from climber's left via an easy ledge system. The proposed anchor is about 65 feet above the lower rappel anchor

on Song of the Dodo. The proposed anchor is aligned a few feet left of the lower anchor, but this should not be a problem. The proposed anchor is far enough left of the tree that the branches should not interfere with pulling the rope. I proposed to use two camouflaged 1/2" by 3" bolts in a vertical alignment with a chain for equalization.



Advantages of a lower anchor (near the tree):

1. It is close to the existing anchor, so there's no problem locating it.
2. There is a good ledge to stand on while setting up the rappel.
3. The rope toss and retrieval are simple.
4. There is an easy down climb to get there without using the tree (head down a gully near the EL100 tree, and traverse left on a good ledge to the anchor).
5. A 50m rope can be used.

Disadvantages of a lower anchor:

1. It is more involved to get to the lower anchor than to a higher anchor.
2. Few people know about the easy approach, and many will continue to down climb to it using the tree, which is likely to become increasingly risky. This could be mitigated by cairns, but some have expressed opposition to using them.
3. If the tree falls over, the root system pulling out could impact the ledge in the vicinity of the anchor, and the tree could get in the way of the anchor or the rope line below the anchor.

Option 2: Higher Anchor Near the Top of the Ridge

The higher anchor proposal is about 7m above and 3-4m right of the current tree anchor, near the top of the ridge, close to where Vertigo tops out on the Upper Ramp.

Advantages of a higher anchor:

1. It is quick to get to without having to down climb.
2. It appears to be in a good place to toss and retrieve the rappel rope without interference from the tree.

Disadvantages of a higher anchor:

1. It is not documented in the guidebook, and is not visible from the approach, so very few climbers will know that it's there without prior knowledge.
2. It does not have a stance below it, and it must be threaded while "working over the edge". Getting on rappel will be a bit more difficult.
3. It might not be usable with a 50m rope.
4. If the tree falls over, the tree could get in the way of the rope line below the anchor.



Of all of these disadvantages, #1 is most important.

Information from FHRC

Overview

This rappel station is one of the more straightforward and commonly used rappel routes for climbers descending the Upper Ramp or the top of Redgarden via the Chockstone Chimney rap. Currently a pine tree is used which has possibly been weakened by forces of nature and repeated climbers use. According to numerous climbers, this issue must be addressed in the near future as the tree is deemed suspect as a solid rappel point.

1) Does the proposed anchor replace a tree anchor?

The tree at this location has historically been used as a rappel anchor. Despite the adequate placements for nuts and cams, most parties use the tree exclusively to reach the anchor for Song of the Dodo. The tree has possibly been compromised by repeated use by climbers as well as strong winds this last winter.

2) Does the proposed anchor replace an unsightly wad of webbing?

Yes, at present (May 2006) the tree has slings around it.

3) Is the proposed anchor in the middle of a pitch?

No, the anchor is not interfering with any pitch; however one must down climb if approaching from the Upper Ramp.

4) How long is the proposed rappel?

The lower rappel option is about 65-70 feet to the stance at the anchors for Song of the Dodo and the higher option is approximately 85-90 feet. From the anchor on Song of the Dodo, another 80 ft. rappel is required to reach a ledge which can be down climbed, or another 95 ft. rappel is required to reach the ground.