

On the Quest for a Mewing Cat

By Melissa LeVangie

The skill of tree climbing has brought me to many places and given me numerous adventures but a recent morning was a personal first!

I had a call the day before from someone asking if someone in my company could climb trees. I said yes and then they asked, “Well, do you perform cat rescues?”

I had to think about it. Of all the years I’ve climbed, I’d never rescued a cat before. So I said, “sure I can.”

He replied, “Great, because my wife is at her wits’ end! The cat has been meowing at the top of the tree for six days now and won’t come down. Can you do it today?” I was near Boston at a meeting, so I said that, unfortunately, I couldn’t, but that I could be there early the next morning. He said great, he’d see me then.

So that morning at 7:30 I arrived at this adorable little house in a neighboring town close by a local lake called Lake Mattawa. As I jumped out of my truck I immediately heard the “Meeeeeewwww.” Gosh, it was a sad and pathetic sound.

The cat had been up there for SIX days! Their local fire department had tried to rescue it but their ladder truck wouldn’t reach and it scared the frightened cat higher up into the tree.

So up into the tree I went, armed with a green mesh rope bag for the kitty and my secret weapon of a big bag of fish shaped kitty treats. Cat was frozen stationary in place out on a branch scared silly and “meeewwwinng” away at 110 feet in this big old pine tree.

At the first location I stopped, she smelled the kitty treats as I tried coaxing



her down by shaking the bag and talking softly to her. She started to move down toward me and lost her balance and slipped. She fell about a foot and the homeowner did the big “Aaaahhh!” But cat clawed her way back up to safety and then proceeded to climb outward toward the tip of the branch she was on.

I was nervous to climb any higher than I was for I did not want to scare her to do the same. As it was, I was so far up in the tree that I was tied into the 6-inch diameter trunk and for white pine, from a tree climber’s perspective, it may make you a bit hesitant to continue any higher.


I tried prodding her with a stick to move her toward the trunk which worked. When she came into the center of the tree I

climbed two feet higher and let her nibble a couple of treats I held up to her. Once cat got a taste of food, remember six days, she was psyched to see me all of a sudden. As cat started wildly seeking the source of the crinkly treat bag, I grabbed her to try and put her in my mesh rope bag. However, both my hands weren’t completely available, because of the secret weapon, and she frantically backed away from me clawing to freedom and loneliness. Drat!

At that point, cat returned to her familiar outer limb and started “meeewwwwing” with desperation. I decided to climb a bit higher and thought – no hold’s barred, the cat is coming down.

I re-prodded kitty with the stick to entice her to come back to the center of the tree. This time I skewered treats onto the prodding stick and also dumped most of the fish-like vittles into the bottom of the rope bag; the next time I would be ready. It worked like a charm. She came back into the center of the pine, eating the leading treats and frantically searching for more. I placed the green bag directly in front of her and she climbed into the rope bag to gobble the treats at the bottom! Wooo-whoooo I got her! I hurriedly close shut the rope tie at the top of the bag that would ensure her bag-ride down would be a secure one.

As I climbed down the homeowner was gleefully exclaiming from the ground and cat was quiet and content, gnawing away at the morsels at the bottom of the rope bag. When I got out of the tree the homeowner hugged me and told me I was her hero. Smiling and beaming from ear to ear I thought to myself, “I love my profession.”

Melissa LeVangie is a certified arborist, owner of Trees New England in Petersham, Massachusetts, a lover of trees and, now, “The cat rescuer.” 

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