Stay Away Yogi! Camping in Bear Country

Protecting your food and keeping safe

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What I want to cover

- Why Safety is a concern
- Basic food safety rules
- The safe (or really safer) camp site
- Techniques for keeping food safe
  - Bear Bagging
    - Advantages
    - Disadvantages
  - Bear canisters
    - Advantages
    - Disadvantages

Reasons why this subject should be on your radar

- Number one job of a Scouter is to provide a safe program
  - I don’t mean wrap kids up in bubble wrap
  - Scouting has to be fun. Being in the woods is Scouting great laboratory and the places where most memories will be created. We need to get kids outdoors.
  - Unofficial motto of Philmont- “Don’t be stupid”. Ignoring safe food handling practices is stupid.
    - Best case if something goes wrong is kids go hungry
    - Worst case if something goes wrong, someone gets hurt or sick

Also…….

- A fed animal is a dead animal

Basic food safety

- Food safety begins with selection
  - Backpacking trips are different than car camping
  - Winter camping trips can be different from summer trips
    - But maybe not. Assumptions that you can use Mother nature to give you free refrigeration might be a bad assumption
- General rules
  - Keep food hot or cold - Bacteria grows more slowly below 40°F and above 140°F.
  - Cook foods to the right internal temperature
  - Use coolers with ice for foods require refrigeration. Use water proof containers to avoid contact with water in cooler.
  - Make sure you are following the right cleaning protocol (including not making your campsite smell able by performing clean up too near your site.)

Some precautions to remember

- Never store food in your tent
- Never store food in a backpack that is left unattended or unguarded
  - Small animals have been known to eat their way into a backpack and then eat their way out.
- Never leave a site with trash- Leave no trace is for the protection of the environment, animals and maybe the next people using that site.
- Never assume weather conditions will keep animals away from your food.
- Try to avoid food preparation when bears are on the prowl. Especially late evenings.

The safe campsite selection

- Basic fundamentals
  - Safety above-Widow makers
  - Drainage or evidence that water has flown through the campsite.
  - Distances from trails and bodies of stream (often set by park regulation)

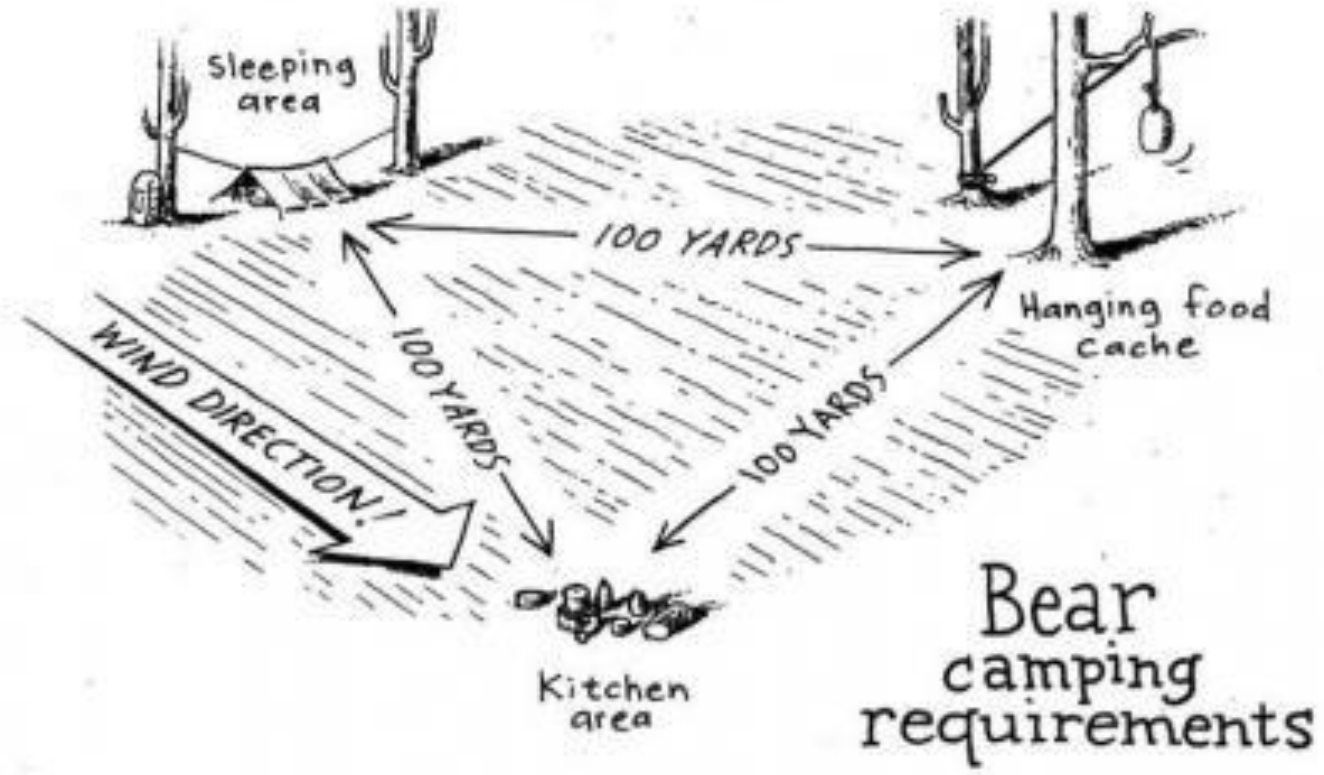
But consider also

- Paths that animal could take-
  - Signs of animals
  - Feces
  - Camping in well used spots (you are only as good as the people before you?)

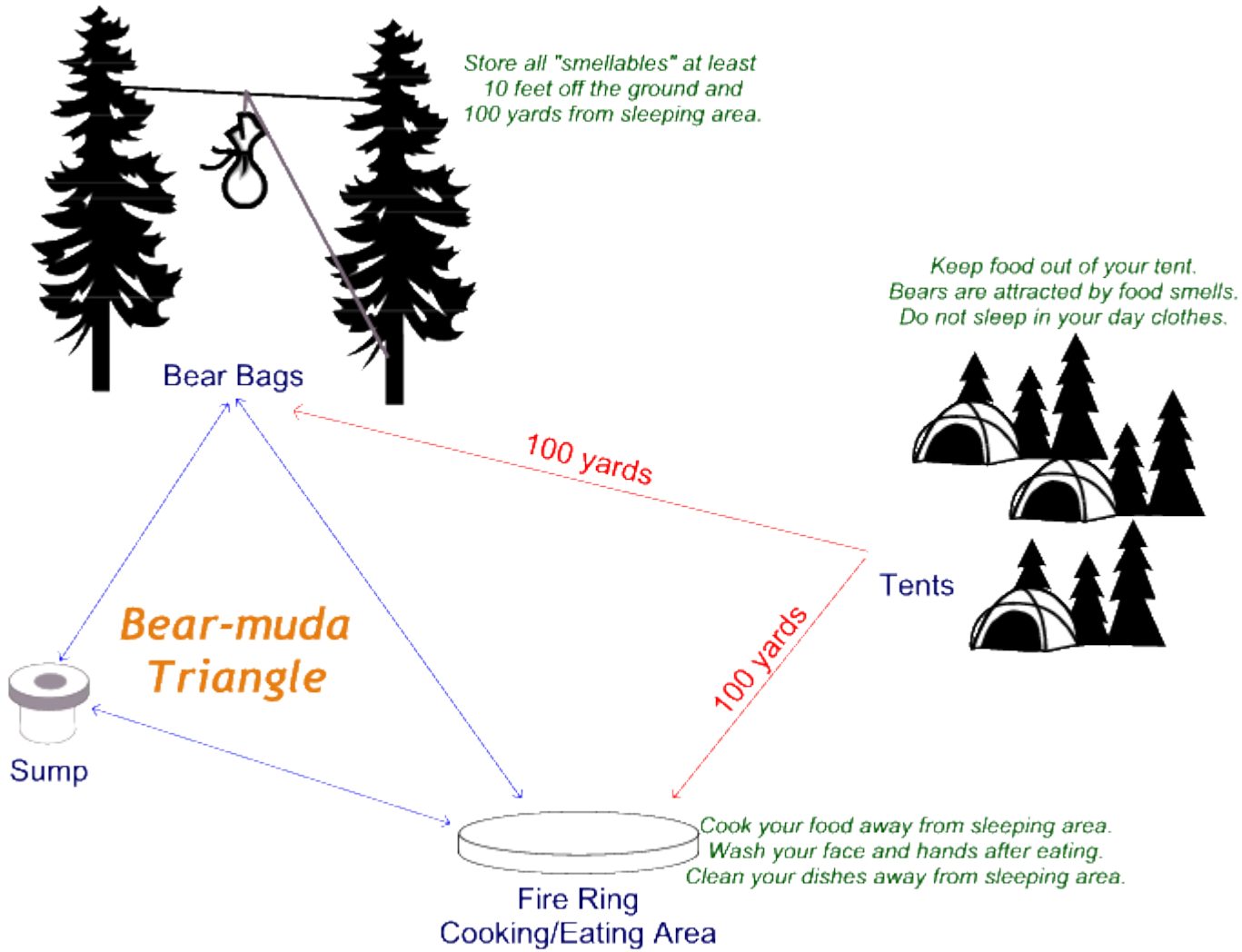
Smell-ables

- Trash
- Food (of course)
- Screens and Creams -if the product says that it is scent-free, it can still have a strong enough smell to attract a bear. These items include:
- Sunscreen
- Insect repellant
- Foot creams and powders
- Moisturizers
- Medical creams
- Soaps
- Hand sanitizer.
- When applying creams, try to use them in the morning and avoid using creams in the afternoon and evening. By wearing the cream or repellant during the day, it will sweat out of the skin by the evening, and be less potent. Consider washing the face, arms, and legs with water as well to get the creams off the skin.
- Clothing
    - Dedicated sleepwear

Safe camp site

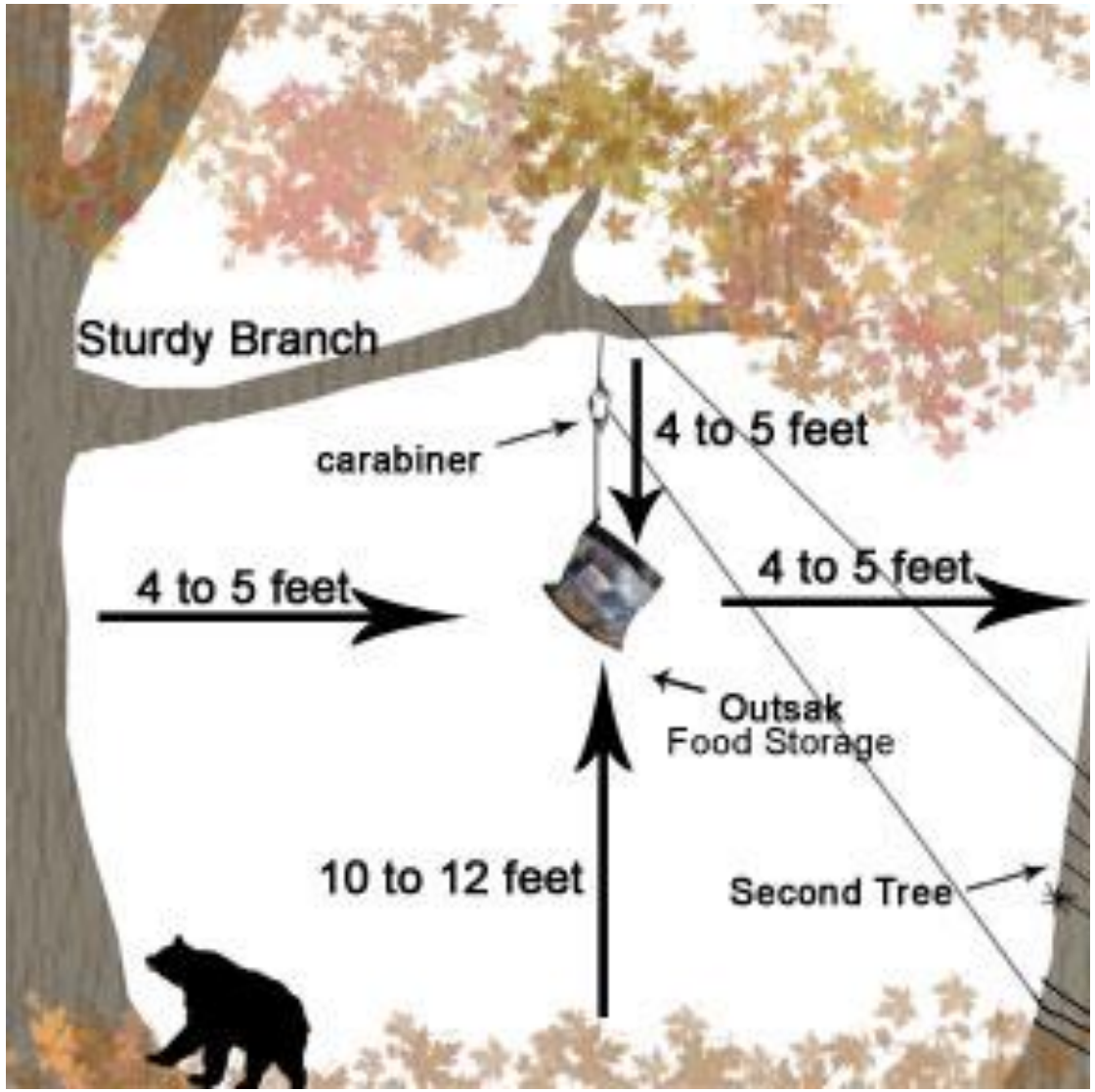


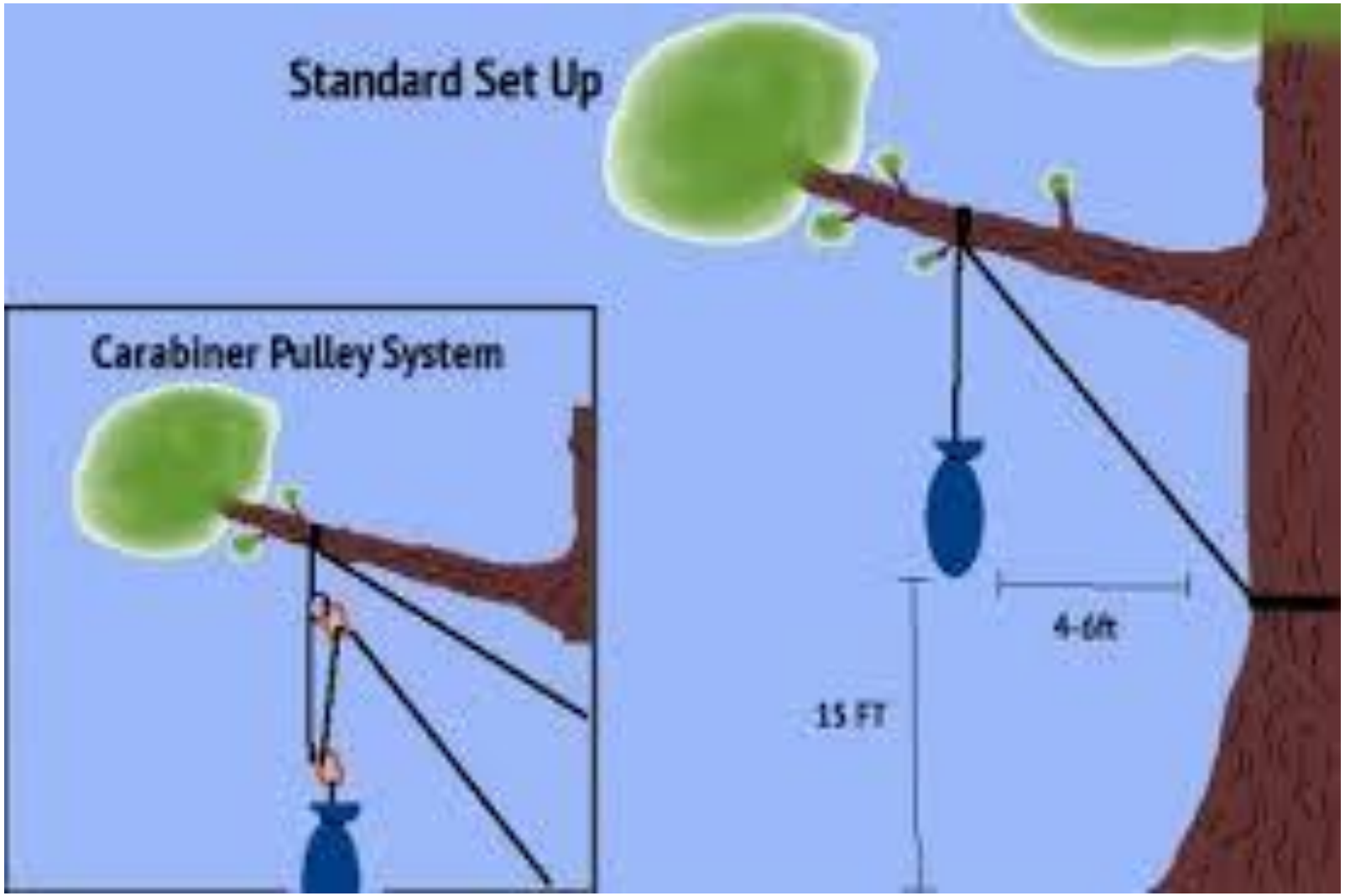
Philmont Procedures- Bear-muda Triangle



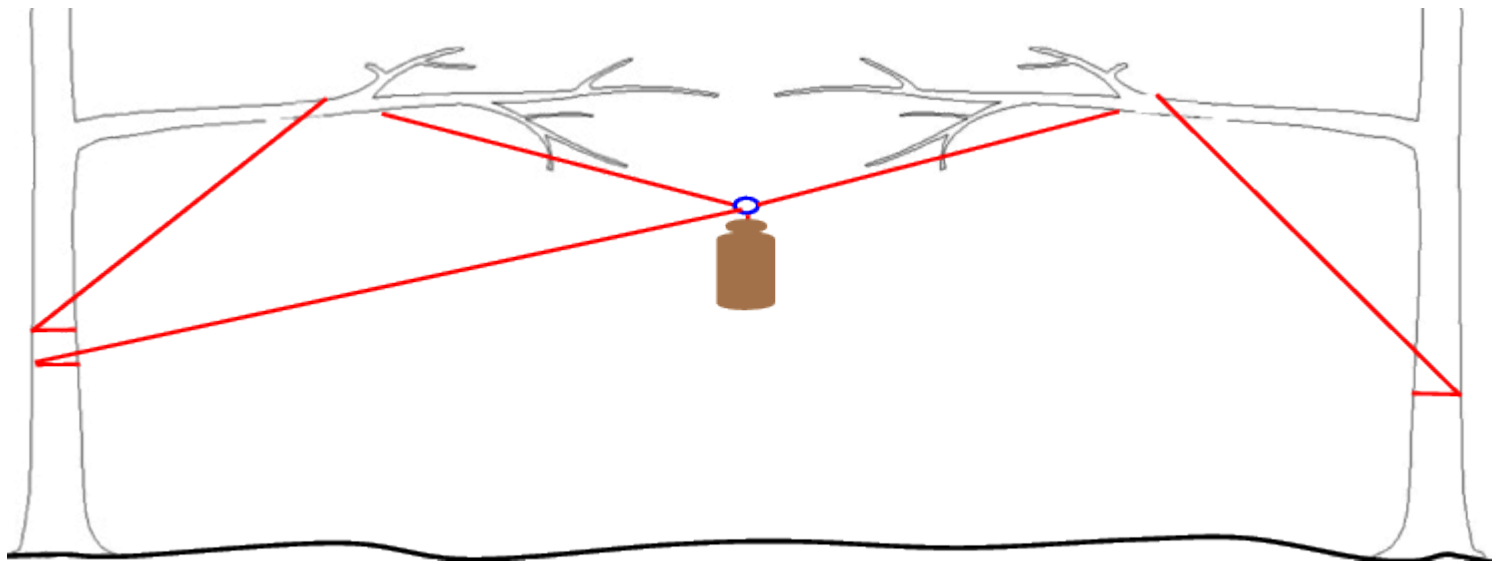
Bear bags

- General discussion
  - Advantages
  - Disadvantages
- Guidelines for hanging (height, limb size)
- Counter balance
- Tethered line
  - Steel leader
- Pacific coast trail method
- Bear poles
- Courtesy rules


Sturdy Branch
carabiner
4 to 5 feet
4 to 5 feet
4 to 5 feet
Outsak
Food Storage
10 to 12 feet
Second Tree

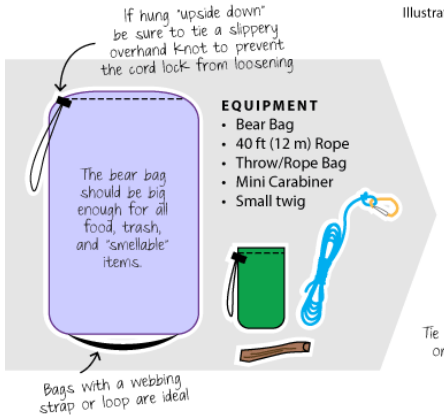

Standard Set Up
Carabiner Pulley System
4-6ft
15 FT

Copyright Ron Hildebrand



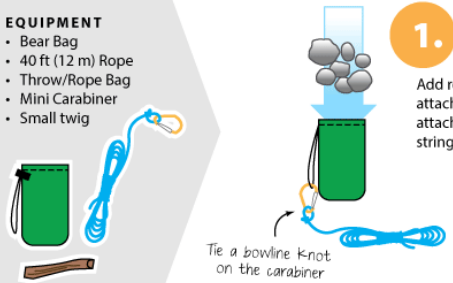
HANGING A BEAR BAG—THE "PCT" METHOD

Illustration ©2013 by Derek Hansen, TheUltimateHang.com

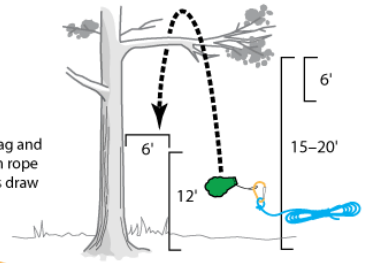


EQUIPMENT

- Bear Bag
- 40 ft (12 m) Rope
- Throw/Rope Bag
- Mini Carabiner
- Small twig



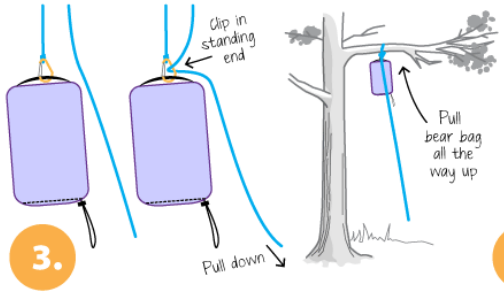
1. Add rocks to throw bag and attach carabiner (with rope attached) to the bag's draw string to secure.



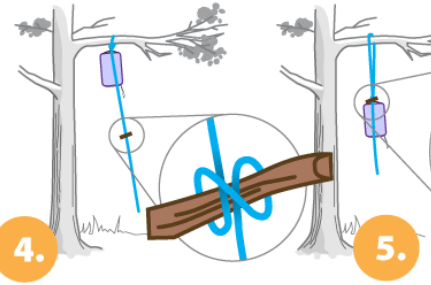
2. Toss the throw bag over a sturdy branch that is 15–20 ft (4.5–6 m) above the ground.

NOTE: When properly hung, the bear bag should hang at least 12 ft (4 m) above the ground and 6 ft (~2 m) down from the branch and away from the tree trunk.

(See http://lnt.org/blog/hanging-bear-bag)

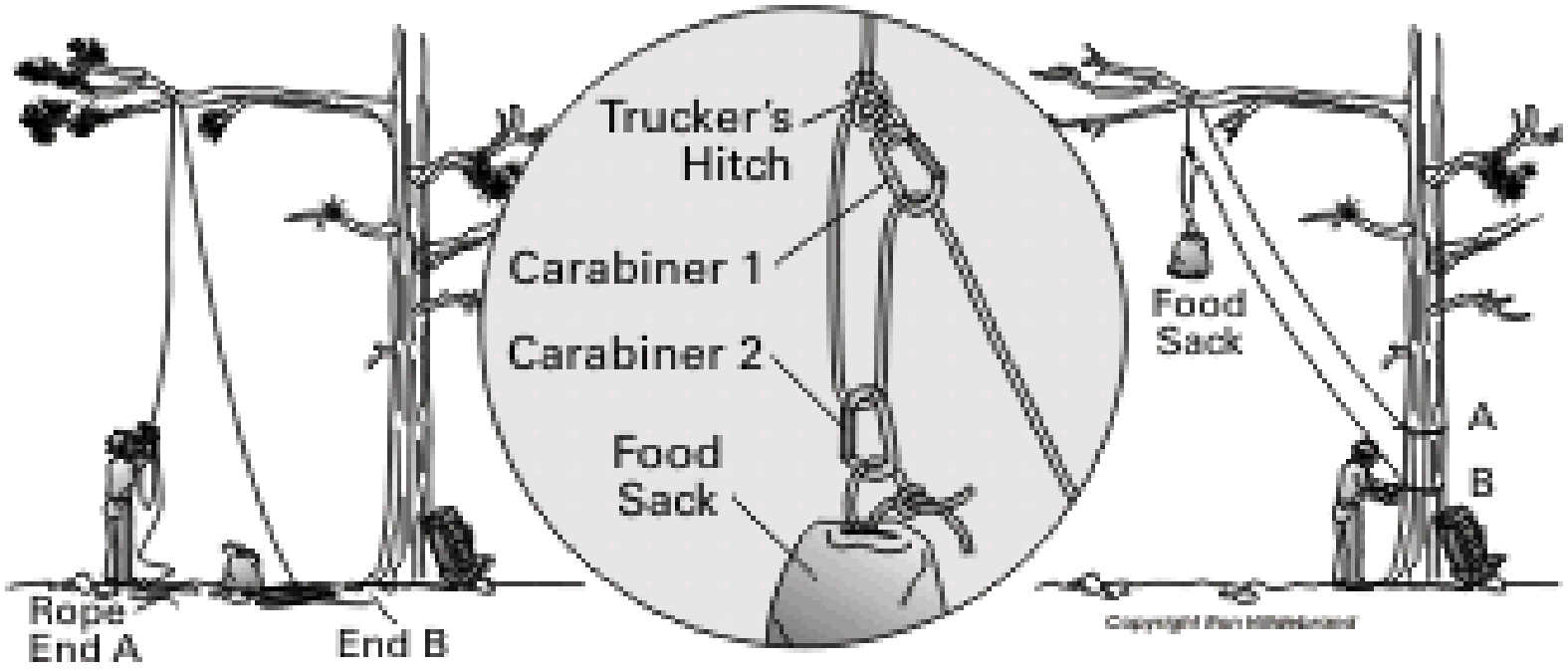


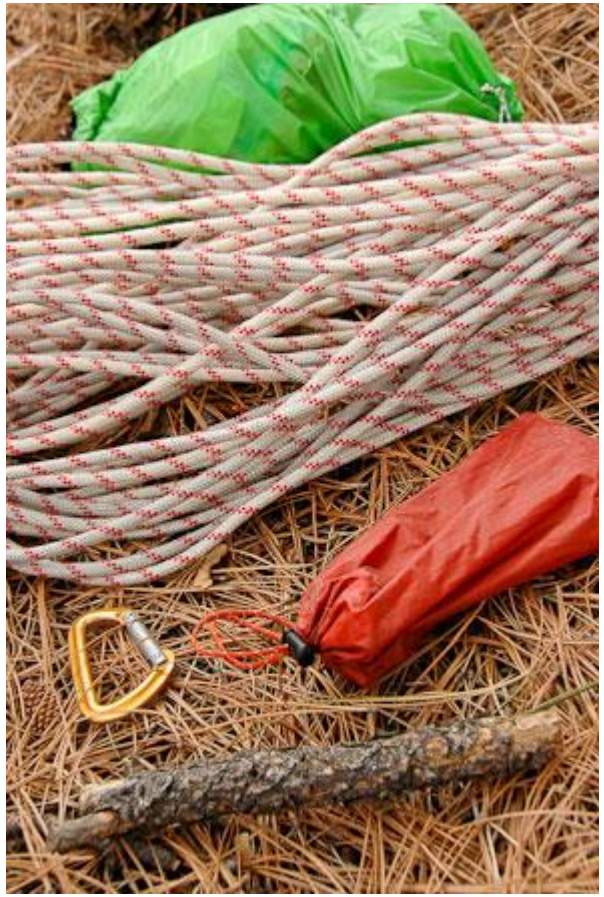
3. Unclip throw bag from carabiner. Clip carabiner to bear bag. Feed loose end of the rope through carabiner and pull loose end to raise the bear bag to the top of the tree branch.



4. Reach as high as you can and tie a clove hitch around the twig on the loose end of the rope, creating a toggle.

5. Release the loose end of the rope. The bear bag will stop at the toggle.


Trucker's Hitch
Carabiner 1
Carabiner 2
Food Sack
Rope End A
End B
Food Sack
A
B



Discussion of bear bagging

- Advantages
  - Lighter weight options- need rope and bear bags
  - Store more items
  - A lot of different techniques
- Disadvantages
  - Need trees and the right kind of trees
  - Might damage the trees
  - More difficult to hit right branches
  - Bears are getting smarter.

Final notes on Bear bagging

- Plan your schedule so you have hung your bag prior to the time that bears become active.
- Bear poles, Bear cables and other permanent, shared resources.
  - If governing agency wants you to use bear poles or bear cables you should.
    - May be part of their LNT or for safety
  - Respect other peoples bear bags
  - Be Careful not to cross lines if using bear cables

Bear canisters

- Advantages
  - Don’t need trees
  - Are simple to use (no throwing or knots)
  - Are proven to be effective (actually the required method in some high bear areas)
- Disadvantages
  - Heavy- could add up to three pounds to your pack load
  - Are of limited size
  - Can be cumbersome to pack (inside or outside?)
  - Some require a “tool” to open.
  - You may have to find the canister in the morning

Bear Vault

Counter Assault Bear Keg

Bearicade

Smell proof bags

Backpacker’s cache

Final technique

- Put food in water proof bags
- Put in fast moving stream or tether bags
- Let cold water suppress the smell so animals can’t get your bag.
- Advantages
  - If water is cold enough, it helps keep food fresh
  - Don’t need to carry anything except a waterproof bag
- Advantages
  - Need a stream
  - Distinct possibility that the force of the water could take your food down stream
  - Banking on an animal not finding it.
  - Amount of food that you can protect is probably limited

If you meet a bear

If You Encounter a Bear…

- Remain calm and avoid sudden movements.
- Give the bear plenty of room, allowing it to continue its activities undisturbed. If it changes its behavior, you're too close so back away.
- If you see a bear but the bear doesn't see you, detour quickly and quietly.
- If a bear spots you, try to get its attention while it is still farther away. You want it to know you're human so talk in a normal voice and waive your arms.
- Remember that a standing bear is not always a sign of aggression. Many times, bears will stand to get a better view.
- Throw something onto the ground (like your camera) if the bear pursues you, as it may be distracted by this and allow you to escape.
- Never feed or throw food to a bear.

If a Bear Charges…

- Remember that many bears charge as a bluff. They may run, then veer off or stop abruptly. Stand your ground until the bear stops, then slowly back away.
- Never run from a bear! They will chase you and bears can run faster than 30 mph.
- Don't run towards or climb a tree. Black bears and some grizzlies can climb trees, and many bear will be provoked to chase you if they see you climbing.
- If you have pepper spray, be sure that you have trained with it before using it during an attack.

http://usparks.about.com/od/backcountry/a/Bear-Safety.htm

Final slide

- Good luck and be safe