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## Synthetic Communications: An International Journal for Rapid Communication of Synthetic Organic Chemistry

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information: http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/lsyc20

# An Improved Synthesis of Bicyclo[3.3.3] undecane

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To cite this article: Gregory S. Wayne & Gary J. Snyder (1995) An Improved Synthesis of Bicyclo[3.3.3]undecane, Synthetic Communications: An International Journal for Rapid Communication of Synthetic Organic Chemistry, 25:20, 3267-3270, DOI: 10.1080/00397919508015479

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00397919508015479

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#### AN IMPROVED SYNTHESIS OF

#### BICYCLO[3.3.3]UNDECANE

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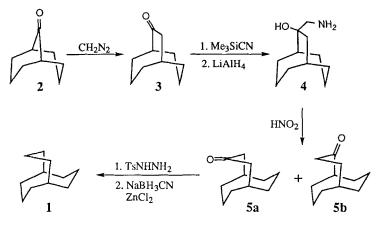
Abstract: A shorter and significantly higher-yield procedure for the preparation of bicyclo[3.3.3]undecane (manxane) is reported.

In the course of our measurements of the strain energies of bridgehead imines by photoacoustic calorimetry<sup>1a</sup>, we required 1-azidobicyclo[3.3.3]-undecane, which we made from the title hydrocarbon, bicyclo[3.3.3]undecane (manxane, 1).<sup>1b</sup> In the process of preparing 1, we developed a procedure that simplifies the literature synthesis<sup>2</sup> and increases the overall yield from 4% to 20 - 25%.

As shown in the scheme, the synthesis involves two ring expansions of the bicyclo[3.3.1] skeleton of the starting material, ketone 2. In contrast to the first ring expansion  $(2 \rightarrow 3)$ , the second  $(3 \rightarrow 5a + 5b)$  cannot be accomplished with diazomethane.<sup>2</sup> While this conversion can be carried out by a diazonium ion route via 4 (Demjanov-Tiffeneau ring expansion), the literature conversion of 3 to 4 required four steps with an overall yield of only 19%.

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#### Scheme

We found that this conversion can be carried out much more efficiently and in just two steps. Trimethylsilyl cyanide reacts virtually quantitatively with **3** to give the cyanohydrin TMS-ether, which can be reduced with lithium aluminum hydride to give **4** in 60% yield.<sup>3</sup>

Our second improvement was made in the last step, the reduction of ketones **5a** and **5b**. The literature procedure used a modified Wolff-Kishner reduction, which went in only 40% yield.<sup>2</sup> We used a one-pot procedure that involved forming the tosylhydrazones of **5a** and **5b** and reducing these with sodium cyanoborohydride-zinc chloride.<sup>4</sup> This procedure gave moderately pure material in yields of 65-87%. Not only were higher yields obtained, but the procedure is much simpler to carry out.

In conclusion, our route reduces the number of steps in the synthesis of **1** and increases the overall yield five- to six-fold. Gram quantities of manxane (**1**) can now be made easily in a few days.

#### Experimental

9-cyano-9-(trimethylsiloxy)bicyclo[3.3.2]decane. To ketone 3<sup>2c</sup> (699 mg; 4.60

mmol), contained in a dry reaction flask, under argon atmosphere, was added trimethylsilyl cyanide (0.67 mL; 5.06 mmol) containing a catalytic amount of anhydrous zinc chloride (5 mg) via syringe, with stirring.<sup>3</sup> The reaction mixture was heated to 100 °C for 2 hours. The reaction turned from yellow to dark brown in color. The excess trimethylsilyl cyanide was removed under high vacuum (0.3 mm) to yield a brown liquid (1.210 g). Purification was achieved by column chromatography on silica (CCl<sub>4</sub>;  $R_f = 0.3$ ). The product was a colorless oil (1.10 g; 95%). <sup>1</sup>H NMR (CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  0.22 (9H, s), 1.50-1.86 (10H, complex), 2.03 (2H, complex), 2.09 (1H, dd, J = 16, 4 Hz), 2.20 (1H, quintet), 2.35 (1H, quintet), 2.59 (1H, ddd, J = 16, 4, 1 Hz). IR (neat) 2226 cm<sup>-1</sup> (weak). MS *m/z* 251 (m<sup>+</sup>). Anal. Calc'd for C<sub>14</sub>H<sub>25</sub>NOSi: C, 66.87; H, 10.02; N, 5.57. Found: C, 66.86; H, 10.10; N, 5.67.

**9-(Aminomethyl)bicyclo[3.3.2]decan-9-ol hydrochloride (4-HCl).** A dry flask equipped with a stirrer, reflux condenser, and addition funnel, was charged with a suspension of lithium aluminum hydride (430 mg; 11.3 mmol) in diethyl ether (15 mL). To this suspension was added a solution of the cyanohydrin TMS-ether (2.6 g; 10.0 mmol) in diethyl ether (5 mL), drop-wise, at a rate which maintained a gentle reflux.<sup>3</sup> Stirring was continued for one hour. The excess lithium aluminum hydride was then quenched with water and 15% sodium hydroxide. The precipitate was removed by filtration, and the solution was dried over MgSO4. Hydrogen chloride gas was then bubbled through the solution, producing the HCl salt of **4** as a white solid, which was separated by filtration (1.414 g; 63%). <sup>1</sup>H NMR (D<sub>2</sub>O)  $\delta$  1.50 - 1.90 (12H, complex), 1.94 - 2.10 (3H, complex), 2.27 (1H, complex), 3.03 (1H, dd, J = 13, 1 Hz), 3.23 (1H, dd, J = 13, 1 Hz) (lit:<sup>2c</sup>  $\delta$  3.04, 3.22, J=13 Hz).

**Bicyclo[3.3.3]undecane (1).** To a solution of **5a** and **5b**<sup>2c</sup> (1.0 g; 6.02 mmol) and p-toluenesulfonyl hydrazine (1.19 g; 3.39 mmol) in methanol (15 mL), was

slowly added a solution of sodium cyanoborohydride (402 mg; 6.39 mmol) and zinc chloride (410 mg; 3.01 mmol) in methanol (12 mL).<sup>4</sup> After being stirred for 10 minutes, the mixture was refluxed for two hours. The reaction mixture was then treated with 0.1 M sodium hydroxide solution and extracted with petroleum ether. This solution was then washed with brine and dried over MgSO<sub>4</sub>. Removal of the solvent provided **1** as a white solid (637 mg; 76%). <sup>1</sup>H NMR (CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  1.43 - 1.57 (18H, complex), 2.36 (2H, complex) (lit:<sup>2a</sup>  $\delta$  1.5, 2.37). <sup>13</sup>C NMR (CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  20.6, 29.5, 31.2. MS *m/z* 152 (m<sup>+</sup>).

Acknowledgment. We thank the donors of the Petroleum Research Fund, administered by the American Chemical Society, for support of this work.

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(Received in the USA 16 March 1995)