

Boy Scouts save hemlocks at Foxfire museum

Special to The Tribune

Eagle Scout candidate John Touchstone of Canton recently organized an effort to treat about 500 hemlocks that had been infected with the hemlock woolly adelgid at the Foxfire Museum & Heritage Center.

Touchstone and leaders and members of Troop 62 received support from Save Georgia's Hemlocks. For several months this fall, he worked to plan and receive approval for a leadership service project benefitting the Foxfire Foundation to treat hemlocks.

The invasive adelgid has no natural predators here and is attacking

hemlocks from Georgia to Maine. Scientists are working to develop biological controls to hopefully establish a natural predator-prey balance, but chemical controls currently are the most reliable option.

"I had heard of Foxfire from some books we have at my house," Touchstone said. He learned about an opportunity to help with hemlocks from Donna Shearer, with Save Georgia's Hemlocks. After a visit, he decided a project to save the hemlocks would help maintain the proper environmental setting around the historic village.

Scouts received special training for the project. On Nov. 12, Touchstone

led 18 scouts and seven adult leaders and volunteers from Troop 62 to treat more than 500 hemlocks on the Foxfire property. Cost of the chemicals was covered by Save Georgia's Hemlocks through a grant from the Lake Rabun Fund for hemlock-related education and charitable treatment projects in Rabun County.

"Hemlocks are an important part of the ecosystem in the mountains," said Barry Stiles, curator of the Foxfire Museum. "It's great that the Boy Scouts and Save Georgia's Hemlocks were able to work together to help preserve our trees at the museum before they were lost forever."



Submitted Photo

Eagle Scout candidate John Touchstone of Canton, front row far right, is pictured with volunteers from Troop 62 after he organized the treatment of about 500 hemlocks at the Foxfire Museum & Heritage Center.