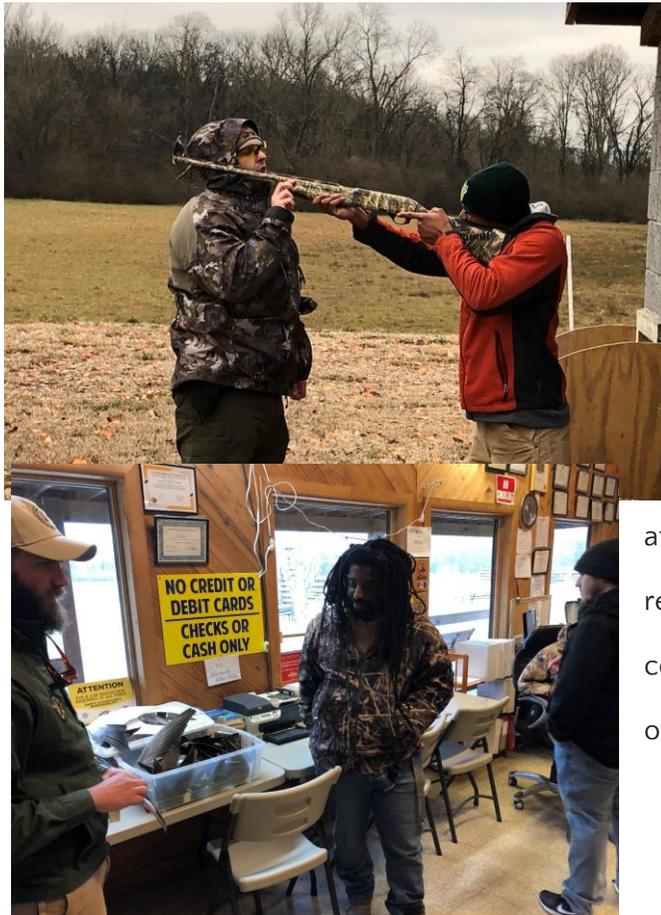


## Good Hill Hunting

“See about a Duck”  
by Jerome Saintjones

When it comes to all things *outdoors*, count William E. Stone “in.” Since his childhood days on a farm, the 61-year-old Central Florida native has been involved in some aspect of agriculture and wildlife management. For more than a quarter century, he has played an integral role in producing and presenting to the world a new generation of minority foresters and environmental scientists, culled from the classrooms of the Alabama A&M University’s College of Agricultural, Life and Natural Sciences.



Truth be told, Stone has carried out his noble mission in myriad ways, including serving as a major professor to numerous master’s students and a handful of doctoral candidates. He has dutifully kept office hours, founded of the AAMU student chapters of the Society of American Foresters and The Wildlife Society, worked afterhours to ensure the construction of ag-related floats for Homecoming, maintained contact with grads and quietly performed the other duties as assigned.



Last year, Stone was approached by the Delta Waterfowl, an entity wholly dedicated to duck management and research. Based in Bismarck, North Dakota, the organization had launched a program designed to encourage duck hunting. Delta Waterfowl sponsored a hunt in January 2022. Stone, fellow professors and his AAMU student wildlife

chapter were granted access to a private farm in Jackson County, Ala., to hunt ducks. The outing netted about seven ring-necked ducks taken from the skyline. The hunting squad is planning to participate in the opportunity again in January 2023.

Not long after the event, Stone was contacted by the Georgia Wildlife Federation (GWF), located in Covington, Ga. GWF had much success with its Academic Afield program and was now expanding it to also encourage wildlife research and hunting among students at historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs). The program recognized the need for such fundamentals as a Hunting 101 class, as well as such prerequisites as practice shooting, rifle cleaning, hunting basics, to name a few.



As for AAMU's role, Stone said the Academics Afield program offered on The Hill will strive for a club of 12-15 students who possess some outdoor inclination. A few arranged hunting-focused and shooting-focused events are already on the distant radar for spring 2023. One such outing, if all goes well in the planning, is a deer or squirrel hunt next January. By mid-January, the hunting team even could find themselves participating in an Oak Mountain State Park activity involving the entire after-hunt process—from skinning deer to actually cooking venison, added Stone.



Later in the spring semester, perhaps in April 2023, the Bulldog hunting club will engage in a turkey hunt sponsored by the South Carolina-based National Wild Turkey Federation. Somewhere between January and April, Stone hopes to work in a fishing trip.

On an organization and association level, Stone noted a push nationally to encourage minorities to take up hunting. Programs like Academics Afield aim for the newbies, those with little to absolutely no hunting experience or mentors.

When his family had lived on a farm in Utah, a negative childhood incident involving an injured dove almost turned Stone against hunting. By the time he was in high school, his library research demonstrated that many human health problems could be attributed to a diet high in red meat. His negative sentiment began to shift during his undergraduate days at the University of Florida, when he was part of a curriculum that provided sound, research-based rationale for hunting. Often, significant agricultural damage can result from a certain animal population left unchecked or “browse lines” unmonitored.



Moreover, through their various taxes and required licenses, hunters contribute a lion's share of the funds used for wildlife management, said Stone.

Finally, for those who eventually become hunting enthusiasts, the cost for basics (e.g., license, jacket, hand warmers, rifle, ammo, boots, gloves, scope, orange vest/hat, etc.) is not prohibitive. New programs are also available to lure women into the joy and adventure of hunting.

While some use hunting to sharpen their outdoorsman skills, Stone admitted that hunters in this region tend to hunt as a meat source. Perhaps, as Stone's young proteges become fully acclimated to the world of hunting, one will emerge whose only goal is to "see about a duck."

