



GEORGIA WILDLIFE  
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# Press Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

May 1, 2024

**CONTACT:**

Coral Minchey  
cminchey@gwf.org  
770-787-7887

## Georgia Wildlife Federation's Academics Afield Program Receives SITKA Ecosystem Grant

**Covington, GA** – The Academics Afield Program, operated by Georgia Wildlife Federation, was recently awarded \$10,000 from the SITKA Ecosystem Grant for encouraging the hunting experience. The Academics Afield program aims to address the need for increased access and education in hunting and the shooting sports. As part of the R3 Initiative to recruit, retain, and reactivate individuals in hunting and shooting sports, the program supports conservation efforts. The college learn-to-hunt program is run by student interns that focus on recruiting students that would be considered non-traditional hunters. Selected students participate in workshops throughout the school year that include educational sessions on the history of hunting and conservation, game species biology, and conservation funding. There are also hands-on portions of the workshops where students are taught firearm safety and shooting skills. The final activity of a workshop is a mentored hunt where students are partnered with peers or wildlife professionals that have hunting experience.



In April, Academics Afield students from Georgia Southern University and Fort Valley State University partnered with mentors from NWF, GADNR, NWTF, and GFC for a turkey hunt near Swainsboro, GA. The funding received from SITKA will enable programs like this to continue at participating schools throughout Georgia for the 2024-2025 schoolyear.

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“The impact of this program is two-fold: teaching new hunters how to access land and safely hunt while allowing experienced hunters to pass along their beloved pastime” said Coral Minchey with the Georgia Wildlife Federation. “Watching students experience the outdoors and enjoy the beauty of nature is irreplaceable.”

With a recent decline in active hunters, there has been a decrease in funds available for conservation. Learn-to-hunt programs, like Academics Afield, enable non-hunters to get the training and support necessary to become a hunter. Creating new hunters increases the number of licenses and ammunition purchased contributing to the funds available to the state for wildlife management. College students are excellent candidates for this programming because they desire to try new hobbies, have financial flexibility, and begin to build their life-long identity.

For more information on Academics Afield, contact Coral Minchey at [cminchey@gwf.org](mailto:cminchey@gwf.org). Academics Afield programming is supported by the GA R3 Initiative; National Shooting Sports Foundation; SITKA and the GA state chapter of the NWTF.

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**About Georgia Wildlife Federation**

Georgia Wildlife Federation was founded as a sportsman's organization in 1936 and is Georgia's oldest conservation organization. Today, members include hunters, anglers, bird watchers, hikers, educators, and all Georgians who are interested in preserving our natural resources and outdoor heritage.