



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

November 12, 2024

**CONTACT:**

[info@gwf.org](mailto:info@gwf.org)

770-787-7887

## Albany State University's New Hunters Visit Mike Commander Archery Range

**ALBANY, GEORGIA** –In October, six students from Albany State University's *Academics Afield* chapter, along with three mentors visited Mike Commander Archery Range on Chickasawhatchee Wildlife Management Area in Dougherty County to develop their skills as accurate and prepared deer hunters.

*Academics Afield*, a program of Georgia Wildlife Federation, is a college-level program designed to teach curious new hunters the knowledge and skills needed to source their own sustainable protein while also contributing to wildlife conservation.

At the archery range, students practiced safe use of crossbows and determined effective shooting distances. Range Safety Officers welcomed the students to the public range provided by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and provided classroom resources for the program. Public shooting ranges are made possible state hunting license fees and federal taxes on sport shooting equipment.



by

"Learning to hunt without a mentor can be incredibly daunting," said Bre Bashford of the Georgia Wildlife Federation. "Programs like *Academics Afield* makes the journey of someday self-identifying as a hunter a real possibility." Bashford dedicates significant time to working with *Academics Afield* students, helping them understand the connection between hunting and wildlife conservation, and addressing common barriers that often prevent new hunters from entering the field. "The biggest challenges new hunters face are a lack of knowledge and skills, uncertainty about where to hunt, and not having anyone to go with," she explained.

*Academics Afield* tackles these challenges by providing step-by-step skill development through classroom instruction and range time; familiarizing students with the process of locating and accessing public land; and fostering a supportive community of new participants and experienced mentors. Mentor Bailey Eldridge volunteers her time with *Academics Afield* because, "I believe in the power of education to ensure the future of responsible hunting and conservation. It's important to me that others understand not only the skills involved in hunting, but also the deep respect we owe to wildlife and the land. Hunting is more than just a personal pursuit—it's an opportunity to build a community, share traditions, and create lasting memories. Being able to guide new hunters and help them experience the joy of being outdoors, while also teaching them the importance of ethical hunting practices, is incredibly rewarding."

College students are ideal candidates for the national effort of engaging more people in hunting because they are at an age when recreational activity is at its peak and they are eager to explore new interests. Additionally, college students tend to have more financial flexibility compared to youth audiences and are in the process of shaping their long-term identities.

*Academics Afield* is supported by the GEORGIA R3 Initiative, including GEORGIA Wildlife Federation, GEORGIA DNR Wildlife Resources Division, the National Wild Turkey Federation, the GEORGIA Chapter of Safari Club International, and Ducks Unlimited. Key funding comes from National Shooting Sports Foundation, Bass Pro/Cabela's Outdoor Fund, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and the GEORGIA Chapter of National Wild Turkey Federation.

###

#### **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.