



**R3 PROGRAMMING AT
HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES
AND UNIVERSITIES**
An Academics Afield Toolkit Addendum

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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To retrieve “R3 For College Students: A Practitioner’s Guide & Academics Afield Toolkit” in its entirety, visit gwf.org/r3toolkit.





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The R3 Programming at Historically Black Colleges and Universities: An Academics Afield Toolkit Addendum documents the research conclusions and lessons learned during implementation from the MSCGP project Extending Academics Afield to Advance Equity in College R3 Programming (#F22AP00937), with a particular focus on engaging students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). The Addendum builds upon the R3 for College Students: A Practitioner's Guide and Academics Afield Toolkit (#F21AP00678) published in 2023 describing why college students are an ideal R3 audience and how to implement new college-focused R3 programs.

Our first goal of this project was to recruit and retain diverse young adults into hunting and shooting by expanding the proven Academics Afield model to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in the Southeastern United States. We expanded the program to five institutions across three states by encouraging open dialogue and collaboration to build strong and trusting foundations for program support. Our second goal was to implement a comprehensive social science research assessment to improve understanding of minority students' hunting-related perceptions and behaviors. This study explored the relationship between Black students at HBCUs and hunting by using a mixed-methods approach (quantitative and qualitative) to characterize their experiences across multiple levels of influence ranging from interpersonal factors to broader environmental contexts. Additionally, in the quantitative portion, we used existing data from White college students at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) in the same southeastern region of the U.S. to contrast the minority and majority experiences of hunting among college students. The Addendum outlines the research conclusions, provides recommendations for action and describes case studies of the Academics Afield programs at HBCUs.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Research Questions:

1. What are the hunting-related perceptions and behaviors among Black HBCU students and how do they compare to those of White students at PWIs?
2. What barriers do Black HBCU students encounter in relation to hunting and how do these barriers compare to those faced by White students at PWIs?
3. How did Black HBCU students feel about their experience in the Academics Afield program and what can practitioners learn from these reflections?

The first phase of the study involved administering surveys to students across HBCUs in the Southeastern U.S. A total of 622 students from five HBCUs participated in the survey, while 4,763 students from six Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) completed the same survey several years earlier. In addition to the survey, focus groups were conducted with 18 students from HBCUs to gather more in-depth perspectives. These focus groups included students who had participated in pilot Academics Afield programs. The survey captured quantitative data on hunting-related experiences, beliefs, and social influences. Key measures included past hunting experience, intent to hunt, motivations, beliefs about hunters, social support, and hunting constraints, alongside demographic information. Insights from the focus groups provided qualitative context, deepening our understanding of the data and exploring participants' reflections on their personal experiences with hunting and participation in the Academics Afield program.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Key Findings:

1. Past hunting participation, intention to hunt, and social support are much different between Black HBCU students and their White PWI counterparts in the Southeastern U.S. There was a 3-fold difference in the proportion of Black HBCU students in this study who had been hunting before (11%), compared to White students at PWIs (35%). Mirroring this difference, the immediate social support (close family who hunt), the strongest predictor of participation in hunting, was three times lower for Black HBCU students (22%) vs. White PWI students (68%). In terms of future intention to hunt, only 25% of Black HBCU students said they would probably or definitely hunt, compared to 42% of White PWI students. Despite this, there was a greater percentage of potential hunters - those who have not hunted but are open to trying - among Black HBCU students (38%) as compared to White students at PWIs (21%).

2. Lower hunting approval among Black HBCU students reflects disengagement or unfamiliarity rather than opposition. About one third (31%) of Black HBCU students approve of legal, regulated hunting, compared to two thirds (67%) of White PWI students. Notably, while 18% of White PWI students neither approved nor disapproved of hunting, a much larger proportion (42%) of Black HBCU students expressed indifference. This high level of indifference among Black HBCU students suggests that their lower approval rates may not reflect strong opposition (see greater percentage of potential hunters above) but rather a lack of familiarity with or disengagement from hunting as a culturally or personally relevant activity. This raises the important question: what can be done to foster greater awareness and approval?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Key Findings:

3. Both groups of students (HBCU and PWI) would hunt for similar reasons. In both groups, hunting to maintain ecological balance, prevent crop damage, and to acquire healthy meat were the strongest motivations for both groups to hunt. However, the mean ratings for all motivations were significantly lower for Black HBCU students relative to their White PWI counterparts. HBCU focus groups reinforced hunting's connection to food as the strongest motivation.

4. Barriers to hunting for HBCU students are prominent and should be addressed. As a first step to assessing barriers, we explored the extent to which HBCU students feel a sense of belonging within the hunting community. More than half (53%) of Black students said they did not feel welcome in the hunting community - an important fact to consider when engaging HBCU partners and students in the process of creating an R3 program. Almost all barriers measured were significantly greater for Black HBCU students when compared to White PWI students, with the lack of diversity in hunting, previous negative experiences outdoors, and logistic constraints among the most prominent. Focus groups also revealed that cultural norms around firearms and hunting represented a challenge. For students who had participated in an HBCU Academics Afield event, several remarked that having instructors of color dramatically increased their level of comfort and sense of self-efficacy.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recommendations for Action:

1. Increase representation and inclusion to create a more welcoming environment for hunting. Aspiring hunters should feel like they belong in the hunting community. Representation matters in creating that sense of belonging. Diverse mentors and culturally competent and responsive staff can reduce feelings of isolation and increase comfort among participants.

Action: Recruit diverse mentors and provide cultural competency training for facilitators. Ensure marketing materials and communications reflect diverse participants.

2. Acknowledge unique barriers faced by young Black hunters (or aspiring hunters). Recognizing cultural, structural, and logistical barriers to hunting participation is key to creating equitable opportunities. Many Black students face unique challenges related to things such as cultural norms, concerns around firearms, and perceived safety. These challenges need to be addressed openly to help students feel safe and supported.

Action: Use models like Clark's Stages of Psychological Safety and Tuckman's Stages of Group Development to design safe learning environments with supportive mentorship. Allowing time for conversation and reflection about barriers to hunting (real or perceived), may be particularly important for this group of aspiring hunters.

3. Design outreach efforts to align with audience needs and preferences. Tailored outreach fosters trust and meaningful engagement. Collaborating with HBCU faculty and staff who understand students' preferences and needs can enhance program effectiveness.

Action: Build partnerships by initiating trust, identifying needs, delivering results, and empowering partners for future success. Be wary of one-size-fits all solutions or making assumptions about an audience, and instead ask questions and work with partners to meet new hunters where they are.

A photograph of three hunters in a grassy field. One hunter in the foreground is kneeling, wearing a green cap and sunglasses. Two other hunters stand behind him, both holding rifles. In the background, there are blurred figures of people and vehicles, including a white truck and a dark car. The scene is outdoors with bright, natural light.

CREATING A MORE INCLUSIVE FUTURE FOR HUNTING AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

A Multi – Stage Study

A MORE INCLUSIVE FUTURE

Introduction

Academics Afield is a learn-to-hunt program, founded in Georgia in 2019, that aims to introduce college students from nontraditional backgrounds to hunting and shooting. A distinguishing feature of this program is the emphasis on social support through peer mentorship as well as multiple touchpoints with instructors over the course of a semester, or longer in some cases. Our comprehensive guide and toolkit (Bashford et al., 2023) outlines the rationale and implementation of Academics Afield, providing a framework for other practitioners to more effectively engage college students in R3.

Following the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) recommendation to broaden the relevance of conservation, this study and toolkit addendum aim to share preliminary findings on the perceptions and behaviors of Historically Black College and University (HBCU) students regarding hunting in the Southeastern U.S. The findings highlight notable differences from students at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) in the same region. This addendum aims to address these important differences and provide practitioners with additional information and example case studies to thoughtfully and effectively engage young Black college students in hunting.

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Background and Rationale

All college students share a common curiosity and willingness to try new activities - a curiosity that may extend to hunting (Vayer et al., 2021). In fact, studies suggest that nearly one third of college students with no previous hunting experience may be interested in trying it out. Both PWIs and, to an even greater degree, HBCUs bring participants into the fold who are more diverse than traditional hunters, addressing the need for increased relevance in conservation-related activities like hunting (AFWA, 2019). A shared characteristic of students selected for Academics Afield, whether from a PWI or HBCU, is a lack of social support around hunting. This is where the built-in social support of Academics Afield becomes especially important in engaging students from non-hunting backgrounds.

As efforts to diversify hunting via targeted R3 efforts grow, research suggests that Black hunters (Adesawe, 2024), one of the smallest participant groups, and Black college students specifically (Dorwart et al., 2022), face unique challenges in hunting and outdoor recreation more broadly. Rather than using a “one size fits all” approach for Academics Afield program expansion to HBCUs, we first conducted multi-state surveying and focus groups in the Southeastern U.S. to explore the experiences of Black HBCU students around hunting. The findings and lessons learned from this study may inform R3 practitioners who want to more effectively meet the needs of HBCU students and broader audiences.

A MORE INCLUSIVE FUTURE

Study Approach and Key Findings

Our study had three primary goals:

1. To assess hunting perceptions and behaviors among Black HBCU students and examine how they compare to those of White students at PWIs.
2. To identify the barriers Black HBCU students encounter in relation to hunting and examine how these barriers compare to those faced by White students at PWIs.
3. To understand Black HBCU students' experiences in the Academics Afield program and determine what practitioners can learn from these reflections.

To address these goals, we used two methods. First, we used surveys to conduct a comparative study of Black HBCU students and White PWI students. Second, we used focus groups to gain a deeper understanding of HBCU students' experiences with hunting.



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Study 1: Survey at HBCUs and PWIs

Methods:

Surveys (N = 622) were collected from five collaborating HBCUs spanning four states in the Southeastern U.S. (Table 1). These surveys measured factors related to hunting including motivations, social support, beliefs about hunting and hunters, barriers, and demographic correlates of hunting participation. This HBCU survey shared many of the same survey items used in a previous multi-state study (WSFR grant #F18AP00171 and #F19AP00094) of college students at PWIs (Vayer et al., 2021). The similarity between instruments allowed for comparisons of survey results between Black HBCU students and White PWI students (N = 4,763) in the same region (Table 1).



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Study 1: Survey at HBCUs and PWIs

Methods:

Black HBCU Student Participants			White PWI Student Responses	
University/State	Surveys (Total = 622)	Focus Group (Total = 18)	University/State	Surveys (Total = 4,763)
Alabama A&M (AL)	99	3	Auburn (AL)	602
Albany State (GA)	161	6	Clemson (SC)	611
NC Central (NC)	98		NC State (NC)	663
Tuskegee (AL)	71	5	U of Georgia (GA)	787
U AR Pine Bluff (AR)	193	4	U of Florida (FL)	403
			U TN Knoxville (TN)	841
			Texas A&M U (TX)	856

Table 1: Survey participation across Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) in the Southeastern U.S. The table shows the number of survey responses from each university, totaling 622 participants from five HBCUs and 4,763 participants from seven PWIs.

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Study 1: Survey at HBCUs and PWIs

Key Findings:

Hunting Participation

Analysis of participation among Black HBCU students revealed unique patterns in both past and future likelihood of hunting. Compared to Black HBCU students (11%), more White PWI students have hunted (35%), though similar percentages have accompanied others hunting. Looking to the future, fewer Black HBCU students (25%) reported that they would probably or definitely hunt in the future compared to White PWI students (42%). Notably, however, a greater proportion of Black HBCU students (38%) fall into the category of potential hunters—those who do not currently hunt but are open to trying—compared to White PWI students (21%).

Motivations to Hunt

When students were asked which reasons they would hunt, if they were to hunt, food-related reasons (obtaining meat) was the strongest motivator for Black HBCU Students in this study; this was followed by altruistic reasons (e.g., maintaining ecological balance and reducing crop damage), egoistic reasons (e.g. spending time with family and friends, seeking a challenge), and lastly trophy reasons. These results mirror the motivation patterns of White PWI students, but all mean ratings for Black HBCU students were lower in comparison to their White PWI counterparts (Figure 1).

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Study 1: Survey at HBCUs and PWIs

Key Findings:

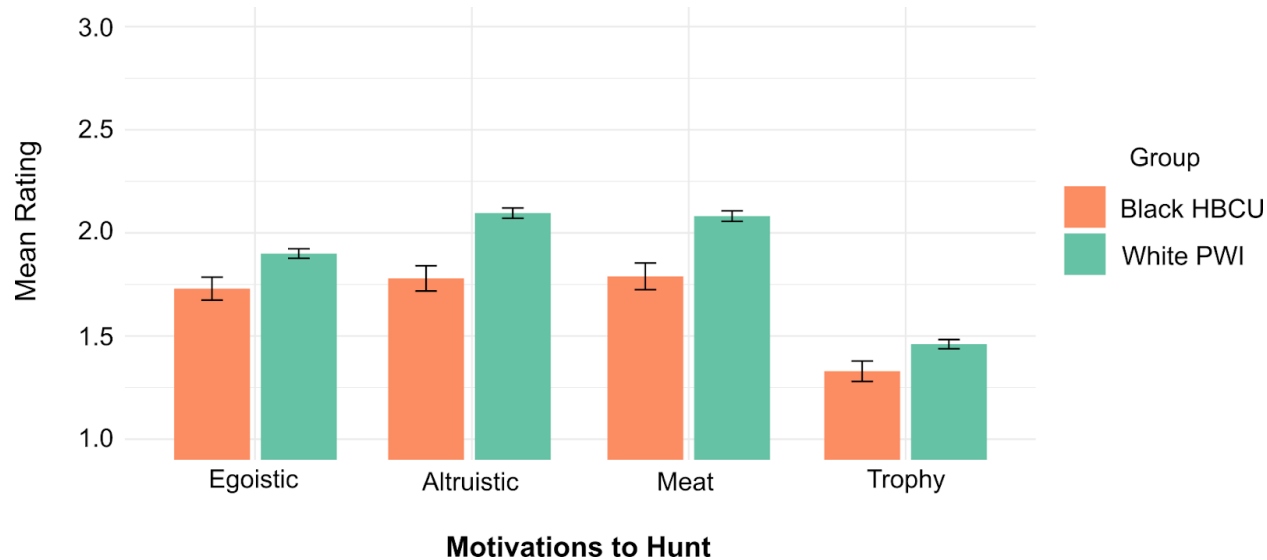


Figure 1. This bar plot illustrates the mean ratings of different motivations for hunting among Black HBCU (N = 622) and White PWI (N = 1473) students across the Southeastern U.S. The motivations considered are Egoistic, Altruistic, Meat, and Trophy. The bars represent the mean ratings for each belief, with error bars indicating the 95% confidence intervals for the mean ratings on a scale where a value of 1 indicates "No," 2 indicates "Maybe," and 3 indicates "Yes." Black HBCU and White PWI groups are distinguished by orange and green bars, respectively.

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Study 1: Survey at HBCUs and PWIs

Key Findings:

Social Support for Hunting

Social support is the strongest predictor of future hunting among college students (Vayer et al. 2021). We found distinct differences in social support for hunting between Black HBCU students and White PWI students (Figure 2). For Black HBCU students, familial involvement in hunting was limited. Only 12% of students reported that their fathers hunt, significantly lower than their white counterparts at PWIs (37%). This trend extends to other family members, with 19% of Black students reporting hunting among grandparents compared to 35% for White students. Looking beyond immediate family, involvement of friends in hunting reflects a similar pattern, where twice as many (64%) White PWI students report having friends who hunt, compared to 31% of Black HBCU students. Interestingly, the “Other” category of social support for hunting was more pronounced for Black HBCU students (13% vs 3% for PWI), suggesting that other members of their social network (coaches, co-workers, neighbors) might offer some level of exposure to hunting.



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Study 1: Survey at HBCUs and PWIs

Key Findings:

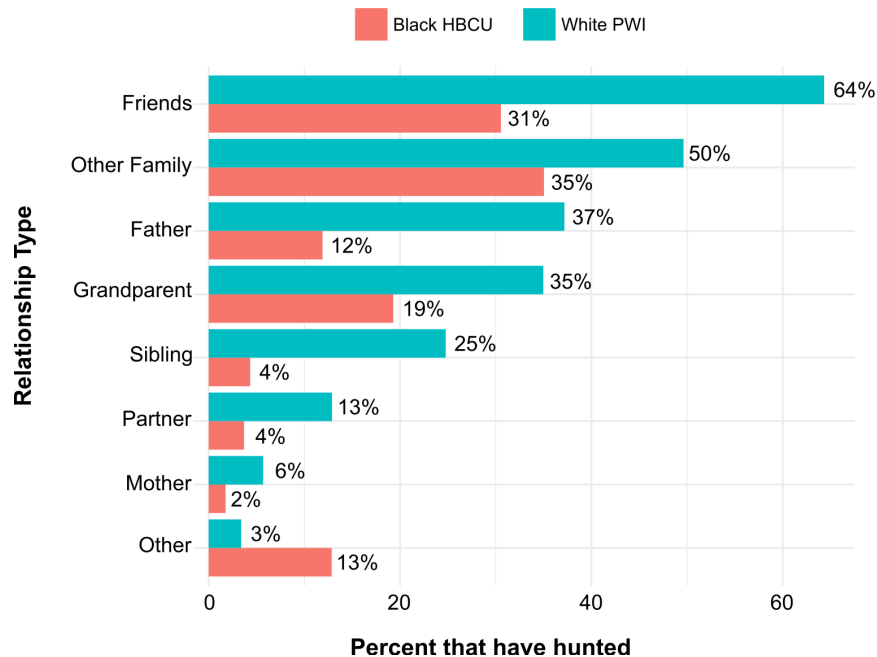


Figure 2. Prevalence of hunting within the social circles of Black students from HBCUs (N = 622) and White students from PWIs (N = 4,763) from the Southeastern, U.S. segmented by types of relationships. The categories range from immediate family members to friends and partners, revealing the percentage of each student's social network that participates in hunting.

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Study 1: Survey at HBCUs and PWIs

Key Findings:

Barriers to Hunting

We also evaluated a number of constraints related to hunting on both the HBCU and PWI surveys. Most (18 of 21) barriers examined were significantly greater for Black HBCU students over levels reported by White PWI students (Figure 3). Modern R3 programming is very effective at decreasing skills and knowledge-based barriers for potential hunters (von Furstenberg et al., 2023). More challenging and relevant to non-traditional audiences such as HBCU students, are those barriers that relate to a sense of belonging in the hunting community. The most significant barriers faced by Black HBCU students, compared to their White PWI peers, were discomfort related to their race/ethnicity, followed closely by past negative experiences in outdoor settings. Also, not included in the PWI survey was a question asking HBCU students if they felt welcome in the hunting community: more than half (53%) of HBCU students replied they did not. For practitioners, addressing constraints related to belonging—through both small and large actions—will be essential to ensuring a positive experience and successful outcomes.



A MORE INCLUSIVE FUTURE

Study 1: Survey at HBCUs and PWIs

Key Findings:

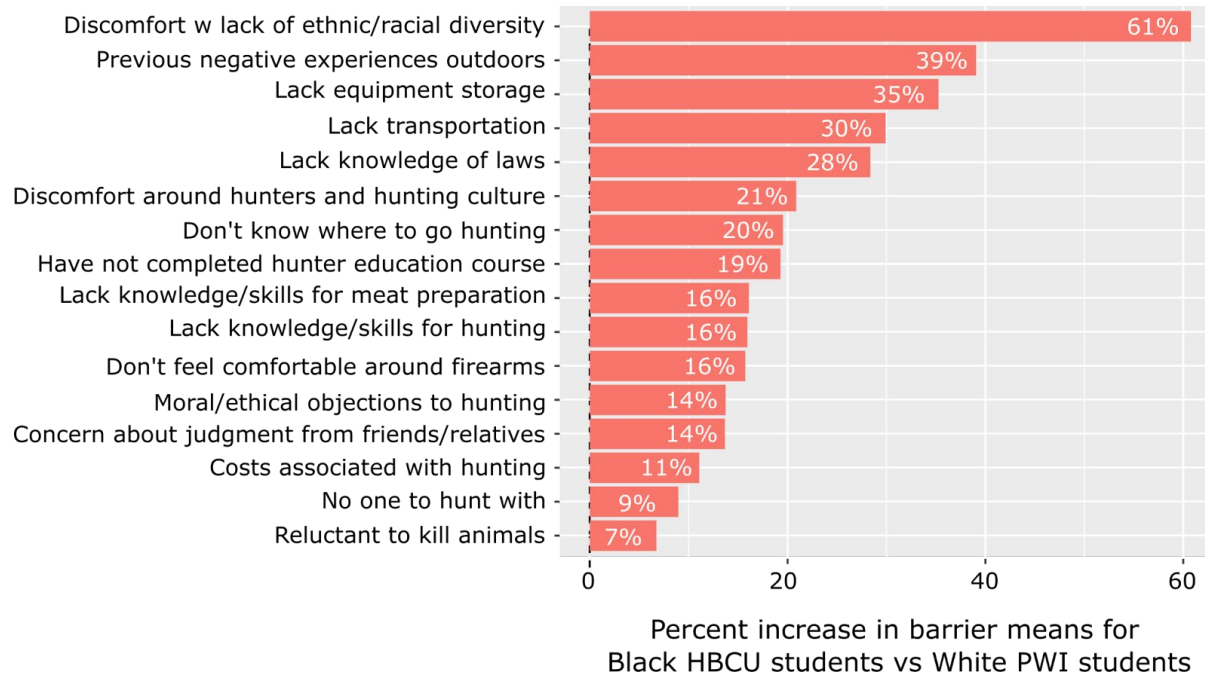


Figure 3. Comparison of self-perceived barriers to hunting between Black HBCU students and White PWI students. This bar chart details the self-perceived barriers to hunting as reported by Black students at HBCUs relative to their White counterparts at PWIs. The vertical axis lists various barriers, while the horizontal axis indicates the percent increase in the reported frequency of each barrier by Black HBCU students compared to white PWI students.

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Study 2: Focus Group at HBCUs

Methods:

For a deeper qualitative understanding of Black HBCU students' experiences of hunting, we collaborated with four HBCUs across three states in the Southeastern U.S. to conduct multiple focus groups, speaking with 18 students in total (Table 1). These focus groups were held over Zoom and structured around predefined questions. Questions were designed to explore students' experiences with hunting, including perceptions of diversity within hunting and the impact of racial and cultural identity. Discussion facilitation, including the initial welcome, was conducted by a Georgia Wildlife Federation staff person of color on the research team. This approach was employed to enhance the comfort level of the participants and facilitate more open and authentic dialogue.



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Study 2: Focus Group at HBCUs

Key Findings:

Pathways into Hunting

Participants shared various reasons for starting to hunt, including family traditions, personal interest in outdoor activities, and the influence of peers. Common motivations for hunting included the enjoyment of nature, the challenge of the hunt, and the value of self-sufficiency in procuring food. Favorite contexts for hunting often involved the company of close friends or family members.

"I started hunting with my dad as a kid. It's always been a bonding thing for us. Out there in the woods, it's quiet, just us and nature."

"My favorite hunting is duck hunting on the lake. There's something serene about being out there at dawn, waiting for the day to start."

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Study 2: Focus Group at HBCUs

Key Findings:

Barriers to Hunting

Although not directly addressed in the focus group discussion, barriers to hunting came up in conversation and included the lack of access to suitable land, financial costs associated with hunting gear and licenses, and time constraints. Some participants also mentioned a lack of knowledge about hunting or a lack of mentorship as obstacles. Firearms were a recurring barrier in several discussions, where students' parents had expressed apprehension about their child being around guns in general.

"I've always been interested, but I don't really know where to start. And honestly, it seems like everything from the gear to the licenses costs a lot."

"The main thing holding me back is access to land. It's not easy finding a place where you can just hunt without having to pay huge fees."

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Study 2: Focus Group at HBCUs

Key Findings:

Social Perceptions of Hunting

Family and friends' attitudes towards hunting varied significantly among participants. Some described strong support within their social circles, where hunting is viewed as a valuable skill and a traditional activity. Others faced opposition due to ethical concerns or disinterest in hunting. The potential for future support often hinged on personal relationships and the ability to share positive hunting experiences.

"My family doesn't really see the point of hunting. They think it's unnecessary and a bit cruel, which makes it hard for me to talk about my interest in it."

"My friends are supportive; they understand it's about more than just hunting. It's about conservation and respecting wildlife."

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Study 2: Focus Group at HBCUs

Key Findings:

Racial Identity and Inclusivity

Discussions about race and identity revealed that participants' feelings of inclusion or exclusion in hunting spaces had a significant influence on their desire to hunt. Some individuals felt out of place or unwelcome due to being in the minority. There were also concerns about racial stereotypes and the predominance of white men in hunting communities, which affected Black HBCU students' sense of belonging and comfort.

"Sometimes, I feel like I'm the odd one out at hunting events. It's not overt, but you definitely feel like you're not the typical face in the crowd."

"There aren't many hunters who look like me. At times, it can be isolating, and it makes you question if you belong."

A MORE INCLUSIVE FUTURE

Study 2: Focus Group at HBCUs

Key Findings:

Desired Changes in the Hunting Community

Responses highlighted a desire for more inclusive community practices and policies that facilitate access for people of diverse backgrounds. Suggestions included outreach programs aimed at minority communities, education programs to teach hunting skills, and changes in representation within hunting media and leadership. Overall, Black HBCU considering hunting wanted to see more people that look like them.

"I think if there were more programs targeted at urban youth to introduce them to hunting, it could change the perception and make the hunting community more diverse."

"We need more leaders in the hunting community who come from diverse backgrounds to show that everyone is welcome and has a place here."

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

Engaging Diverse Young Adult Hunters



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Increase representation and inclusion to create a more welcoming environment for hunting.

- Recruit diverse mentors that reflect diverse participants (e.g., women and minorities) to help increase comfort and sense of belonging. Build capacity for cultural competency among mentors and program facilitators to better support participants from diverse backgrounds, reducing anxiety and feelings of isolation.
- Increase representation in marketing and media. Resources include:
 - [MAFWA Small Game Diversity and Inclusion Marketing Toolkit](#)
 - License Free R3 photos at the National R3 Community [Clearinghouse](#)
 - [Photos in this Addendum](#) that you have permission to distribute by Josh Smith
 - [Marketing to Recruit, Retain and Reactivate Participants Chapter](#) of the National Hunting and Shooting Sports R3 Practitioner's Guide



RECOMMENDATIONS

2. Acknowledge unique barriers faced by young Black hunters (or aspiring hunters).

- Recognize that diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds may shape students' experiences and feelings around firearms and hunting activities. Many Black students at HBCUs can face a wider array of barriers and constraints to hunting than their white counterparts at PWIs. Some of these are structural and logistical, but many are cultural.
- Incorporate open discussions about participant's learning objectives and any concerns about getting into hunting, creating a friendly space for them to share their perspectives. Ensure mentors are prepared to understand and empathize with the unique challenges of working with people from all backgrounds (including Black students).



RECOMMENDATIONS

2. Acknowledge unique barriers faced by young Black hunters (or aspiring hunters).

- Enhance safety and support to create a more welcoming environment for hunting by applying Clark's [Four Stages for Psychological Safety](#) and Tuckman's [Model of Group Development](#). These models reflect key findings in our research as well:
- Create an environment where all participants feel they belong and are respected. Clearly set expectations to participants and mentors that hunting is for everyone regardless of race, gender or other immutable characteristics. Set a welcoming tone. Acknowledge cultural differences and experiences with the outdoors - invite participants to share these. Highlight shared goals, such as learning new skills and exploring nature, to create a common purpose.
 1. Introduce basic hunting skills and allow space for learning (and safe mistakes). Listen and acknowledge any concerns they may have. Discuss specific constraints and how they might be overcome. Recall that YOU are likely the primary social support around hunting and should provide supportive guidance and feedback.
 2. Create safe opportunities for participants to demonstrate newly learned skills and develop a sense of self-efficacy.
 3. Build in time for students to reflect on their workshop experience and encourage students to contribute and share their insights as part of a group learning experience.
- Resources include:
 - [Creating an Inclusive Environment Course](#) by International Hunter Education Association USA
 - [Volunteer and Mentor Management Chapter](#) of the National Hunting and Shooting Sports R3 Practitioner's Guide
 - [Best Practices Workbook](#) for Hunting and Shooting Recruitment and Retention by National Shooting Sports and DJ Case Chapter 6 - Expanding your Reach to Diverse Audiences

RECOMMENDATIONS

3. Design outreach efforts to align with audience needs and preferences.

- Building partnerships with HBCU faculty/staff who have strong connections with students is a critical way to foster trust and engage students. To build a partnership, the following steps were developed by Sergeant Bill Freeman of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and have been informed by our research findings and adapted for this addendum: initiate contact by building trust; learn and identify partners' wants and needs; deliver tangible outcomes; and empower partners to continue programs on their own (Table 2).
- Resources Include
 - [Campus Conservation Program](#): Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR), featuring hiking and fishing activities (agendas in Appendix)
 - [Camp Charlie](#): Georgia Wildlife Federation's camp program (details in Appendix).



RECOMMENDATIONS

3. Design outreach efforts to align with audience needs and preferences

Detailed Steps for HBCU-Focused Targeted Outreach	
Step 1: Initiate Contact	Begin the relationship-building process: establish trust, demonstrate transparency, and brainstorm potential program outcomes.
	Contact a faculty/staff member who can communicate with administration/leadership, or contact administration/leadership directly to delegate tasks. Both bottom-up and top-down approaches can be effective.
	Programs have had success partnering with conservation, recreation, human health, and criminal science fields.
	Plan your communication strategy: consider who you're speaking with, their potential motivations or barriers, and the most effective way to deliver your message.

Table 2. Detailed breakdown of the steps involved in conducting intentional outreach, including key actions and considerations to ensure successful engagement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

3. Design outreach efforts to align with audience needs and preferences

Detailed Steps for HBCU-Focused Targeted Outreach	
Step 2: Learn and Identify	Understand your partner and their students' wants and needs beyond survey results; listening is key to building relationships.
	Tailor your program to meet their preferences; conservation provides diverse recreation activities (e.g., wildlife watching, fishing).
	Identify where students are in their journey and choose activities that move them forward. Use diverse instructors to resonate with the audience.

Table 2. Detailed breakdown of the steps involved in conducting intentional outreach, including key actions and considerations to ensure successful engagement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

3. Design outreach efforts to align with audience needs and preferences

Detailed Steps for HBCU-Focused Targeted Outreach	
Step 3: Deliver	Build trust by engaging partners in every planning step and organizing events in a safe, welcoming manner.
	Start with simple personal skill-building activities (e.g., hiking, fishing, small game hunting) and progress to more complex skills (e.g., camping, big game hunting).
	Host events close to or on campus to reduce travel barriers and create a comfortable environment for participants.
	Follow through on commitments to establish credibility.

Table 2. Detailed breakdown of the steps involved in conducting intentional outreach, including key actions and considerations to ensure successful engagement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

3. Design outreach efforts to align with audience needs and preferences

Detailed Steps for HBCU-Focused Targeted Outreach	
Step 4: Empower	Invite partners to be involved in every program phase to inspire future replication.
	Encourage participants to take on leadership roles, volunteer, and pursue certifications or mentorship experiences.
	Design programs that include a broad range of conservation-related activities (e.g., fishing, birding, wildlife watching, camping, habitat improvement) to foster retention and develop hunting advocates.

Table 2. Detailed breakdown of the steps involved in conducting intentional outreach, including key actions and considerations to ensure successful engagement.



**CASE STUDIES OF
ACADEMICS AFIELD AT HBCUS**

HBCU CASE STUDIES

Introduction

Academics Afield programming can look and function in different ways between programs. The strongest programs tend to have support from state wildlife agencies, NGO conservation organizations and university leadership. This approach allows for flexible student hiring, improved access, and effective recruitment of participants and coaches.

The following examples of HBCU Academics Afield Programs demonstrate insightful lessons and key takeaways. Implementers strived to achieve the following criteria, but adaptations were made as outlined below. Identifying challenges, remaining flexible, and responding to evaluation is key to a program's success.

Fundamentals of Academics Afield

1. Educate new and existing hunters on conservation history and hunting's role in the North American Model of Wildlife Management
2. Implement program evaluations for a data-driven program design
3. Host 3-4 workshops a year with each workshop offering species biology education, firearm training, a mentored hunt, and a wild game culinary social
4. Coordinate via a student intern (Academics Afield Coordinator) with peer coaches enhancing immediate social support network
5. Integrate students to support structures and resources for future participation



ALABAMA A&M UNIVERSITY

Primary Contact

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Program Partners

Alabama A&M University (AAMU)
Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR)
Delta Waterfowl

Program Description

Practitioner's recruited students for workshops primarily from the College of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences. The program collaborated closely with the ADCNR R3 staff to help implement the program by providing training and organizing most of the mentored hunts.



ALABAMA A&M UNIVERSITY

What are some successes you saw with this program?

“We have good attendance (about 15 students per year) that attend our Academics Afield orientation meeting and go to the first workshop and hunt. Then we have about five students attending the rest of the hunts (usually two per semester) because they are located about 200 miles from our campus.”

Did you experience any challenges with initiating this program?

“We can’t store firearms on campus. We tried to work with campus police but could not identify an arrangement. The travel distance is a barrier for participants, so we are working on planning hunts that are closer to campus. A new student Coordinator is helping to facilitate communication better in the GroupMe application. A student Coordinator is valuable, especially when the faculty facilitator doesn’t have a lot of time to communicate with students.”



Shotgun Training



Rifle Training

Image Courtesy of Billy Pope, ADCNR

ALABAMA A&M UNIVERSITY

What recommendations do you have for practitioners wanting to start their own program?

“Have a faculty or staff helper in addition to a student Coordinator. Identify financial resources to implement the program and be prepared to learn about hunting along with the students.”

What value does this program bring to HBCU students?

“More interest in wildlife conservation and hunting. Students took pride in providing meat for the family table. Most are first time hunters and didn’t know how to get started in the activity.”



Field Training



Deer Butchering

FORT VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

Primary Contact

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Program Partners

Fort Valley State University (FVSU)
Georgia Wildlife Federation (GWF)
Georgia DNR- Wildlife Resources Division
National Wild Turkey Federation
Ducks Unlimited
Georgia Chapter of Safari Club International
Cabela's/Bass Pro Outdoor Fund
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

Program Description

Practitioner's recruited students for workshops primarily including students within the College of Agriculture, Family Science and Technology. The program collaborated closely with Georgia Wildlife Federation to provide educational opportunities. Students were interested in learning how to hunt and learning to shoot firearms as they relate to hunting.



FORT VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

What are some successes you saw with this program?

“We saw students that were normally shy, come out of their shell and engage with their classmates and the Academics Afield community. Some have reported that they plan to pursue hunting as an outdoors activity.”

Did you experience any challenges with initiating this program?

“The biggest challenge that I saw was getting students to the events as FVSU requires a faculty or staff member to travel with them or be at the events. There were a few times that we were unable to participate as there were no vehicles available and we are prohibited from transporting students in private/personal cars.”



Shotgun Training



Deer Hunting

FORT VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

What recommendations do you have for practitioners wanting to start their own program?

“Plan to engage, engage, engage, and then engage some more. Program success requires the instructor/preceptor to be engaged not only in getting people interested in the events but potentially attending events with students. It is important as a team-building approach to their education for students to see their mentors/faculty there.”

What value does this program bring to HBCU students?

“Initially, the value is, of course, to learn responsible hunting practices and how to go about these activities. Students are also introduced to hunting as an ecological and conservation effort. More importantly, from a human health perspective, I think students reap the reward of an old-fashioned field trip outside, something we do not see much of in this internet-driven world.”



Dove Hunting



Dove Hunting

TUSKEGEE UNIVERSITY

Primary Contact

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Program Partners

Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR)
Tuskegee University
Alabama Chapter of National Wild Turkey Federation

Program Description

Practitioner's recruit students for workshops via courses at Tuskegee's College of Agriculture, Environment and Nutrition Sciences. Students are seeking out the opportunity to engage in the outdoors from talking with students that have been in the program previously. Academics Afield objectives paired well with the goals of ADCNR's Campus Conservation Program educating participants on conservation and outdoor recreation which is the program's current format.



TUSKEGEE UNIVERSITY

What are some successes you saw with this program?

"I saw students being involved in outdoor activities such as hunting, and the shooting sports for the very first time in their lives. I saw passions being developed that the students never knew they had until they had a chance to experience the outdoors. Through this program I witnessed students excited about and looking for more opportunities to engage, taking advantage of internships, summer employment, and pursuing careers in the outdoors with different agencies across the southeast."

Did you experience any challenges with initiating this program?

"One of the biggest challenges was building the partnerships that's necessary for these types of programs to succeed. This is a brand-new challenge for both students and University staff, so trust and patience are vital. To overcome them we met them at their level and built from there. We took the time we needed to teach new skills in a safe environment. We also used students that attended the first year to act as mentors the second year."



Rifle Training



Stand Safety

TUSKEGEE UNIVERSITY

What recommendations do you have for practitioners wanting to start their own program?

“Begin with simple things, such as offering Hunter Education, Firearm Safety, or lectures on conservation and the role that hunting plays in society and habitat management. Listen to what the students and University want or are concerned about.”

What value does this program bring to HBCU students?

“For all students it brings about conservation awareness, for others it’s a life changing experience.”



Deer Hunting
Image Courtesy of Billy Pope, ADCNR



Shotgun Training

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS PINE BLUFF

Primary Contact

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Program Partners

Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
Arkansas Outdoors Society
University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB)

Program Description

UAPB recruits students every spring semester inviting all registered students for next year's programming. Advertisement strategies include flyers, targeted approaches to STEM Scholars, first-year seminar labs and fall New Student Orientations. First events include firearm trainings introducing community partners.



UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS PINE BLUFF

What are some successes you saw with this program?

“Students recruit students. Every year, we have seen an increase in interest and participation. We have also had international students participate. One student from Zimbabwe stated that hunting is so expensive in his country so having this opportunity was a chance of a lifetime.”

Did you experience any challenges with initiating this program?

“The main challenge was transportation. Students did not sign up because they did not know how they were going to attend. Renting a van and making students aware that transportation is available in advance may recruit more student participation in the future.”



Trap Shooting



Duck Hunting

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS PINE BLUFF

What recommendations do you have for practitioners wanting to start their own program?

“Utilize students enthusiastic about hunting and the outdoors to recruit new participants. Also, inform students that they do not have to kill an animal if they don’t want to and that they can donate their harvests to feed families in need if they do not have storage space while living in the dorms. Lastly, explaining to students that they will not be alone and that volunteers/mentors will assist throughout the entire process.”

What value does this program bring to HBCU students?

“Some students were already hunting and fishing. Now, we are creating a supportive community.”



Quail Hunting



Cleaning Quail

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To retrieve “R3 For College Students: A Practitioner’s Guide & Academics Afield Toolkit” in its entirety, visit gwf.org/r3toolkit.

Black People's Experience with Hunting: Insights from College Students in the Southeastern U.S.



Problem: Exclusivity of Hunting

- Agencies are targeting diverse audiences to increase inclusivity and address declining hunting participation
- There is limited information on Black college students' perceptions and behaviors related to hunting



Approach: Survey of HBCU Students

- A mixed methods study involved surveys of 662 Black students from five HBCUs in the Southeastern U.S.
- Their hunting-related perceptions and behaviors were compared to 4,763 White PWI students from the same region.



COMPARATIVE FINDINGS

- **Significant Disparity in Hunting Participation:** Only 11% of Black HBCU students have hunted, compared to 35% of White PWI students. Future hunting intentions are three times lower among Black students.
- **Higher Barriers (18 of the 21 measured) for Black Students:** Black HBCU students face more individual-level barriers like discomfort around firearms (16% higher) and equipment storage challenges (35%), and community-level barriers such as lack of hunting land (19%) and discouragement from past negative experiences (39%) as compared to White PWI students.
- **Equal Commitment to Conservation:** Despite differences, both Black HBCU and White PWI students scored equally high on a conservation caring scale.

FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

Approach: A Deeper Dive via Focus Groups

- Focus groups with 18 students
- 4 HBCUs and 3 states
- Explored students' experiences, and perceptions of hunting more fully.



- **Racial and Social Barriers in Hunting:** Many Black HBCU students see hunting as a "white activity" and face significant barriers: lack of social support, discomfort in white hunting spaces, and fear of racial discrimination.
- **Enhanced Participation through Representation:** Seeing instructors and leaders who look like them and having targeted outreach programs significantly enhances Black HBCU students' willingness to participate in hunting activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION



- **Increase Representation and Inclusion:** Recruit diverse mentors and provide cultural competency training. Ensure marketing and communication materials reflect diverse participants.
- **Acknowledge Unique Barriers Faced by Young Black Hunters:** Use models like Clark's Stages of Psychological Safety and Tuckman's Stages of Group Development to design safe learning environments with supportive mentorship. Allowing time for conversation and reflection about barriers to hunting (real or perceived), may be particularly important for this group of aspiring hunters.
- **Design Outreach Efforts to Align with Audience Needs and Preferences:** Build partnerships by initiating trust, identifying needs, delivering results, and empowering partners for future success. Be wary of one-size-fits all solutions or making assumptions about an audience, and instead ask questions and work with partners to meet new hunters where they are.

CAMPUS CONSERVATION PROGRAM

Event Checklist Example

1. Establish Event Date/Location/Type/Time – 4-5 months in advance
 - a. Communicate with college contact, NGO partners, landowners, and staff.
 - b. Communicate with R3 Coordinator and schedule shooting sports trailer.
2. Establish marketing and selection plan – 4-5 months in advance
 - a. Create registration links, flyers, selection process, confirmation emails
3. Determine equipment/gear/supply needs – 3-4 months in advance
 - a. Communicate with partners about needs.
4. Recruit staff and volunteers to assist – 2 months in advance
 - a. Provide the schedule of events to department staff and NGO partners.
 - b. Utilize network of pre-existing volunteers (Hunter Ed instructors, past collegiate hunt program participants, university staff, etc.).
 - c. Communicate directly with staff and volunteers to coordinate needs.
 - d. Schedule assistance from shooting sports coordinators.
5. Initiate reimbursement request for food, supplies, and lodging costs
 - a. If receiving funding from DCNR, send schedule of events to Becky.
 - b. If receiving funding from other partners, send a schedule of events.
 - c. Remember to save all receipts for reimbursement.
6. Communicate with staff and volunteers – 2 weeks in advance
 - a. Let them know the time and event details.
 - b. Keep all parties in the loop and be available for questions.
 - c. Distribute a detailed agenda of the event and job assignment.
7. Plan meals for event – 1-2 weeks in advance
 - a. If ordering food, order 1 week prior to event.
 - b. If cooking, plan food 2 weeks prior.
8. Communicate with collegiate staff and participants – 1 week in advance
 - a. Send event agenda, inform them of any last-minute details or changes.
 - b. Encourage questions.

9. Event Preparation – 2-3 days in advance
 - a. For all events, consider:
 - i. What do participants need to participate in the event?
 - ii. What can I bring to provide a better experience?
 - iii. What do mentors need to provide a quality experience?
 - iv. What's the worst-case scenario and how can I prepare for it?
 - b. Check equipment.
 - i. Check firearms, bows, and all equipment to ensure safe operation.
 - ii. Inspect truck and trailer to ensure safe operation.
 - c. Prepare food for the event.
 - i. Determine meal schedule, make plans for cooking or picking up.
 - ii. Purchase food (including snacks) and drinks 1-2 days in advance.
 - iii. Ice down or refrigerate food accordingly.
 - d. Print waivers and bring pens. Keep an event roster.

10. Day of Event

- a. Arrive no later than 1 hour before events, including staff/volunteers.
- b. Set up equipment/stations.
- c. Greet staff and volunteers.
 - i. Thank staff for coming. Go over plan for the day.
 - ii. Ask staff to engage with participants.
 - iii. Provide staff and volunteers with a detailed agenda.
- d. Greet participants as they arrive.
 - i. Ensure participants sign waivers.
- e. Start the event at or near the scheduled time.
 - i. Welcome everyone – thank them for coming and explain they are here to learn and to ask questions.
 - ii. Make participants feel comfortable and let them know they're learning skills they can replicate on their own.
 - iii. Mention the importance of buying a license.
- f. Facilitate the event, keep things on schedule.
 - i. Be prepared for changing situations out of your control, such as weather.

11. After the Event – 1-2 days after

- a. Send thank you emails to staff and volunteers.
- b. Send follow-up survey link to participants.
- c. Email receipts for reimbursement to appropriate parties.
- d. Clean and organize equipment.

[Additional Campus Conservation Resources](#)

CAMPUS CONSERVATION PROGRAM

Fishing Day Agenda Example

Follow guidelines and event checklist for the Campus Conservation Program.

Fri 8/8/24, Public Fishing Lake – 8/8/24

08:00-08:30 – Participants arrive, welcome, introductions, housekeeping, waivers

08:30-09:00 – Safety briefing, split into groups to rotate through stations

09:00-11:00 – Participants rotate through stations

- a) Station (A) – Ethics, safety equipment, tackle
 - i. Gear types – Pole and line, spinning, bait casting
 - ii. Terminal tackle – Hooks, snaps and swivels, weights, bobbers, knot-tying
 - iii. Other tackle – pliers, clippers, landing nets, fillet knives
- b) Station (B) – Tackle use
 - i. Casting, retrieving, setting drag
 - ii. Setting hook, playing fish
- c) Station (C) – Techniques, habitats, and species of fish
 - i. Where to fish
 - 1) Private waters – ponds, lakes, streams
 - 2) Public waters – streams, rivers, reservoirs
 - 3) State fishing lakes
 - ii. Species of fish in Alabama
 - 1) Fish identification cards

11:00-13:00 – Participants fish

13:00-14:00- Preparing the catch

- a) Cleaning methods

Note: Stations A-C can be taught in a classroom prior to an actual fishing day

[Additional Campus Conservation Resources](#)

Sergeant Freeman, ALDCNR

CAMPUS CONSERVATION PROGRAM

Half-Day Hike Agenda Example

Follow guidelines and event checklist for the campus conservation program.

Sat Hike, Monte Sano State Park – 4/13/24

14:00 – Participants arrive on site, welcome, introductions, housekeeping, waivers

14:30-17:00 – Lead participants on hike. Engage students throughout the hike as opportunities arise on:

- a) outdoor safety
- b) wildlife management
- c) bird ID
- d) plant/habitat ID
- e) track and sign, scouting,
- f) Leave No Trace etc..

17:00-18:00 – Dinner (optional) and presentation – overview of agency, conservation, licenses, programs.

[Additional Campus Conservation Resources](#)

CAMP CHARLIE - GEORGIA WILDLIFE FEDERATION

Camp Charlie, developed by the Georgia Wildlife Federation in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is a planned weekend of camping and hands-on outdoor activities. The program is focused on families, but the mission to introduce individuals to the outdoors, the associated objectives and weekend agenda may apply to students.

With the right combination of adventure, inspiration, education and shared experiences, a weekend in the outdoors is a great opportunity to instill a sense of responsibility and stewardship that could impact a lifetime of choices.

Awareness: To become more aware of the opportunities to be involved in outdoor activities and the benefits of spending time together in nature.

Appreciation: To appreciate the value of clean water, wetlands, forests, undeveloped public lands and other natural resources.

Knowledge and Skill: To learn new outdoor skills and explore nature.

Action: To take responsibility by doing something specific to help protect natural resources in their community, state or the world for future generations.

Weekend Agenda

Friday:

- 4pm: Arrival and Camp Setup
- 6pm: Community Dinner
- 8pm: Campfire Stories and S'mores

Saturday:

- 8am: Breakfast
- 9am: Hike
- 12pm: Lunch
- 1pm: Canoeing
- 5pm: Free time
- 6pm: Campfire Cooking
- 8pm: Campfire Stories and Dutch Oven Cobbler

Sunday:

- 8am: Breakfast
- 9am: Birding
- 10am: Camp breakdown
- 11am: Wrap-Up



LEARN MORE

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