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for the masses

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THREE OUT OF THREE AIN'T BAD

What is the ultimate sporting achievement? Does it really get any better than completing a Macnab? Fieldsports commercial manager Charlie Coups heads to Tulchan of Glenisla to find out.

PHOTOGRAPHY: MARCUS JANSSEN & ROBERT DE MONTJOYE

Almost exactly a year ago, I discovered that being the only girl on the *Fieldsports* team has its advantages. I'd been contacted by Lucie Boedts-Kuehnle – wife, mum of three, lawyer, taxidermy enthusiast, all-round country sports super-woman and founder of The Ladies' Macnab Challenge – to ask if I would like to attempt my own Macnab. Excitingly, the invitation had also been extended to our then editor and 'honorary female' Marcus Janssen. Neither of us needed asking twice!

Despite spending valuable office hours discussing tactics, possible scenarios and essential kit lists, we were under no illusion that this was going to be an easy challenge. We knew that the chances of even one of us being successful were slim. So, as we drove up the track towards Tulchan Lodge in the Angus valley of Glenisla in late August, our thoughts were focused on just how lucky we were to have been offered the chance to attempt our first Macnab and whatever the

outcome, we were determined to enjoy the experience.

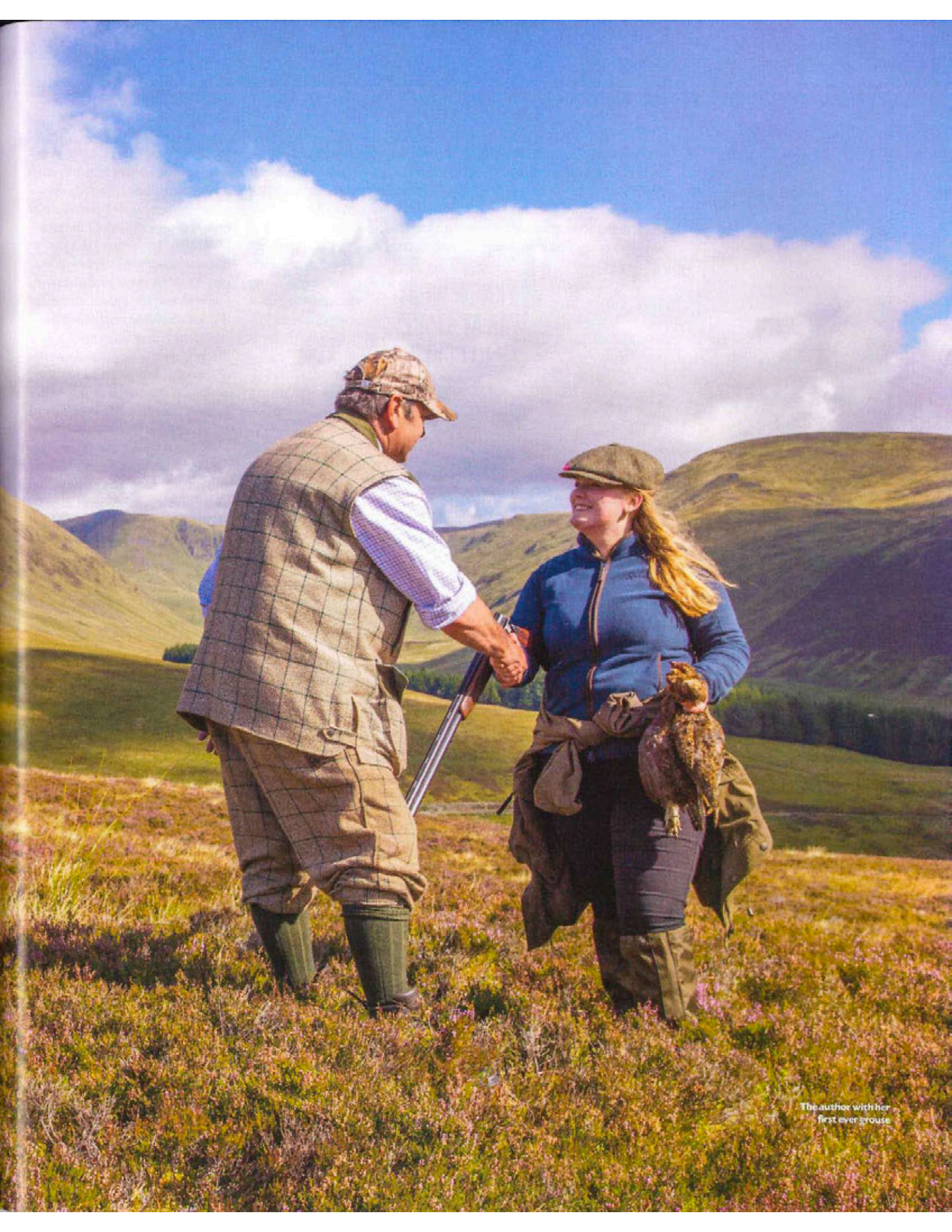
Lucie and husband Florian are the epitome of perfect hosts. A large gin and tonic greeted us as we walked through the front door, and the smell of dinner (venison from the estate) made us feel quite at home. The lodge itself, surrounded by over 12,500 acres of breathtaking stalking and shooting terrain is everything you would expect a typical Scottish sporting lodge to be: remote and spacious yet homely with roaring fires, walls covered in antlers and deep baths. Heaven.

Joining us were French journalist Marie Rauscent, her two close friends and experienced hunters Anne Marder and Juliette Hézèques (who succeeded in her Macnab attempt the day before), Hubert Crepin, Robert de Montjoye, Björn Kilian, Niklas Scharffetter, Tom Fritzsche and Patrick Benze. Incredibly, still out on the river and hoping to complete her trio before dark was Kathryn Bontoft from

»



The salmon was first to be ticked off the list



The author with her
first ever grouse

SPORTING MEMORIES

George Goldsmith.

Dinner was a sumptuous affair. Lucie kindly presented us with copies of *John Macnab* by John Buchan as we celebrated Juliette's success the previous day, regaled each other with sporting tales past and talked excitedly of the challenge that lay ahead.

The kitchen was eerily quiet at 6am the next morning as we waited for the phone to ring. The plan was simple – with two days planned at the lodge, Marcus would focus on getting his Macnab on the first day, and I would try my luck on the second. Ghillie Dougy Morrison would call the lodge shortly with his thoughts on where Marcus would be in with the best chance of hooking a salmon that morning. So, after a quick phonecall and a short drive, stopping briefly to watch hundreds of red stags ascend the hills from the morning low-ground mist,

we met Dougy by a stretch of the Shee Water, a small tributary of the River Erich.

Fish were showing everywhere as I sat down to watch on a rock at the end of the first pool. I was convinced that Marcus was going to hook something every time the fly fished round perfectly into the faster water. But by the time he had fished down a second pool, it was clear that *Salmo salar* weren't playing ball. The sun was starting to beat down and time was running out. We'd soon have to return to the lodge for the next part of the challenge.

It was the last chance of the morning when Marcus insisted I fish the next pool down.

Considering this was meant to be 'his' day, this will go down as one of the most selfless acts of friendship in sporting history – for I don't know many others who would so generously give up their precious time on the river.

I crept down to the water's edge, listening carefully to Dougy's instructions, carefully making my way down the narrow pool a step at a time, casting a short-lined single spey to the far bank as I went. With no more than 10 casts left before reeling in, my fly gradually started to cover a lie that Dougy had mentioned usually holds a fish. And he wasn't wrong.

For the next 10 minutes I didn't say a word, or smile. This was it, the

most important salmon I was ever going to play in my entire life and I went completely mute. I knew what was at stake; all I could focus on was getting the fish in the net. Eventually, Dougy and I did just that and carefully lifted the salmon onto the bank. Marcus almost rugby tackled me into the river in excitement. We returned the fish safely, and I stood there in complete shock, shaking. The most elusive of sporting challenges had just become slightly more attainable. I almost dared myself to believe it could happen...

Back at the lodge over a quick cup of coffee, it was decided that we would both go in search of some grouse and then head to the hill for a stag, hopefully leaving enough time for Marcus to return to the river later in the day. Led by headkeeper Bill Mearns and keeper Nick Stewart, we piled into the estate vehicles and drove up the glen to a suitable spot where there would be a good chance of some grouse. Joined by several of our party, we formed a line and started out in search of the king of gamebirds.

I had never shot a grouse before, nor anticipated just how physically demanding the terrain would be. I carried my 20 bore through the heather and over peat hags, all the time trying to keep in line, catch my breath and remain focussed. A few minutes in, a covey of grouse rose directly in front of me, quartering away to my left. Instinctively, I picked out my grouse and fired a shot. At exactly the same time, Marcus, who was quite a way down the line to my right, let off both barrels. Three birds fell – one for me and a right and left for Marcus.

Further on, we wheeled the line around and continued back in the direction of the vehicles. With the wind behind us we quickly arrived almost back at our starting point.

"I KNEW WHAT WAS AT STAKE; ALL I COULD FOCUS ON WAS GETTING THE FISH IN THE NET."

A once-in-a-lifetime experience in a truly spectacular part of the world



TILCHAN OF GUENSLA

DATE 30 August 2017

PLACE Drum Mh.

WEIGHT 111 lbs 5.1 kg

POINTS 2/15

SHOOTER Bill Mearns

WEATHER cloudy

WIND weak

Desperate not to give up, I was fixated on the ground ahead of me, listening for the tell-tale chatter. As fate would have it, a single grouse got up 30 yards in front of me, torpedoing away with the wind...

As the bird fell, cheers echoed all around. Not only was Marcus now off the mark but I was successfully two thirds into my Macnab, had shot my first ever brace of grouse, and it was only just midday. Suitably blooded by Bill, lunch beckoned.

I felt nervous, excited and sick. In any other situation I would have made short work of the delicious looking venison rolls that had been prepared for us back at the lodge, but after half an hour I had only taken a bite and sat quietly at the end of the table (also very unlike me).

The third and final part of my challenge was, without doubt, the part I was most anxious about. To me, the thought of shooting my first stag was daunting. Don't get me wrong, shooting and fishing are second nature to me and I've had plenty of experience with small calibre rifles, but this felt different and I was apprehensive of how I would feel after squeezing the trigger. First and foremost, however, I wanted to kill the stag quickly and cleanly.

After a few practice shots, Bill and ➡



After a long and tense wait... Macnab completed



Marcus Janssen completed his Macnab in the evening, finally landing that elusive salmon

SPORTING MEMORIES

I headed out in the Defender. Marcus, meanwhile, ventured to a separate part of the estate to search for his stag with Nick.

It was only when we had reached the furthest end of the glen, after stopping several times to survey the hills, that Bill spotted a herd sheltering just below the mountain's precipice directly opposite us on the other side of the glen.

This was it. We drove round to the other side and headed out on foot, creeping ever closer to the herd. I lay down directly on the steep cliff edge, facing slightly downwards, and found the herd in my scope. The stag I was to take was in no rush to present itself for the shot. All I could do was wait and follow his every move as he sauntered through the herd, sat down, stood back up, and sat down again. By this point I had cramp in my neck and felt panicked that if I didn't get the opportunity soon, I might miss my chance altogether. One sideways glance at Bill's calm and confident demeanour

persuaded me that all was not lost. I took a deep breath and recomposed myself. Minutes later, the stag stood up, walked to a clear position and presented itself broadside. Bill instructed me to take the shot when I was ready.

I'd done it.

As the stag fell, a huge wave of emotion came over me and tears ran down my face as we lay silently for a few poignant moments on the edge of the glen for the herd to pass back by us. I felt overwhelmed by the entire experience, humbled that I had been given the opportunity to complete this once-in-a-lifetime challenge, relieved that my stag had died quickly, and incredibly proud of myself all in equal measure.

Unbeknown to me until a few minutes later, Marcus had shot his stag moments before and had stayed up on the hill to watch me take mine through his binoculars. Now on his way back to the river, he would try again for that elusive salmon.

My stag, although killed cleanly,



The perfect hosts – Lucie & Florian Boedts-Kuehnle with George, Lily-Rose & Florence



The Subaru stood up to the job, too

had subsequently fallen into a ravine about halfway down the mountain, retrievable only on foot. We carefully descended the mountain and successfully gralloched and retrieved the stag. Reaching the bottom of the glen, bloodied and exhausted, the Hagglund took us back to the lodge.

I could not have asked for a warmer reception as I walked into the kitchen. That moment, for me, epitomised the incredible camaraderie that we all love within country sports. People I had met for the first time only the night before, were so kind, excited and over the moon for me – I felt in the company of true friends. It just goes to show that country sports enthusiasts from

all over the world can come together and share these truly epic moments. Without doubt, it made the experience that much more special.

Two glasses of celebratory Champagne later, still covered in blood, mud and hundreds of midge bites, we waited eagerly for news from the riverbank. Thankfully we didn't have to wait long, as moments later, just as this incredible day had started almost 12 hours earlier, there was a phonecall from Dougy; Marcus, too, had caught his salmon.

Celebrations continued into the early hours of the next morning. It was the perfect end to the most memorable sporting day I suspect both of us will ever have. And, we were right, it wasn't easy...

THE LADIES' MACNAB CHALLENGE



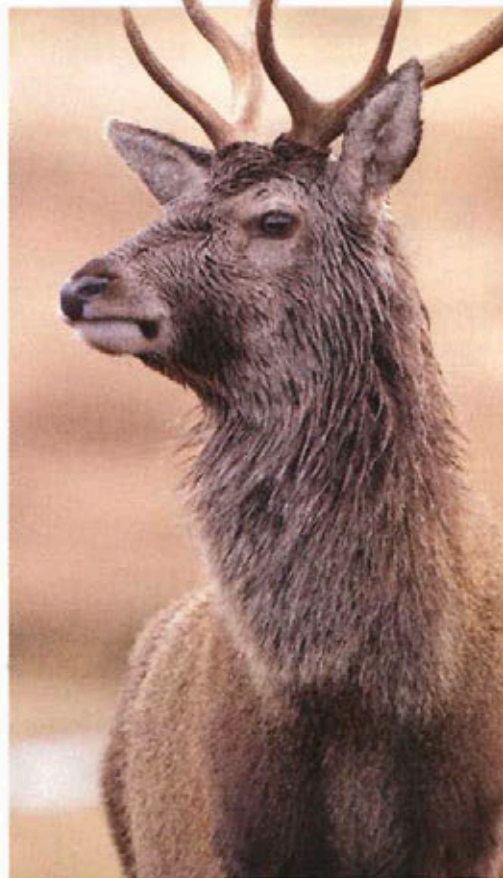
The Ladies' Macnab Challenge was set up by Lucie Boedts-Kuehnle in 2012 when she invited a group of girlfriends to join her at Tulchan Lodge of Glenisla to attempt the holy grail of Highland sport – to stalk a red deer, shoot a brace of red grouse, and catch a salmon, all between daybreak and nightfall.

Over the next couple of years, the Macnab remained elusive. But that didn't curb Lucie's enthusiasm for introducing ladies to shooting, fishing and stalking, and helping to educate

people about the vital role country sports play in the management of our natural environment, how they benefit wildlife conservation and tourism, and support the livelihoods of thousands of people.

Lucie is also a fantastic advocate for the field to fork approach, frequently utilising game meat from her own estate as well as promoting the eating of game to a wider audience across social media.

In 2014, the first Macnabs were achieved. Lucie herself succeeded on August 13!



WIN AN INVITATION TO THE 2018 LADIES' MACNAB CHALLENGE

Lucie would like to offer one lady the chance to try for their Macnab in 2018.

In order to be considered, ladies will have to demonstrate experience in all three areas of the challenge – fly fishing, shooting and stalking.

Initially, please contact Lucie via email, explaining why you would be the perfect candidate to try for a Macnab next year.

Closing date for entries: February 15, 2018

Email: lb@ladiesmacnabchallenge.co.uk

Website: www.ladiesmacnabchallenge.co.uk

Facebook: [@ladiesmacnabchallenge](https://www.facebook.com/ladiesmacnabchallenge)

Instagram: [@ladies_macnab_club](https://www.instagram.com/ladies_macnab_club)

DSC1 COURSE AT TULCHAN LODGE OF GLENISLA

The Ladies Macnab Challenge has joined forces with BASC to run a DSC1 course for both men and women at Tulchan Lodge of Glenisla from June 5–9, 2018. Course details will be advertised on BASC's website shortly (www.basc.org.uk) or for further information please contact Lucie on lb@ladiesmacnabchallenge.co.uk



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