

FREE INSIDE: THE NAKED, STRENGTH CALENDAR 2018

# THE FIELD<sup>®</sup>

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## THE JOYS OF ROUGH SHOOTING

Hunting hedgerows  
for wild birds

### Boom of the punt gunners

Wildfowling's  
golden era

### Grouse moors and the curlew

The British Trust  
for Ornithology's  
scientific study

### FISHING WITH REVOLTING PEOPLE

And other revelations  
from the riverbank

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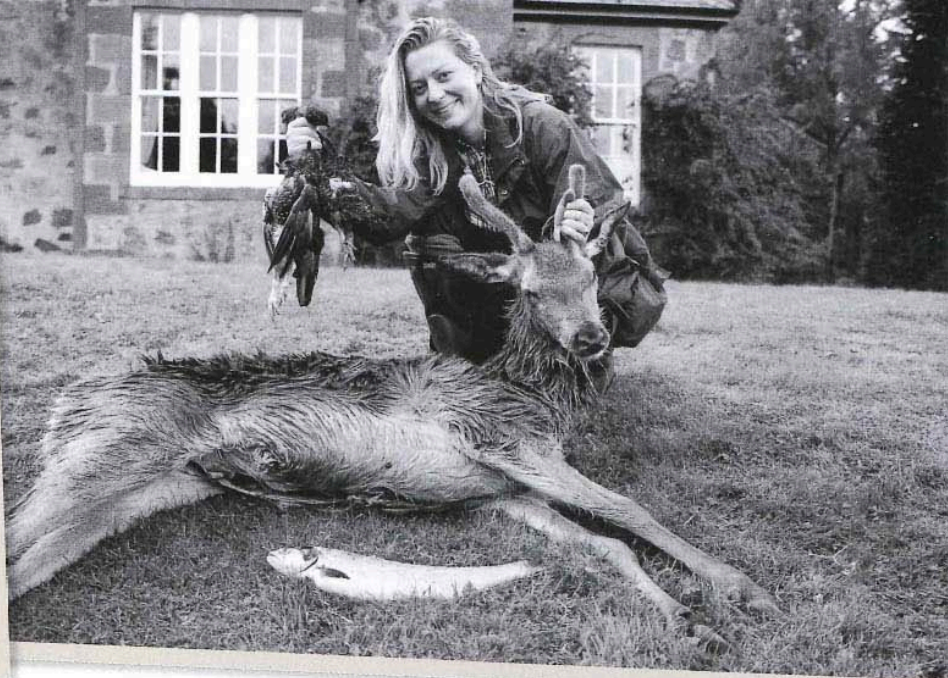
### A COUNTRY FIT FOR THRUSTERS

Out with the Meynell  
and South Staffs Hunt

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13 DEC - 8 JAN



# Lucie Boedts-Kuehnle

A lawyer and keen ecologist, the founder of the Ladies Macnab Club explains how a Macnab became her obsession – and *The Field* her bible

LIVING on a rough and remote deerstalking estate in Scotland can make you feel desperate. Every time I returned to this Scottish isolation I would dream of my more sophisticated, stimulating life working as a lawyer in large, cosmopolitan cities such as Dubai, London or Singapore. I shot my first stag in Scotland during the rut in 2008 after an easy stalk. A clean shot. “That’s it?” I thought, wondering at the fuss surrounding deerstalking in Scotland. I hung the magnificent stag trophy above my desk in Brussels and wondered if I would ever try again.

But this was before I read John Buchan’s novel *John Macnab*. It was a revelation to me, providing inspiration for all kinds of sporting adventures in Scotland with my lady friends. We could not only devise and attempt a Macnab and endless variations of the challenge but also follow other sporting pursuits. We talked about chasing grouse or trying our hand at hawking and falconry and, with a glass of whisky in hand, we would fantasise about poaching on the neighbouring royal estate of Balmoral.

But the idea of a real Macnab remained a fantasy until I read about a successful attempt in *The Field*. In 2011, Editor Jonathan Young and his friend, Chris Dewbury, took a Macnab each at the Gannochy estate in Perthshire, Scotland, which is close to the estate near Angus that I visit every year. My fantasy, which had felt unreachable, suddenly seemed possible. A successful Macnab was my goal and sporting obsession and *The Field* became my bible. I couldn’t wait to participate in the following year’s Field Macnab Challenge with my friends.

Success requires sporting skill, stamina, finesse and adrenalin but I found that the pursuit of it brought a more holistic purpose to my life. We live in polluted cities with over consumerism and materialism but the Macnab Challenge is based on a minimalist lifestyle. Being non-reared and purely wild, the grouse, stag and salmon are

## TOP TIPS FOR THE MACNAB

For deerstalking, take good boots and start on the fitness work early. Some rifles, such as the Sauer 404 Artemis, are made specially for ladies.

For fly-fishing, learn to tie your own flies with the fur and feather of what you shoot in the season. For the grouse, don’t be afraid to try a 28-bore; it is light to carry and gives minimal felt recoil with the right load.

the ultimate wild harvest and symbols of purity and sustainability.

I got together a group of like-minded, adventurous ladies – who are also passionate about wild food and field-to-fork gastronomy – to go to Scotland and attempt the challenge. The Ladies Macnab Challenge, a new Ladies Club, was born. The club is based on and inspired by the famous quote from John Macnab, “you’ve got to rediscover the comforts of your life by losing them for a little”, which I think perfectly encapsulates the philosophy of the Macnab Challenge. The pursuit requires you to fight with the elements, you

will feel hungry and cold and will probably find yourself lost in breathtaking surroundings. It is a lesson in letting go, living in the moment and of humility, which shows that the main message of John Buchan’s novel is still both relevant and universal. Especially as, despite all of your preparation and skills, a Macnab may remain elusive. It is a reminder of our humble and limited condition when faced with the infinite strength and mystery of the natural elements.

It has been said that the changing weather and climate brings the brightest ideas, as the brain has to adapt constantly. Brainstorming takes on a literal meaning when you are admiring the endless wild open spaces in pursuit of a Macnab in Scotland. The Ladies Macnab Club believes that an affinity with nature creates unrivalled artistic inspiration and creative energy, so we launched a project to empower and assist contemporary artists, such as Eric Poitevin. They work in Scotland as an artist in residence, sponsored by the Ladies Macnab Challenge. *The Field* remains a source of inspiration for the Macnab girls, fieldsports enthusiasts interested in the cultural roots and long history and tradition of our sport. ■

*Lucie Boedts-Kuehnle is the founder of the Ladies Macnab Challenge, which has taken place every year since 2012. A Belgian-born lawyer, ecology enthusiast and mother of three, she divides her time between Luxembourg, Scotland, Germany and Brussels. The granddaughter of a Belgian sculptor and hunting adventurer, the artist in residence project – which invites contemporary artists to work in Scotland and reflect on nature and ecology while the women pursue a Macnab – became an obvious addition to the main event.*