



Opportunity **KNOCKS**

Encouraging new people to enjoy the rich rewards of shooting is central to our mission and Country Sport Scotland's **KIRK NORBURY** reports from a goose shooting trip which ticked all the boxes.

With the cost of traditional game shooting fluctuating and the need for greater inclusivity in the sport, many enthusiasts are seeking new opportunities that offer the same excitement, fulfilment, and connection to the countryside. Recognising this shift, Country Sport Scotland recently joined an inspiring three-day event hosted by Scott A. Cruickshank and his team at SAC Shooting. This event was specifically put together to introduce more women to field sports, providing an opportunity for participants to experience duck and goose shooting, learn fieldcraft skills, and create lasting memories.

Hosted in the stunning agricultural landscape of Aberdeenshire, the event brought together women from across the UK and beyond. This diverse group of participants, with varying levels of experience, shared a common desire to learn more about field sports, develop practical skills and immerse themselves in the world of goose and duck shooting. As more women take an interest in field sports, events like these play a critical role in building confidence, fostering community and sustaining the future of the sport.



Hands-on experience

During the event participants received a comprehensive introduction to shooting ducks and geese over decoys – a form of shooting that is as challenging as it is rewarding. Scott, who founded SAC Shooting in 2001, guided the group through each step of the process. His passion for fieldcraft shone through as he demonstrated essential skills, including building hides, understanding how wind direction influences success and mastering the art of decoying.

Working with wild quarry like pinkfoot geese and wigeon requires patience, knowledge and skill. Scott's clear instruction and hands-on approach ensured that each participant left with a better understanding of what it takes to succeed. The hands-on nature of the event was a highlight for many of the guests.

The teaching extended beyond the field and into the realm of game preparation. After the successful shoot, participants were treated to a detailed demonstration of how to prepare their quarry for the table. From plucking and breasting to butchery techniques, Scott offered advice on transforming wildfowl into delicious, nourishing meals. This underscored an important message: field sports are not just about pursuit but also about understanding and respecting the food we harvest.

Beyond the practical skills, the event fostered a strong sense of community and camaraderie. The participants stayed at the charming Saplinbrae Hotel & Lodges, where the bonds formed in the field continued to strengthen over evening meals and shared stories. For many, the friendships formed during the trip were just as important as the skills learned. This feeling of unity is essential in a sport that may occasionally seem daunting or exclusive to newcomers.

Scott explained his motivation for creating the event: "I started SAC Sporting Ladies to get more women into our sport, our hobby and our way of life. Wildfowling is difficult to get into for many people, especially women, so I wanted to create opportunities where they could learn in a supportive environment. We offer trips for geese and ducks, decoying pigeons, and deer stalking. Everyone gets involved in breasting the birds and butchering their quarry to take home and enjoy. It's about giving them the skills and confidence to participate fully in field sports."





Opening the door

The event was co-organised by Abbie Wilson, a passionate advocate for women in field sports, whose enthusiasm and commitment to an inclusive environment were felt by all who attended. Abbie also brought her Labrador, Gunner, who showcased his impressive skills, retrieving geese from long distances across the stubble fields.

Abbie shared her thoughts on the importance of these trips: "We brought together women from different stages in their shooting journey. The hands-on experience – from setting up hides to butchering game – gave everyone a deeper appreciation of what goes into a successful shooting experience. And being able to share this on social media helps encourage even more women to get involved. The friendships, skills, and knowledge gained are priceless. We hope to run more of these trips, whether for deer stalking, pigeon, duck or goose shooting, to keep bringing women into the sport."

Her message highlights a key challenge in field sports: accessibility. Knowing where to start can be daunting, and supportive events like these provide a welcoming entry point for those who might otherwise feel excluded.

The need for more

Scott and Abbie both recognise the need for the sector to do more to inspire and sustain field sports for future generations. The skills and values imparted during the event are essential for preserving the sport. By engaging more women and promoting inclusivity, trips like this help ensure field sports continue to thrive.

The success of this event also underscores the broader trend of diversification within field sports. As the cost of driven game shooting increases, more people are turning to pursuits like wildfowling, pigeon shooting and deer stalking. These activities offer affordability and the opportunity to develop a deeper passion for country sports.

Country Sport Scotland was delighted to participate in the event, which was an inspiring reminder of the power of community, education and shared experience in field sports.

For those interested in learning more about the opportunities available with SAC Shooting, visit the Country Sport Scotland website. We look forward to future collaborations and to seeing even more women join the field sports community.



Country Sport Scotland and BASC

Country Sport Scotland is a dedicated resource which connects enthusiasts with trusted providers offering activities such as deer stalking, game shooting and fishing. In 2023, CSS entered an exciting new chapter when it became part of BASC. This partnership enhances CSS's ability to support and advocate for the sector while promoting BASC's commitment to fostering sustainable shooting and conservation practices. Under BASC's stewardship, CSS continues to work closely with providers, estates and sporting businesses to ensure high standards and the continued growth of Scottish country sports tourism.

Its mission is to promote and support Scotland's country sports industry, highlighting its role in rural economies, conservation and sustainable land management. The aim is to provide both newcomers and seasoned enthusiasts with a way to discover country sports experiences.

country sportscotland.com



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