

A photograph of a group of geese in a field of tall grass. The geese are in various poses, some standing and some appearing to be in flight or landing. The background is a soft-focus field of grass under a bright sky.

Pride, respect and a sense of responsibility

A three-day event for lady Guns to shoot geese and ducks addresses every step of the process, from decoys to dressing the birds

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Fieldsports are evolving, with more women than ever expressing an interest in the sport. To encourage this trend, SAC Sporting hosted a three-day ladies' event in Aberdeenshire. It brought women together to experience the joys of goose and duck shooting, learn essential fieldcraft and share a sense of camaraderie.

Representing Country Sport Scotland, I had the privilege of attending this event to witness and document the passion and enthusiasm it sparked among those who took part.

The event began with a warm welcome at the Saplinbrae Hotel & Lodges, a charming venue that became the group's base for the trip. Women from all over the UK and

beyond arrived, eager to learn and connect. When we met in the bar that evening, the atmosphere was relaxed yet buzzing with anticipation. Many attendees were new to this type of fieldsports and their excitement was palpable as they mingled and shared their reasons for joining the event.

Scott Cruickhank, founder of SAC Sporting, began the evening



Abbie Wilson's labrador, Gunner, is kept busy during the first flight of the morning



Geese are plentiful on the stubbles and provide sporting opportunities for the lady Guns

with an introduction to the activities planned. His passion and dedication to educating newcomers set the tone for the days ahead.

Co-organiser Abbie Wilson also shared her perspective on creating inclusive opportunities for women in the sport. The rest of the evening was spent in the hotel restaurant where Scott had arranged an incredible starter for us featuring an array of wild game. The food that evening was fantastic and reflected what we had in store for the rest of the trip.

For me, this was more than merely an assignment – it was an opportunity to observe how an inclusive →

Flighting geese

With the decoys placed in a stubble field to imitate feeding birds, Gunner is quick to retrieve any fallen geese



approach can transform fieldsports for everyone. The attendees' enthusiasm and the organisers' warmth created an atmosphere that was immediately engaging.

The next morning started early, with guests heading out to the fields for their first experience of goose shooting. We loaded into pickup trucks and made our way to our first location. We parked the trucks and the first sound to greet us was the classic *wink-wink* of pink-footed geese in the sky and on the nearby stubble fields.

Scott's expertise was evident as he guided the group through the essentials of setting up the decoys on the stubble field and in a pond close to it, improving the hides

and understanding how wind direction impacts success. For many, this hands-on approach was a game-changer.

Exhilarating

As the group settled into the hides, the thrill of what was about to happen became clear. The sight of pinkfeet flying towards us was exhilarating. With Scott's support, the women learned to adapt to changing conditions and make ethical decisions in the field.

"These are wild birds" I'd hear him say, as he reminded everyone to keep still and their heads down as the geese made their way in. Every successful shot was met with cheers from the group.

We spent the morning in that stubble field and as the sun rose we were treated to a lovely sunny morning. Abbie brought along her trusted labrador, Gunner, and they did a fantastic job of retrieving the geese – even those that landed much further back in the fields. We then gathered all the gear, the decoys and all the shot geese and made our way back to the hotel for a well-deserved breakfast.

After the morning's shoot, the group gathered for a demonstration on preparing the shot birds. Scott walked them through each step, from plucking and breasting to butchery techniques, turning wildfowl into table-ready meals. This aspect of the event resonated deeply with

The ladies take a hands-on approach to improving the hides and setting up decoys



Gunner delivers a handsome pink-footed goose to Abbie





The three-day event is hosted by SAC Sporting, based in Aberdeen

everyone, many of them appreciating the opportunity to understand the full field-to-table process.

The practical skills gained extended beyond the shooting itself. The guests left with a sense of pride in their ability to bring their quarry home and prepare it with respect. This full-circle approach to fieldsports was a highlight for many

“Ducks were the evening’s key quarry but that didn’t mean geese were off the table”

and underscored the importance of sustainable practices.

As an observer, it was clear that this event wasn’t only about shooting. It was about understanding every part of the process, fostering respect for the quarry and instilling a strong sense of responsibility.

Rockets

In the afternoon we ventured out again, this time for an evening duck flight on a series of ponds that have attracted a good number of wigeon and teal. This was a different experience for the group compared with that morning. The moon was our only source of light as we sat on the edge of the pond. We listened for the faint sounds of whistling in the distance and, before you knew it, they would fly like rockets into the pond.

It would take the guests a few flybys to understand how quick these ducks are and that they had to be ready and paying attention. With very little cloud cover picking up the ducks as they came in, it was difficult for the Guns, but the evening was still a success as it resulted in a nice mixed bag of wigeon and teal.

The second morning flight focused on refining skills and fostering connections. Participants once again

headed out early into the fields, applying what they had learned with growing confidence.

By this point, the group had bonded over shared experiences and a strong camaraderie had developed. As they worked together to set up the hide and position the decoys, it was clear how much progress had been made. Skills that seemed daunting

on the first day now came naturally. Scott and his team were on hand to offer tips and encouragement.

That morning the wind was on our side, which is something that brings a smile to those that are used to shooting geese. The ladies shot well, with many groups of geese deciding that our decoy pattern looked very enticing, making for a very exciting morning for all.

We ventured back to the hotel once again to refuel ourselves and have

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Now part of BASC, CSS is better equipped to support the sector and champion responsible practices within it. Together with estates and other sporting businesses, it ensures high standards and a thriving future for Scottish country sports tourism.

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some needed rest before heading out again that evening for the excitement of whistling wings.

For this evening flight, we went to the same pond we visited the morning before but this time ducks were our key quarry. But that didn’t mean geese were off the table as there were many in that area. ⇒



All the shot geese are gathered by Scott, who emphasises the importance of the field-to-fork ethos

Flighting geese

The final day of the trip was similar to the one before, with an exciting morning flight for geese and a duck flight in the evening. However, there was one aspect that was different. Scott asked if anyone wanted to join him and the team to have a go with their .22 rifles. An opportunity for the guests to try something different as they “plinked” the targets in the distance. This strengthened the group as they had a friendly competition to see who could shoot the best.

Supportive

Back at the hotel, the fixture concluded with a celebratory meal. Many attendees expressed gratitude for the supportive environment and the chance to meet other women with similar interests. The friendships formed were a highlight for many, adding a sense of community to their shared experience.

As one of them said: “I couldn’t have wished for a better experience. The lodge is lovely and cosy, the food in the hotel is great, there are plenty of birds and amazing company of amazing people, including Scott himself, who is an amazing host.”

Scott shared his motivation for hosting the event: “Wildfowling can be difficult to get into, especially for women. I wanted to create an opportunity where they could learn in a supportive environment, build their confidence and take home skills they can use in the future.”

His dedication to creating an inclusive and educational experience was evident throughout the weekend.



The event isn't only about shooting; Scott also teaches the team how to prepare birds for the table

By focusing on practical skills and ethical practices, Scott ensured that participants left with a deeper understanding of what it means to be part of the fieldsports community. Abbie Wilson echoed this sentiment, emphasising the importance of accessibility and inclusivity in fieldsports. “We’re breaking down barriers and showing that this is for everyone. Seeing these women grow in confidence over just a few days has been incredible.”

Her passion for bringing more women into the sport was clear from her hands-on involvement and the welcoming atmosphere she helped to create. One thing that struck me was the genuine sense of transformation among the participants. For many, this wasn’t only an introduction to duck and goose shooting but a stepping stone to a deeper connection

with fieldsports, something that is vital for the future protection of our shared enjoyment.

The inclusive nature of the event was also in evidence. Fieldsports can sometimes feel intimidating to newcomers, particularly women. This event challenged those perceptions, proving that with the right guidance and a supportive community, anyone can thrive. It was refreshing to see barriers being broken down and a more diverse group stepping into a traditionally male-dominated arena.

As a representative of Country Sport Scotland, I was proud to see this. Our role in promoting such events is about inspiring others to take that first step and explore what fieldsports have to offer.

The lady Guns wait under a moonlit sky for the wigeon and teal to arrive

➔ Scott Cruickshank and his team offer many different opportunities including pigeon shooting, deerstalking and of course; duck and goose shooting. To learn more about opportunities with SAC Sporting, visit the Country Sport Scotland website. With passionate advocates like Scott and Abbie leading the way, the future of fieldsports is inclusive, exciting, and brighter than ever. bit.ly/sacshoot