



# The romance of the Macnab

This year's challenge is about to begin – but what is it that makes this sporting endeavour so special?

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**M**acnab: the one word guaranteed to make any sporting sort mellow with that first-kiss-misty-eyed look. Many attempt the challenge but few complete it. The Macnab Challenge is without doubt one of the toughest, most frustrating, exceptionally exhilarating sporting experiences you can attempt in the British Isles. High pheasants, coveys of wiley partridge and a day crossing High Leicestershire all pale in comparison to the clarion call of a challenge that is not only physically demanding but comes complete with its own history and mythology.

This year's Field Macnab Challenge is the second in association with Blaser, the shotgun and rifle manufacturer and outfitter, whose sporting heritage and style is

neatly encapsulated by the all-round nature of the Macnab. Indeed, Blaser is capable of equipping the sportsman or woman with everything required to achieve a successful Macnab, from its inimitable R8 to the deadly F3, sporting duds, optics, clothing, footwear and accessories (the rod is in the pipeline).

## ENTICING TRIO

But just what is it about the combination of salmon, stag and grouse that gives the Macnab Challenge something more than the trio of components manage to do on their own? The Classic Macnab has all the hallmarks of the picture perfect: Scottish glens, lochs, rivers and ravines, ancient deer forests and timeless vistas. If the popularity of Landseer's shortbread-tin stag indicates one thing, it is that the natural elements of Scotland are one of the country's greatest assets. →



## THE WRITE STUFF

The Macnab Challenge is tied to a story, and that story is tied to an author. Written by John Buchan in 1925, *John Macnab* comes from an era of stiff-upper-lipped protagonists. They are jolly good sorts with clean-cut, manly virtues clothing a core of post-World War One steeliness. Adventure, dash and daring, Buchan's books have them all. *John Macnab* is one of his most light-hearted stories, and the most timeless. Struck with *taedium vitae* and a sense that there is "nothing left remarkable beneath the visiting moon", three protagonists (Sir Edward Leithen, John Palliser-Yeates and Lord Lamancha) decide to slough off their ennui by following the fictional example of Jim Tarras, "the best shikari God ever made", when on furlough in Scotland from his regular shooting trips in East Africa: to poach a salmon or a stag; to jettison the horrors of the mundane and find some zest in life once more. A universal message, and one still as appealing today as it was when Buchan wrote it.

It is this background that gives the Macnab Challenge its unique and romantic place as a part of sporting legend.

Throwing down a gauntlet offers a soup-con more glamour than doing something sedately within your own time. A Macnab only counts if it is taken between dawn and dusk. Twenty-four hours doesn't do it, and several plaintiff enquiries from those who managed two elements, slept on it and then caught the third have fallen on barren ground. A dose of feather-soft pillow in-between isn't the thing for those attempting a true sporting challenge.

### FIELDRAFT REQUIRED

There is also a pertinent level of skill demanded from those setting their sights on *The Field's* Macnab Hall of Fame (see below). You might never have added a grouse to your game book but an early September partridge or pigeon should have given you a good idea of what's required. Fieldcraft is not to be overlooked. A regular in the butts one may be but a quiet understanding of the wildlife you are pursuing is essential. Gaudy noisiness has no part on the hill and it's highly unlikely a wagon stuffed full of elevenses will make an appearance on any Macnab attempt. Indeed, it may well negate it.

But there are also numerous members of the Macnab Club who have taken to the hill with at least one of the trio of salmon,



Stalking in glorious scenery is one element that adds romance to the challenge

## THE FIELD'S MACNAB CLUB

### 2010

John Davies  
Joe Thompson  
John Fields  
Daniel Riddle  
Stuart Hudson  
Dean Hemmings  
Marc Sale  
Alex Brant  
Tony Terry  
Ruairidh Cooper  
Jackie Weller

### 2011

Arwyn Davies  
Chris Cook  
Janek Wichtowski  
Paul Martland  
Campbell Whyte  
Andrew MacInnes  
Joe Thompson  
John Fields  
Chris Dewbury  
Jonathan Young

\* Denotes that more than one Macnab has been achieved. Macnabbers appear in chronological order

### 2012

Joe Thompson  
Graham Bonham-Carter  
John Davies \*  
Rob Savage  
Keith Trenter  
Stuart Hudson  
Helen Hemmings  
Edward Thompson  
Gerd Kemkens  
Frans Kemkens  
George Bourne-Arton  
Thomas van Straubenzee  
Pelle Forss  
Tony Rawlings  
Mike Barnes  
Chris Dewbury – *Macnorfolk*  
Kevin Robertson – *variation of Macafrican*  
Wes Stanton – *classic with ptarmigan*

### 2013

Keith Trenter \*  
Bill Mayfield  
Will Appleby  
Ruairidh Cooper \*  
Lawrence Brennan  
Adam Calvert  
Peter Glenser  
Witold Danilowicz  
Thomas Ohlsson  
Jonathan Blumb

### 2014

Dean Hemmings \*  
Stuart Waring  
Joe Thompson  
Stuart Hudson \*  
Will Appleby  
Tom Festing  
Alex Novell  
Lucie Boedts  
Vincent Lebrun  
Maxime de Thomaz  
Juliette Trivier  
John McGrory  
John Robinson  
Jonathan Forss  
Andrew Sims – *Corinthian Macnab*  
Peter Tupper  
Bill Dent

### 2015

Tom Festing  
Nicholas Le Rougetel  
Keith Clarke  
Roddy McBain  
Derek Smith  
Colin MacLaren  
John Paterson  
John Fields  
Will Appleby  
Donald O'Such  
Matt Watkins  
Derek Mayne

### 2016

Richard Kellett  
Ghislaine Golsong  
Joseph Thompson  
Peter Carr  
Henri Vanhoenacker  
Alan Ruddy  
Tom Festing \*  
Will Ramsay  
Shane Tibbitts  
Stefaan Reynders  
Paul Paré  
Will Appleby \*

### 2017

Juliette Hézèques  
Charlotte Coups  
Marcus Janssen  
Rupert Kenyon  
Geoffrey Minter  
Lee Beverland  
David Adamson  
Joe Thompson \*  
John Fields \*  
John Paterson \*  
Shaanan Smith  
Roddy McBain \*  
Steve Forrest  
John MacGregor  
Ben Carter

### 2018

Fergie May  
Emily Coates  
Orlando Hill  
Malcolm Smith  
Luke Bordewich  
Tom Scrope  
Willem Moore  
Paul Paré \*



Spying the hill at first light – a Macnab must be completed between dawn and dusk

stag and grouse missing from their game-book. Alongside the requisite skill, these successful Macnabbers must be the recipient of a good dollop of luck and a helpful gillie. If it happens to be a day when a cast peaks *Salmo salar*'s fancy, then your luck is in. Having one unsuccessful Macnab attempt (as an observer) under the belt, watching salmon leap but never take, it is safe to admit that much depends on the luck of the day. A group of stags in a swirling wind, and they scatter as they scent the overzealous stalker. A poor season for grouse and a brace becomes your one chance, not the bounty that a covey holds.

### RISE TO THE CHALLENGE

The Macnab holds a unique place in our sporting firmament. It is an adventure, a journey, a campaign; it combines physical endeavor with solitude and camaraderie. It also holds a prized place in many sporting imaginations. It is the ultimate Corinthian Challenge and money cannot buy it. Join this year's Field Mancab Challenge, in association with Blaser. ■

### MACRULES

#### THE MACNAB MUST BE COMPLETED WITHIN ONE DAYLIGHT DAY

- **THE CLASSIC MACNAB** A salmon on the fly, a stag and a brace of grouse.
- **THE REAL MACNAB** A salmon on the fly and a stag, as the trio did in John Buchan's *John Macnab*. They must be 'poached' in a legal sporting manner from an pre-warned owner who accepts the challenge.
- **THE SOUTHERN MACNAB** A couple of snipe, a sea-trout and a roe buck.
- **THE MACMARSH** A foreshore goose, a pike and a fallow buck.
- **THE MACVERMIN** An impressive rat, a pike on the fly and a brace of magpies (to be shot).

- **THE MACSCANDI** A moose, capercaillie and a trout on the fly.
- **THE MACARGENTINIAN** A golden dorado, 100 brace of doves and a wild pig. This is the northern Argentinian Macnab.
- **THE MACAFRICAN** A brace of sandgrouse, an impala and a tigerfish.
- **THE MACCHARLIE** Riding to foxhounds, harriers and staghounds.
- **THE CORINTHIAN MACNAB** Riding to hounds in the morning, shooting a brace of partridges in the afternoon, and then catching a trout on the fly.
- **THE MACNORFOLK** A brace of wild greys, a fallow buck and a bass on the fly.

For rules, how to enter and more information on The Field's Macnab Challenge in association with Blaser, go to: [www.thefield.co.uk/macnab-challenge](http://www.thefield.co.uk/macnab-challenge)