

5 CHEETAHS SUCCESSFULLY RELOCATED TO THE HOEDSPRUIT ENDANGERED SPECIES CENTRE

20 April 2011: On Sunday, 17 April 2011 and after many months of preparation and much anticipation, five cheetahs, an adult female with three sub-adults and an adult male, were successfully relocated to their new home at the Hoedspruit Endangered Species Centre (HESC) as part of the Centre's ongoing breeding programme.

In 2010, South African National Parks (SANParks) projected that some of the cheetah in the Mountain Zebra National Park would eventually need to be relocated to new homes to ensure the genetic integrity of the cheetah population as well as the parks ecosystem.

With the necessary permits in place and a letter of support from the Limpopo Province, the cheetahs were transported in two vehicles from the Mountain Zebra National Park, near Cradock, watched over by four staff members and supported by the expertise of Dr Zimmerman.

The manager of the Mountain Zebra National Park, Lesley Ann Meyer oversaw all the procedures and the cheetahs were inoculated for rabies and cat flu (fellocell), as well as treated with Frontline plus for ticks and fleas. Christo Scheiber (curator at HESC) said: "While the cheetahs were sedated we were able to implant a microchip for identification."

Now released at HESC, the five cheetahs will remain in quarantine for three months before joining the other cheetahs in the successful breeding programme.

Lente Roode, founder of HESC states: "I am thrilled to receive this incredible 'present' and we all truly appreciate Mr David Mabunda's effort and for his support with HESC. These cheetahs will add new bloodlines to our current stock and assist in preventing in-breeding. We aim to maintain a large enough gene pool to be able to prevent the cheetah from becoming extinct; however some of these cheetahs will also be released in areas where necessary. This is a wonderful, encouraging and positive moment for conservation here at HESC."