

By Vincent van der Merwe, EWT Carnivore Conservation Programme, Cheetah Metapopulation Project Coordinator



A tale of three cheetah brothers

In 2012, the Endangered Wildlife Trust's (EWT) Cheetah Metapopulation Project made a young female cheetah available to Hopewell Game Reserve in

the Eastern Cape. There was a requirement for this female to join the only male cheetah on the reserve so that a breeding population could be established.

After her flight to Port Elizabeth, a three-month stay in the boma was necessary to nullify her homing instinct to return to Limpopo. Just eight hours after her release onto the greater reserve, she made mincemeat of a poor blesbok that had made the mistake of crossing her path.

In February 2013, Hopewell management informed the EWT that four young cubs had been born. Just as these cubs approached independence, the only female in the litter was removed and utilised for cheetah reintroduction onto a reserve in Limpopo. Three male cubs remained and soon ended up in a fierce brawl with their father. So frightened by the ordeal, they bolted through the Hopewell fence line, ran



across the N2 and headed west for Addo Elephant National Park.

A helicopter pursued the three escapees and one was darted on the Addo fence line just as his two brothers crossed into the national park. He was flown 100 km north to the Darlington section of Addo

and released into a boma. The very next day, Addo staff watched with great amusement as this youngster literally climbed out of the boma. He headed north right out of the reserve and was reported wandering around citrus farms near Waterford.

He was not seen again for four months whilst his two brothers were regularly sighted in the Colchester section of Addo. In July 2015, Addo visitors watched two male lions walk over the crest of a hill. They positioned themselves in such a manner that they would catch the lions crossing a nearby road. Much to their amusement, the lions came bolting over the hill in hot pursuit after three male cheetahs. We will never know how the three brothers found each other, but the reunion must have been a sight to see.

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Enquiries about the EWT Carnivore Conservation Programme, Cheetah Metapopulation Project:
Vincent van der Merwe
vincentv@ewt.org.za 

