

Namibian Cheetahs Moved to Bophuthatswana

Ten cheetahs were flown from Namibia to Bophuthatswana and released in the Pilanesburg National Park and Madikwe Game Reserve in March 1995.

All the cheetahs had been involved in killing livestock on farms and were collected by the Africat Foundation in Okonjima, Namibia. They were anaesthetized, blood-tested for Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) and Feline Leukaemia Virus (FeLV) and crated for the flight.

A group of three males was sent to Madikwe, where four others from Namibia had been released in November 1994. The remainder, a male, and a female and five cubs, were released in Pilanesberg. They were reported to have settled well.

Pilanesberg, which earlier received a pride of lions from Namibia's Etosha National Park, is a 550 km² fenced reserve forming part of a vast tourist complex, including Sun City and Lost City, 200 km west of Pretoria.

Up to 90% of Namibia's 2,500 cheetahs – the largest surviving population in the world – live outside protected areas and cause considerable losses of livestock. Farmers are thought to have killed 10,000 during the 1980s, and many have been exported to captive collections. Several organizations, including Africat and the Cheetah Conservation Fund are working to ameliorate predation problems in order to conserve the cheetah population.