

# Conservation efforts see cheetahs thrive in Mountain Zebra National Park

Mountain Zebra National Park (MZNP) in the Eastern Cape celebrated ten years since the reintroduction of cheetahs in 2007 - after being absent from the plains of the Karoo for 130 years - on International Cheetah Day.



Image Supplied

The park has enjoyed a number of successes with cheetah since the arrival of two male and two female cheetahs a decade ago – most notably that has been instrumental in contributing towards national initiatives to conserve the species through working with the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT).

“It is South African National Parks policy to reintroduce wildlife species which would have occurred in an area before hunting or habitat loss forced them to local extinction in earlier centuries,” says head of corporate communications, Janine Raftopoulos.

## Contributing to EWT’s Cheetah Metapopulation Project

Since their introduction, the park’s cheetah population thrived with the birth of 29 cubs within the first five years. To curb them from interbreeding, the animals are regularly relocated to a number of different reserves throughout South Africa – contributing significantly to the EWT’s Cheetah Metapopulation Project.

“This project ensures adequate genetic viability and contributes towards national initiatives to conserve the species, and entails the management of over 300 cheetahs on more than 50 small fenced reserves throughout South Africa,” continues Raftopoulos.



Image Supplied

Only a few cheetah can be sustained at any given time – dependent on the prey populations in the park. Depending on these numbers, animals may have to be moved to or from other reserves. SANParks manages all predators in terms of social units and by mimicking natural processes.

## Cheetah tracking

There are currently six cheetahs in the park, of which two are collared. These are the cheetah guests can encounter should they participate in the cheetah tracking activity, which MZNP is renowned for. The tracking involves guests going out in a game drive vehicle with a trained guide who then tries to pick up the signal on his telemetry device which is emitted from the collars of the animals. Cheetah tracking also includes a game drive where guides showcase the natural flora and fauna in the park.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>