Beyond Bloodlines: Two Male Cheetahs Forge a Rare Social Bond at Kuno

India-born KNG23 and Botswana-born CCB4 are being observed moving, hunting and feeding together in Madhya Pradesh, India





Cheetah's at Kuno National Park

BHOPAL, MADHYA PRADESH, INDIA, September 29, 2026 / EINPresswire.com/ -- An unusual social relationship between two young male cheetahs at Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh is providing wildlife officials and researchers with an opportunity to observe the flexibility of cheetah social behavior.

The two cheetahs, identified as KNG23 and CCB4, are unrelated and come from different backgrounds. KNG23 was born in India, while CCB4 arrived in India from Botswana as part of the country's ongoing cheetah reintroduction program. Despite having no previous association, the two have gradually developed a close social bond and are now being observed spending considerable time together.

The development is particularly notable because male cheetahs are known to form coalitions, commonly involving brothers from the same litter. The behavior of KNG23 and CCB4 presents a different pattern, with the two animals having originated separately and being unrelated. Kuno's field teams are continuing to monitor their interaction to understand whether the relationship develops into a stable coalition.

An Unexpected Association

The relationship began to emerge after circumstances brought the two animals into proximity.

KNG23 was temporarily separated from his mother and siblings following an injury that required isolation. CCB4, meanwhile, had arrived from Botswana and was subsequently separated from his two sisters as they moved into the wild. The two males were initially kept apart by a fence but continued to show interest in one another.

When KNG23 was later brought back to a soft-release enclosure following another injury in the wild, the two were again in close proximity. This time, the field team removed the separating fence and allowed them to interact.

Their first encounter was peaceful. During one of their initial interactions, the two shared a kill without displaying aggression towards one another. While this alone was not considered sufficient to establish a social bond, subsequent observations showed increasingly coordinated behavior.

From Shared Space to Shared Activities

Over the following days, KNG23 was observed following CCB4 and remaining close to him. The two have been seen moving together, hunting together and sharing kills.

Field teams have also recorded the animals making vocalizations when separated from one another and engaging in mutual grooming. When confronted by another cheetah group, they have also displayed behavior suggesting that they support one another.

These observations are of interest because cheetah coalitions are generally associated with male siblings or males that have established close associations earlier in life. The developing relationship between KNG23 and CCB4 therefore offers researchers an opportunity to study how social bonds can form under different circumstances.

Another Dimension to Project Cheetah

The behavior of the two males adds a new dimension to the ongoing observations being undertaken under Project Cheetah, India's program to re-establish a free-ranging cheetah population.

Since the arrival of cheetahs from Namibia and South Africa, followed by additional animals from Botswana, conservation teams have been monitoring their adaptation, movement, reproduction and social behavior in Indian landscapes. Kuno National Park has become an important site for observing these processes as the reintroduced population establishes itself in the wild.

The emerging relationship between KNG23 and CCB4 demonstrates that reintroduction involves

more than monitoring individual animals. It also provides an opportunity to understand how animals adapt to new environments and develop social relationships within a restored population.

For Madhya Pradesh, where Kuno National Park forms an important part of the State's wildlife landscape, such observations add to the growing body of knowledge emerging from India's cheetah reintroduction program.

As field teams continue to follow KNG23 and CCB4, their developing relationship may provide further insights into the social behavior and adaptability of cheetahs in the wild.

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