



THE first introduction and engagement between the two 14-year-old elephants recently translocated to the Aquila Private Game Reserve, and one of the Aquila Safari original elephants. Aquila is the first Western Cape private game reserve in 270 years to reintroduce the Big 5 to the Cape after colonial hunters killed most of these species in the province. | AQUILA PRIVATE GAME RESERVE

## CONSERVATION

# Young elephants welcomed to Aquila

### STAFF WRITER

TWO young elephants received a warm welcome to the Aquila Private Game Reserve and Spa following their recent translocation.

“Aquila Private Game Reserve is proud to have been the first Western Cape private game reserve in 270 years to reintroduce the Big 5 to the Cape after colonial hunters shot and killed most of these species in the Western Cape,” Aquila Private Game Reserve owner Searl Derman said.

He added that the translocating of 14-year-old elephants was a mammoth task, and expressed the excitement of the reserve’s teams in the successful release of these elephants at Aquila.

“No expense was spared to ensure a team of researchers, vets and conservation staff kept a keen eye on the process while monitoring the behaviour”.

One of the new elephants introduced at Aquila was orphaned and rehabilitated before being reintroduced to the wild. Being born in captivity, the other elephant offers the conservation teams a great research opportunity, observing it now, roaming free, alongside the other Big 5 and wildlife on the reserve.

Although the release and introduction were considered a success, it did not occur completely without incident when one elephant had a standoff with a rhino.

“After a big display of mock charging, trumpeting and ear flapping, both parties walked away uninjured and happy,” said Derman.

The elephants spent their first day exploring their new home and interacting curiously with the other wildlife. Derman said that the meeting between the reserve’s animals and one

of the Aquila elephants “was a beautiful moment as they humbly greeted each other and immediately bonded”.

The on-site research team said this had been one of the “best releases” they had witnessed and that the elephants’ anxiety and stress levels are minimal and “their trunk attitude and body postures satisfying”.

Aquila has a strict “no touch and interaction” policy and guests will only be able to see these animals while on a game drive on the 10 000 hectare conservancy.

“Moving and reintroducing wildlife is always risky, and I would like to thank the teams for overseeing the translocation of these beautiful animals. It is extremely gratifying to witness this moment and we are proud to continue our wildlife conservation work while expanding our wildlife populations,” Derman said.