



Contact:
Randy Bird
Tel: (905) 342 – 3053
Email: rbird@eagle.ca
Official website: www.randybird.ca

AN UPDATE ON METTIE, OUR ADOPTIVE ORPHAN ELEPHANT

On June 1, 2018, Mettie along with her two best friends, another female calf and a small bull, were about to embark on the next important journey of their lives. As a result of their continuous mischievous behaviour at the nursery, it was thought to be best for all concerned if they were moved. The reasoning was that if left there, Mettie and her friends could possibly encourage other orphans to imitate their behaviour and make it difficult for keepers to safely manage them. A decision was made to send them to another facility in a national park approximately seven hours away.

Loading went smoothly, and with the help of their beloved keepers and an endless supply of milk and greens, the three babies behaved impeccably. The next day they arrived at their new home and calmly exited the transport. They were visited by former friends from the nursery, as well as other orphans who were being raised there. When the introductions were over, keepers gently guided the large group into the park to browse, headed toward the mud bath.

The news of the new babies spread quickly and soon many other elephants began to arrive. A huge bull was seen walking towards the group. For the next hour, the mud bath area was filled with elephants of all sizes from huge bulls to newborn calves, and a female charging around and trumpeting. Through all of this commotion, Mettie stuck to her keeper like glue. When things finally settled, Mettie and her two friends joined the others for a swim. With all of the elephants milling around, the keepers had to be fully alert to ensure no “kidnapping” would take place. As incredibly daunting as this new situation must have seemed, the new elephants were as good as gold, and made the transition as easy as it could possibly be. After one of the warmest welcomes they had ever witnessed, the keepers feel quite confident they will never be short of love or attention in their new home.

This is a new phase for Mettie and her friends, and they will continue to be the responsibility of their keepers for many years to come. They still require milk, as well as their keepers love and protection. It will take from five to eight years before they have the confidence required to make their first steps toward a more independent life. In the meantime, they will have other orphans around them daily to ensure they grow into well behaved and socially acceptable little elephants.

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