



The Meerkatter

The Friends of the Kalahari Meerkat Project Report - www.kalahari-meerkats.com - December 2019

Meerkat Manor Returns.....	1	Weather at the KMP.....	3
Polon 25.04.2016-13.12.2019.....	1-2	Life History Details.....	3-5
Decembers Other Great Return.....	2-3	Group Territories December 2019.....	6
Pregnancies in December.....	3		

Meerkat Manor Returns!

Meerkat Manor is set to return to the KMP! Meerkat Manor previously aired from September 2005 to August 2008. The show aired for four seasons and followed Whiskers to document everything that happened to the group, from roving males and births of new litters to the deaths of group members.

In January 2020 a film crew is due to arrive at the KMP and begin filming for a new season of Meerkat Manor. They will be at the KMP for at least six months or possibly longer and will be filming multiple groups here at the KMP. The new series will most likely air in 2021 or early 2022.

Unfortunately, as the series will not want spoilers to be released before airing, this will be the last Meerkatter with detailed information on Hakuna Matata, Whiskers and Lazuli. The information may be released at a later stage once the new series has been aired.



Hakuna Matata, one of the groups due to be filmed in 2020 for the new series of Meerkat Manor. Photo Credit: Meerkat volunteer Leá Sueur.

Here at the KMP we are looking forward to seeing our meerkats on television once again.

Polon: 25th April 2016 to 13th December 2019

Polon (VJXM095) the dominant male of Lazuli was born into Jaxx on the 25th of April 2016 and died on the 13th of this month. Polon's father was Sanchin II (VEKM012) a roving male who often encountered at Jaxx. He was last seen in February 2016. Baloo (VJXF080), the current dominant female of Jaxx was Polon's mother, and he was part of Baloo's 3rd ever

litter. There were 4 pups born in this litter: Polon, Wawel (VJXM093), Nezumi (VJXF094), and Balbina (VJXF096). Polon was the last of his litter to survive. Wawel was one of the founding members of the group Yetis, which disintegrated in December 2017. Wawel was euthanized due to TB that same month. Nezumi was last seen with Jaxx in December 2016, her collar was found with no remains in April 2017. Balbina was a founding member of Run Amuk who went extinct in April of this year. Balbina was euthanized due to TB in March 2018.



Polon (VJXM095) 25 April 2019 to 13 December 2019. Photo Credit: Meerkat volunteer Narelle Hill.

Polon did not have much of a roving career before he immigrated into Lazuli on the 9th of January 2017. He only left his home group twice previous to this and was only part of one encounter where he approached Lazuli four days before immigrating into the group. He took over as the dominant male of the group two days after immigrating. He was eight months old. This made him the youngest dominant male in the history of the project, the next youngest was Keros (VDM009) who was 11 months old when he took dominance. Polon still currently holds the record for youngest dominant male.



Once Polon had successfully immigrated and taken dominance of Lazuli, he mainly remained with the group, only leaving twice in December 2017 and once in October 2019 after an inter-group interaction with Ubuntu.

Polon saw four dominant females during his time as dominant male: Elise the Great (VLF219) who was last seen in February 2017, her collar was found in April of the same year with no remains; Minnie (VLF222) who was found dead in August 2017; Filthy McNasty (VLF223) who was last seen in May of this year, and his surviving dominant female Sigma (VLF230).

During his reign as dominant we can infer that Polon fathered 28 individuals in total. His first litter was with Cafrine (VLF225) a subordinate female. This litter was 5 pups Finnick (VLM234), Tonks (VLF235), Rubeus (VLM236), Schwanli (VLM237) and Baerli (VLM238). Finnick, the last remaining member of this litter, is now the current dominant male of Hakuna Matata after immigrating into the group this month.

The second, third and fourth litter born during Polon's dominance were with Filthy McNasty. The second litter was also 5 pups: Thursday (VLM239) Annie (VLF240), Weasel (VLF241), Fledermaus (VLM242) and Cermet (VLM243). Annie and Weasel are the only remaining members of this litter.

The third also had 5 pups: Haopia (VLF224), Luther (VLM245), Lennon (VLF246), Israel (VLM247) and Nelson (VLM248). Nelson disappeared in August 2019. Polon's last litter with Filthy McNasty had 7 pups Squelch (VLF250), Squeal (VLM251), Sizzle (VLM252), Slop (VLM235), Splat (VLM254), Sausage (VLF255) and one unnamed pup that did not survive. Out of this litter only Squelch, Squeal, Slop and Sausage still survive, with Sizzle and Splat disappearing at a similar time to Nelson.



Polon (VJXM095) on the right with multiple of his offspring. Photo Credit: Meerkat volunteer Narelle Hill.

Sigma was Polon's last dominant female before his death, she had one litter in August of this year. However, it was not successful, as there was only one pup seen who did not survive. Sigma was pregnant with another litter when Polon died on the 13th of December. She gave birth six days later and five pups have been seen so far.

On December 13th Lazuli had encounters with Shrew (VUBM018) and had an inter-group interaction with

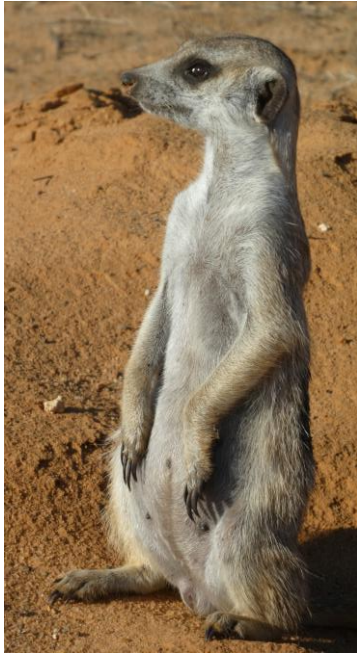
Ubuntu. Lazuli war danced both the rover and the group and Polon frenzied, ensuring his territory was freshly marked with his scent. He was weighed at 9.20am and weighed 803g, which was the last time he was seen. On arrival to the afternoon session Polon could not be found. There was a beep for his collar at a bolt hole but no sign of him or the group. The group was found without Polon and there was concern that he had been bitten by a snake and was in this bolt hole injured. However, the next day another volunteer went back to this bolt hole and realized that there was a tree beside it. They found Polon's remains and his collar beneath the tree. There were obvious signs of predation, and the manner in which his remains were found suggest that he was predated by a wild cat.

Polon was an interesting character here at the KMP. He was always enthusiastic around the scales, asserting his dominance whenever egg was involved. His absence will be felt every weights session at Lazuli.

December's other great return

Meerkat Manor was not the only great return news this month here at the KMP. On the 28th of October Kamala (VBBF116) was evicted from Elrond's Council, a group she helped found with her sister Tayl Baez (VBBF117) in 2018. Between this date and the 4th of November, she appeared at the group five times trying to rejoin but was not successful. She was seen with Elrond's Council's wild yearling female away from Elrond's Council on the 6th of November and then seemed to disappear. She did not try to rejoin the group after this date, nor were there any opportunistic sightings of her. Therefore, on the 6th of this month she was given her last seen and assumed lost from the population.

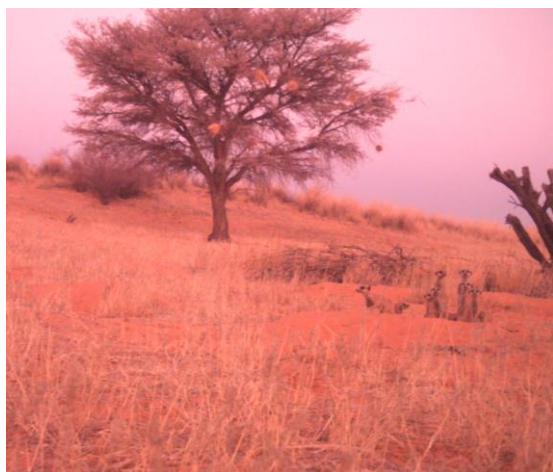
On the evening of the 22nd of December, two volunteers were driving past a sleeping burrow often used by both Zulus and Elrond's Council and saw five meerkats. One of the volunteers was going for a session at Elrond's Council and suspected it may be them. However, they were surprised that four out of the five meerkats they saw had no dye marks and ran instantly down the burrow as soon as they parked the car. One female, however, stayed above ground. She was clearly an adult female; she had no dye marks but let two people approach to 2m before even acknowledging that they were there. This was very obviously a previously habituated female. That night it was organized that another volunteer would go to the burrow in the morning and bring the transponder reader to see if this female could be identified.



Kamala (VBBF116) very comfortable in the presence of people again after not seeing a volunteer for six weeks. Photo Credit: Meerkat volunteer Leá Sueur.

On the morning of the 23rd of December meerkat volunteer Leá Sueur waited at the burrow which the group was seen at the night before. One male was the first to emerge only 10m from her. Then soon after the adult female in question emerged. Lea was able to approach her and scan her for a transponder, she got a reading and compared it with females that had gone missing in that area. It was Kamala!

Unfortunately, the group had emerged too late for it to be feasible to put a radio collar on Kamala that day. She was seen a second time one week later at a burrow 1.3km from the first burrow she was seen at. She also looked like she could be pregnant. We are hopeful here at the KMP that we will have another opportunity to collar her and then have a new group to habituate!



Camera trap footage of the group of meerkats seen near Pharside dam. Hopefully this group will be collared in 2020.

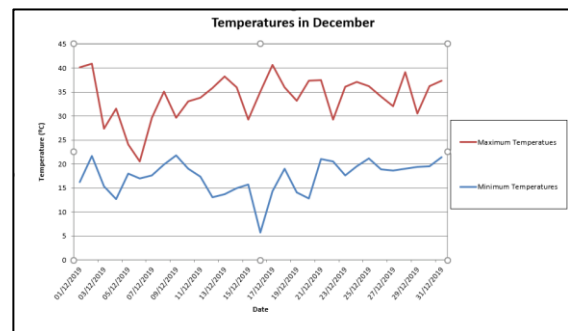
Kamala and her group are not the only potential new group on the reserve. There have been multiple sightings of a group of meerkats near Pharside dam,

and there have also been sightings of a group in the north of the reserve near the fence on the northern perimeter. Hopefully in 2020 these groups will be successfully collared and next year we will have multiple new groups, new meerkats and new meerkat stories.

Pregnancies in December 2019

Females pregnant in December	8
Females who aborted	0
Females who gave birth, litters lost	0
Females who gave birth, litter emerged	0
Females who gave birth, unknown outcome	3
Females still pregnant at the end of the month	5

Weather at the KMP



The temperature fluctuated greatly in December 2019; the highest temperature was 40.8°C on the 2nd of the month. The lowest temperature was 5.8°C on the 16th. There was also 31.9mm rain recorded at the KMP for the month of December.

December 2019 Life History Details

Elrond's Council:

- Five pups emerged and began foraging with the group in December.
- The two wild undyed yearling males, Frodo and Sam, were officially taken off the marksheet and given their last seen this month.
- Sauce (VZUM026), left the group twice and returned once in December. He is still missing from the group as of the 31st.
- All members appear to be in good health.

Gold Diggers:

- There have been three pups seen at Gold Diggers. This initially caused some individuals to be slightly more nervous, however the pups are already allowing volunteers within 1m of them.
- All Gold Diggers individuals look to be in good health.

Hakuna Matata:

- There was a dominance change at Hakuna Matata this month, with three Lazuli males immigrated into the group: Finnick (VLM234), Luther (VLM245) and Israel (VLM247). Finnick



eventually succeeded in becoming the dominant male of the group.

- Dante (VHMM007), Guacamole (VHMM008), Shamrock (VHMM021) and Darjeeling (VHMF029) were given their last seen this month.
- Flint Lockwood (VHMF001) gave birth on the 29th. Double Fluff (VHMF010) was evicted while she was officially pregnant, and it is not clear if she has given birth as she has not been seen since the 18th of December.
- There were many evictions at Hakuna Matata this month: as well as Double fluff, Ace (VHMF022), Twirl (VHMM014) and Mugi (VHMM033) were evicted. Twirl and Mugi had their evictions end but left the group again to go roving at the end of the month and have yet to return.
- Other members of the group also left: Mozzarella (VHMF015) once, Oscar Jr (VHMM016) twice, Pingu (VHMM017) and Shandy (VHMM023) four times each. Mozzarella, Oscar Jr, Pingu and Shandy are yet to return to the group by the end of the month.
- Hakuna Matata also had multiple encounters this month: five with Finnick (VLM234), four with Luther (VLM245), three with Israel (VLM247), one with Pixie (VWM210), two with Lilac (VWM214) and four with unknown meerkats.
- All individuals look healthy.

Jaxx:

- Baloo (VJXF080) was officially pregnant again in December, this will be her 19th litter.
- John Wayne (VJXM114) left and returned to the group once this month. Alya (VJXF130) also left the group and has yet to return, Didah (VJXF112) was evicted from the group and has appeared four times since. She is yet to re-join the group.
- All members are in good health.

Lazuli:

- Polon (VJXM095) was found dead this month and 3 wild undyed adult males have immigrated into the group, along with Xanax (VZUM050). It is unclear who is the dominant male. Finnick (VLM234), Luther (VLM245) and Israel (VLM247) emigrated from the group into Hakuna Matata.
- Sigma (VLF230) gave birth in December.
- Fledermaus (VLM242) and Tonks (VLF235) were given their last seen this month.
- There were multiple evictions this month: Haopia (VLF244) was evicted twice, Weasel (VLF241) and Lennon (VLF246) were also both evicted. All three females have re-joined the group.
- Many members also left the group voluntarily: Finnick (VLM234) three times, Annie (VLF240) and Weasel (VLF241) once, Luther (VLM245) and Israel (VLM247) both left four times. Xanax (VZUM050) left once and has yet to return to the group.
- Lazuli encountered Twirl (VHMM014) five times, Oscar Jr (VHMM016) and Pingu (VHMM017) twice each, Shrew (VUBM018) four times, Rupert Holmes (VUBM024), Jay-A-rod

(VWM214), and Xanax (VZUM050) once. Lazuli had three inter-group interactions with Ubuntu in December.

- The group is in good health.

(Little) Creatures:

- Trash (VCRM008) left and returned to the group once in December. The Worm's Heart (VCRM010) left and returned to the group three times this month.
- The group looks healthy.

Make-e-plan:

- Five pups emerged and started to forage with the group in December.
- Toscana (VMPF020) was recorded as officially pregnant this month; this is her second official pregnancy. She also left and returned to the group once.
- Khloe (VMPM017) and Moo (VMPF019) both received their last seen in December.
- Bigwig (VMPF022) was evicted from the group, has appeared on three occasions since and has yet to re-join the group.
- Make-e-plan had nine encounters with unknown meerkats.
- The group is in good health.

Namaqua:

- Three pups Zuko (VNQM012), Manzaï (VNQF013) and Mononoke Hime (VNQF014) emerged and began foraging with the group.
- Clyde (VWM208) received his last seen in December.
- Bonnie (VWM209) is showing multiple signs of tuberculosis.

Tswana:

- Tswana had five encounters with unknown meerkats in December.
- The two adult males who immigrated into Tswana in November continue to show signs of tuberculosis.

Ubuntu:

- The dominant female, Daisy (VBBF111), gave birth this month. The group is babysitting.
- Mr. Bojangles (VUBM015) and Bon-Bon (VUBM016) were given their last seen in December.
- Rick+Morty (VUBF013), Wren (VUBF017) and Rupert Holmes (VUBM024) left and returned to the group once this month, Shrew (VUBM018) left and returned on four occasions.
- Rick+Morty (VUBF013), Wren (VUBF017) and Meticulous Brown (VUBF019) were evicted and all three re-joined the group this month.
- Ubuntu had multiple encounters this month: six with Jay-a-Rod (VWM216), five with Scuzi (VWM213), four with Shandy (VHMM023) and Pixie (VWM210), two with Mugi (VHMM033), Finnick (VLM234) and Luther (VLM245), one with Israel (VLM247) and four with unknown meerkats.
- Ubuntu had four inter-group interactions in December: three with Lazuli and one with Zulus.



- All individuals look to be in good health.

Whiskers:

- Swift (VWF176) is officially pregnant again.
- The two pups, Lupin (VWM234) and Luna (VWF235), started to forage with the group in December.
- Pixie (VWM210), Scuzi (VWM213), Jay-a-Rod (VWM216) emigrated from the group into Zulus.
- Lilac (VWM214) left and returned to the group twice. Lupin (VWM234) and Luna (VWF235) both left and returned to the group once.
- Whiskers encountered Finnick (VLM234) and Israel (VLM247) on four occasions as well as encountering two unknown meerkats.
- All members are in good health.

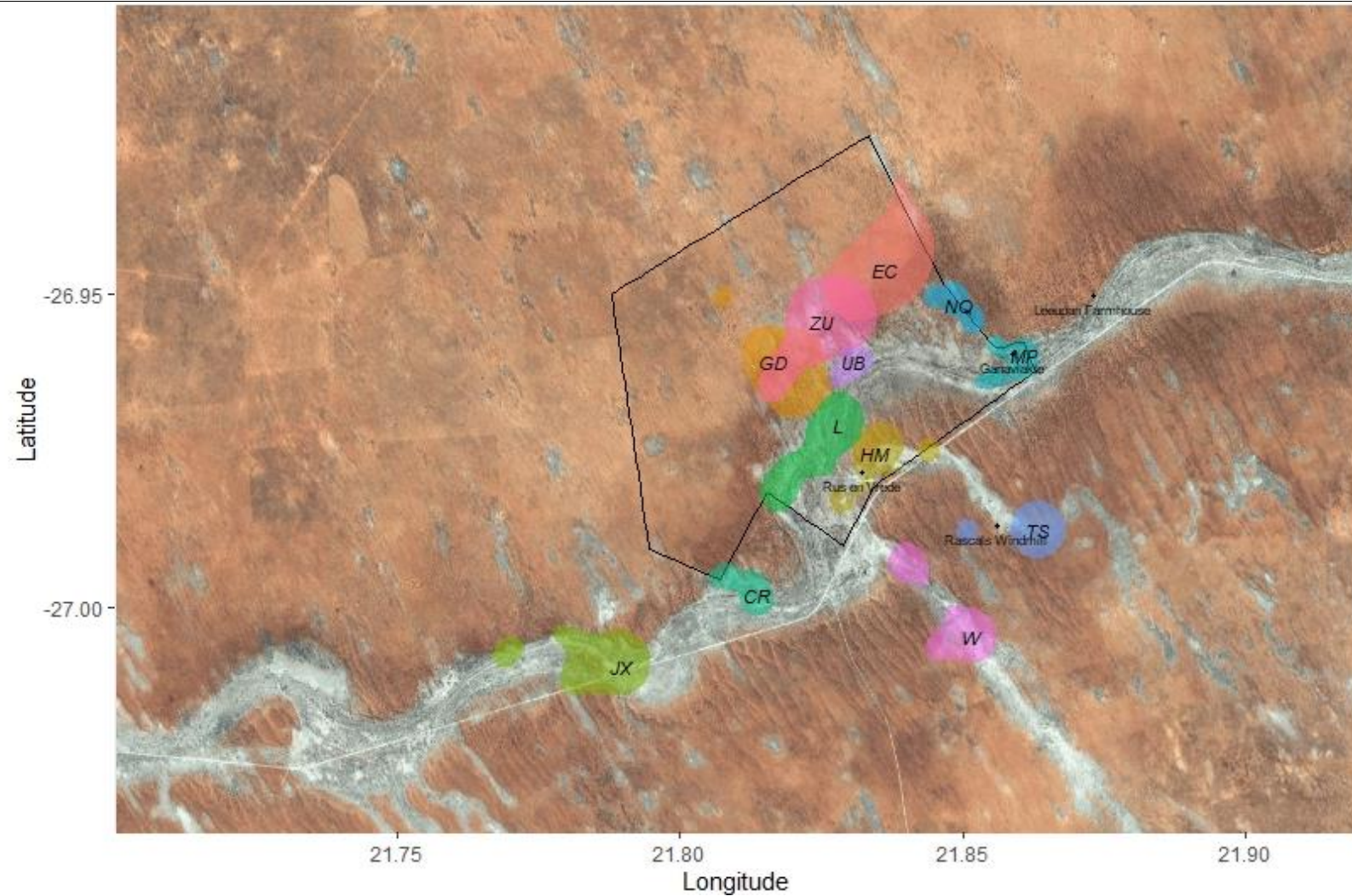
Zulus:

- Pixie (VWM210), Scuzi (VWM213), Jay-a-Rod (VWM216) immigrated into Zulus, while Xanax (VZUM050) emigrated out of Zulus into Lazuli in December. It is unclear who is the new dominant male.
- The three Whiskers males did not immigrate immediately; they encountered Zulus multiple times, with Scuzi (VWM213) once, Jay-a-Rod (VWM216) twice and Pixie (VWM210) nine times.
- All group members are healthy.

The following authors contributed to this report:

Síomha Campbell, Life History.

Group Territories December 2019



Key: CR: Little Creatures, EC: Elrond's Council, GD: Gold Diggers, HM: Hakuna Matata, JX: Jaxx, L: Lazuli, MP: Make-e-plan, NQ: Namaqua, UB: Ubuntu, TS: Tswana, W: Whiskers, ZU: Zulus.