



The Meerkatter

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

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Zulus invasion at Elrond's Council

As you may remember, Gandalf, the undyed dominant male at Elrond's Council was not seen on the very last session of September. There was a group split that afternoon, though it was unclear if Gandalf was part of this split, as the group rejoined at the sleeping burrow. It was thought that Gandalf had already gone below before the rest of the group returned, however the next morning he was still missing and has not been seen since. As it is summer, he could be roving, we will have to wait and see if he will return.

In the days after Gandalf's disappearance the group was not visited for a couple of days. On the 4th of October, however, a meerkat volunteer was waiting at the sleeping burrow for the group to get up, when who woke up with the group? One of our most notorious rovers... Sauce (VZUM026)!! He was being submitted to by the older Elrond's males Merry (VECM002), Aragon (VECM011), Samwise and Frodo (the two undyed wild yearling males). Sauce was also acting very dominant, marking everything and everyone in sight!



Sauce (VZUM026), Aragon (VECM009), Legolas (VECM010) and Gimli (VECM011) (R-L) taking a break after Sauce immigrated in and became the new dominant male of Elrond's Council. Photo Credit: Meerkat volunteer Siomha Campbell.

Over the next few days he continued to be dominant, and an aggressive dominant too! Snapping at some volunteers! Frodo, Samwise and Merry, did not seem to appreciate this new invader as they left on multiple occasions since the arrival of Sauce to Elrond's Council. On the 15th of October they left and have not been seen with the group since.



The new dominant couple at Elrond's Council. Tayl Baez (VBBF117) maintaining her position, while Palestrina (VLM211) took dominance from Sauce (VZUM026). Photo Credit: Meerkat volunteer Siomha Campbell.

This month there were some issues with the radio collar of Tayl Baez (VBBF117), and the group was not found for 10 days. On the 26th, thankfully, they were found again, this time with a second wave of Zulus invaders! Palestrina (VLM211), Langa (VZUM033) and Umfana (VZUM034) woke up with Elrond's council. What's more, Sauce, the original invader, was submitting to Palestrina who was now the one acting dominant!! Sauce on the other hand had returned to his usual self and was significantly less aggressive.

Of the members who stayed in Elrond's Council after the invasions, Kamala (VBBF116) seems to be the only one impacted by the arrivals. She has been evicted on a couple of occasions this month with Sauce paying a lot of attention to her and on one occasion waking up with her separately, away from the group. The other members of Elrond's Council are unaffected by the newcomers, often grooming them. On some occasions, the Zulus males will be foraging around the group while the original members of Elrond's Council forage together in the center of the Zulus males.



Smeagol (VECM006) and Umfana (VZUM034) resting together after the second wave of Zulus invaders. As you can see, Smeagol is unbothered by his new group mate. Photo Credit: Meerkat volunteer Rowan Weaver.

There is one way in which all members of Elrond's Council have been affected by the newcomers. With the influx of fully habituated meerkats Elrond's Council's habituation levels have substantially increased! Volunteers are now able to follow the group for longer and at closer distances. Hopefully this trend will continue, and Elrond's Council will become a fully habituated group in the near future! Only time will tell if the Zulus invaders will settle and if Elrond's Council will improve into a fully habituated group!

The release of Rovers

While Elrond's Council was gaining in numbers this was certainly not the case for many of the other groups here at the KMP. With summer returning, there were many rovers and evictees once again. This caused the numbers in most groups to lower! Even in Elrond's Council there were some movements, in October Merry (VECM002), Samwise and Frodo (the two undyed wild yearling males) appear to have gone roving. As well as Kamala (VBBF116) being evicted from the group by Tayl Baez (VBBF117) on two occasions.

With high numbers of rovers and evictees, Make-e-Plan and Lazuli were down to ten members each at certain times in October. Make-e-Plan had three roving males Kim (VMPM014), Kourtney (VMPM015) and Khloe (VMPM017) along with four evicted females: Crunchy Nut (VMPF006), Dauphnoise (VMPF007), Toscana (VMPF020) and Moo (VMPF019). The latter is not confirmed to have been evicted as the eviction was not witnessed.

At Lazuli, yet again there were many rovers: Finnick (VLM234), Thursday (VLM239), Fledermaus (VLM242), Luther (VLM245) and Israel (VLM247) were all roving for a large part of October. With Thursday and Fledermaus approaching other groups on an impressive 23 and 22 occasions respectively! Also at Lazuli, many of the females left the group, possibly evicted; Tonks (VLF235) left on two occasions, while Annie (VLF240), Weasel (VLF241),

Lennon (VLF246) and Sausage (VLF250) all left the group on one occasion this month. No eviction was witnessed; however, the older females have been previously evicted, and this season have received aggressions from the dominant female Sigma (VLF230).



A depleted Make-e-plan pausing for a drink. The group only contains from R-L; Bridgit (VQLF011), Banksia (VVHM117), Bigwig (VMPF022), the 6 sub adults born in March, and Tom (VMPM031) who is out of the frame Photo Credit: Meerkat volunteer Siomha Campbell.

The most extreme example this month, however, is Zulus. As you may have deciphered with Palestrina, Sauce, Langa and Umfana immigrated in Elrond's Council, this left Zulus with five members, all female!! The dominant female Spruddel (VZUF028), Lil'G (VZUF029), Lentil (VZUF032) and the two juveniles Pumbaa (VZUF048) and Timon (VZUF049). This was the case for multiple days throughout October.

However, there were multiple males interested in joining the new all-female Zulus! Just one day after the last of the four males had left, on the 11th of October, Shrew (VUBM018) was roving and immigrated into the group. Spruddel exerted her dominance over him, but eventually allowed him into the group! Shrew's stay at Zulus was short lived as, four days later, on the 15th, a wild male was seen around Zulus. Once this male was accepted into the group, Shrew left and returned to Ubuntu.



Spruddel (VZUF028), Timon (VZUF048), Lil'G (VZUF029), Lentil (VZUF032) and Pumba (VZUF048) enjoying an early morning as an all-female group of five. Photo Credit: Meerkat volunteer Léo Blondet.

However, perhaps Shrew should have risked staying a little longer as the wild male was not seen the next day! Zulus was the all-female group once again! It



stayed this way for almost 10 days, apart from one other wild male appearing for one session. Zulus did have some encounters with Goldeneye (VGDF007), and at one point it was thought that she would immigrate in. She had woken up with Zulus and had been foraging with the group for some time, however the group appeared to change their mind and chased her away.

On the 24th of October, Zulus were having encounters with Pixie (VWM210), Scuzi (VWM213) and Lilac (VWM214). The group was continuously war dancing and chasing the three males, then the three whiskers males started attempting dominance assertions on Zulus and were accepted into the group. Some will be reminded of a previous invasion involving three other Whiskers males earlier this year when Bonnie (VWM209), Clyde (VWM208) and Cleo (VWM205) immigrated into Namaqua. Fortunately for Zulus, this immigration was much more peaceful.

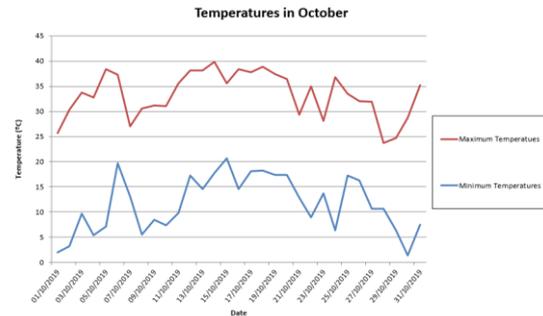
Things seemed to be calming down for yet another new version of Zulus; the three Whiskers males were settling into their new group. The five females seemed relatively unphased by the comings and goings of these different males. Then at the end of the month, another wild male appeared and immigrated into the group. However, this wild male appeared to have been habituated before! Volunteers initially could not approach him to closer than 20m, however, he quickly got used to volunteers approaching him to less than one meter! This has caused great speculation as to who this male could possibly be? He runs to the scales to be weighed! Judging by his size he is about the same age as Scuzi and Lilac, hopefully we might be able to identify him soon by reading his transponder tag – if he has one!

It seems the five Zulus females have swapped four Zulus males for three whiskers males and a semi wild male! It is unclear if all four of these males will stay with the group or if some or all will leave. Only time will tell. One thing is for sure summer; has definitely returned to the KMP!

Pregnancies in October 2019

Females pregnant in October	5
Females who aborted	0
Females who gave birth, litters lost	0
Females who gave birth, litter emerged	0
Females who gave birth, unknown outcome	2
Females still pregnant at the end of the month	3

Weather at the KMP



October 2019, as you can see was a month full of weather fluctuations here at the KMP. The month started cold with a minimum temperature on the 1st of 2°C. The weather warmed up towards Mid-October, it measured 39.9°C on the 14th. It cooled down again at the end of the month with our coldest temperature 1.4°C felt on the 30th.

October 2019 Life History Details

(Little) Creatures:

- Unfortunately, both collared males Kanye (VCRM002) and Watu Porini (VJXM104) were found dead this month, with only the collars remaining.
- Before his death Kanye (VCRM002) had left and returned to the group once.
- Currently there is no collared individual at the group, however, there is a search to find the group and hopefully put a collar on The Worm's Heart (VCRM010).

Elrond's Council:

- Palestrina (VLM211), Sauce (VZUM026), Langa (VZUM033) and Umfana (VZUM034) immigrated into Elrond's Council.
- Merry (VECM002) left the group on two occasions and returned once, he is still roving as of the 31st. Pippin (VECF003) left and returned to the group once.
- Kamala (VBBF116) was evicted twice in October and returned once. She has been trying to approach the group, having 2 encounters with the group while evicted.
- The group also had 3 encounters with unknown meerkats, as well as one group split of uncertain duration, and two that lasted less than a day.
- All four wild individuals as well as Merry (VECM002) and Kamala (VBBF116) were missing at the end of the month.
- The group looks healthy.

Gold Diggers:

- Goldeneye (VGDF007) left the group on two occasions and returned once. She was still missing as of the 31st. George (VGDM006) left the group this month and is also yet to return.
- All other Gold Diggers individuals look healthy.



Hakuna Matata:

- There were many rovers at Hakuna Matata this month, Pet (VCVM001), Dante (VHMM007), Guacamole (VHMM008), Pingu (VHMM017) and Shamrock (VHMM021) all left the group once, with Pingu (VHMM017) the only one to return this month. Twirl (VHMM014) and Oscar Jr (VHMM016) both left and returned to the group five and three times respectively.
- Hakuna Matata had one encounter with Finick (VLM234), fourteen encounters with Thursday (VLM239), thirteen encounters with Fledermaus (VLM242) and two encounters with Pixie (VWM210). They also had one inter-group interaction with Lazuli.
- Pet (VCVM001), Dante (VHMM007), Guacamole (VHMM008) and Shamrock (VHMM021) were still roving and therefore missing from the group as of the 31st of October.
- All individuals look to be in good health.

Jaxx:

- Baloo (VJXF080) gave birth this month, no pups have emerged yet.
- Riesling (VJXF124) has not been seen since the 30th of September and was given her last seen this month.
- John Wayne (VJXM114) left and returned to the group once this month, while Didah (VJXF112) was evicted and returned to the group once. They were both encountered by the group, John Wayne (VJXM114) once and Didah (VJXF112) on two occasions.
- The group also encountered Kanye (VCRM002) on two occasions, and unknown meerkats on three occasions.
- The group is in good health.

Lazuli:

- Lazuli had a busy month!
- Tonks (VLM235) gave birth.
- There were many group movements: Polon (VJXM095), Annie (VLF240), Weasel (VLF241) Lennon (VLF246), and Sausage (VLF250), left and returned to the group once.
- Finick (VLM234) left and returned on 5 occasions, Tonks (VLF235) and Thursday (VLM239) twice, Luther (VLM245) and Israel (VLM247) on three occasions. Fledermaus left once and is still yet to return to the group. The group encountered Israel (VLM247) on one occasion when he was roving.
- There were encounters with Twirl (VHMM014) four times, Oscar Jr. (VHMM016) twice, Shrew (VUBM018) once and with unknown meerkats on five occasions.
- Lazuli also had four inter-group interactions: three with Ubuntu and one with Hakuna Matata.
- All members are in good health.

Make-e-plan:

- Bridgit (VQLF011) is officially pregnant.
- Kim (VMPM014), Kourtney (VMPM015), Khloe (VMPM017) and Moo (VMPF019) all left the group once this month and have yet to return. Crunchy Nut (VMPF006), Dauphinoise

(VMPF007) and Toscana (VMPF020) were all evicted from the group in October.

- The group encountered Crunchy Nut (VMPF006) four times, Dauphinoise (VMPF007) twice, Khloe (VMPM017) twice, Moo (VMPF019) once and Toscana (VMPF020) on two occasions this month.
- Make-e-plan also encountered Pet (VCVM001) and Dante (VHMM007) twice, Guacamole (VHMM008), Mr Bojangles (VUBM015) and Bon-Bon (VUBM016) once, as well as unknown meerkats on 5 occasions.
- Crunchy Nut (VMPF006), Dauphinoise (VMPF007), Kim (VMPM014), Kourtney (VMPM015), Khloe (VMPM017), Moo (VMPF019), and Toscana (VMPF020) had not returned to the group by the end of the month.
- The remaining members of Make-e-plan all seem healthy.

Namaqua:

- Heatherleigh (VQLF018) is officially pregnant.
- Lewie (VLM228) left and returned to the group once this month, Bonnie (VWM20) on three occasions, while Clyde (VWM208) left on two occasions and has yet to return to the group.
- Namaqua encountered two unknown meerkats.
- Bonnie (VWM209) is currently limping on two legs, as himself and Clyde (VWM208) tried to take dominance over Lewie (VLM228) again. All three males were seriously injured in the fight that ensued. Lewie (VLM228) appears to have recovered from his injuries while Clyde (VWM208) has still not returned to the group since the fight, so his injuries have not been checked.

Tswana:

- Tswana are still without a collared individual. Multiple capture attempts have been made this month; unfortunately, none have been successful.
- All members look healthy.

Ubuntu:

- Shrew (VUBM018) immigrated into Zulus for a short time before immigrating back into Ubuntu. He also left and returned to the group three times in October. Mr Bojangles (VUBM015) and Bon-Bon (VUBM016) left the group two and three times respectively. They have still not returned as of the end of the month.
- Ubuntu had many encounters this month: once each with Twirl (VHMM014), Oscar Jr (VHMM016), Pingu (VHMM017), Luther (VLM245) and Israel (VLM247), along with three encounters with both Palestrina (VLM211) and Langa (VZUM033) and four with Umfana (VZUM034), and 5 encounters with unknown meerkats.
- Ubuntu had four inter-group interaction: three with Lazuli and one with Zulus.
- The group is in good health.



Whiskers:

- Swift (VWF176) is once again officially pregnant.
- Pixie (VWM210), Scuzi (VM213) and Lilac (VWM214) emigrated from the group into Zulus. Previously, Pixie (VWM210) had left and returned to the group on five occasions.
- The group had nine encounters with both Thursday (VLM239) and Fledermaus (VLM242), six with Finick (VLM234), seven with Israel (VLM247) and four with unknown meerkats.
- All group members are healthy.

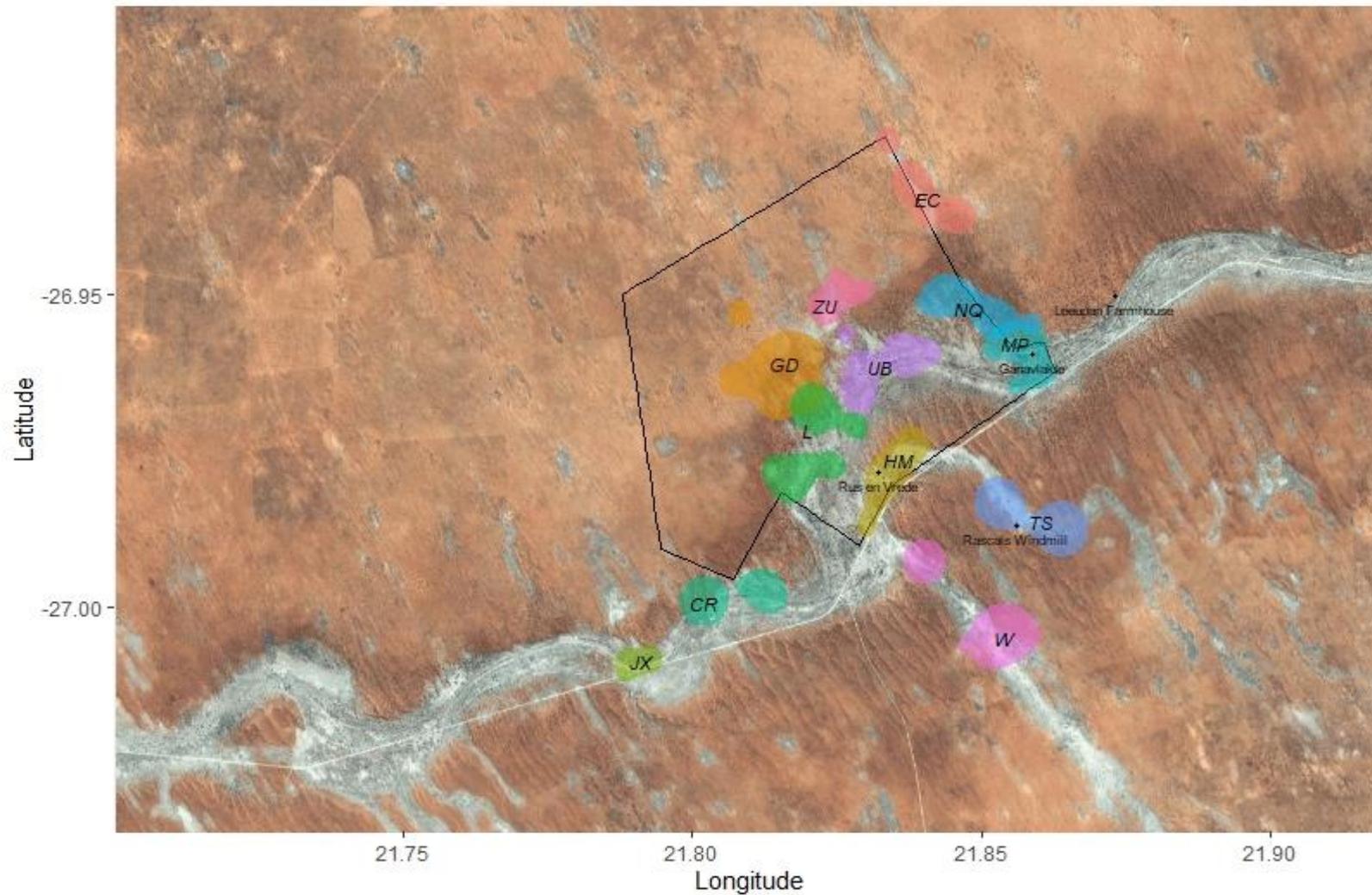
Zulus:

- Palestrina (VLM211), Sauce (VZUM026), Langa (VZUM033), and Umfana (VZUM034) emigrated from the group into Elrond's Council. Previous to the emigration, Palestrina (VLM211) had left and returned to the group twice, while Sauce (VZUM026), Langa (VZUM033) and Umfana (VZUM034) had left and returned once.
- There is currently no clear dominant male at Zulus as Pixie (VWM210), Scuzi (VM213), Lilac (VWM214) and a wild male have all immigrated into the group. Shrew (VUBM018) immigrated into and emigrated out of the group this month.
- Zulus had four encounters with Goldeneye (VGDF007) as well as four encounter each with Pixie (VWM210), Scuzi (VM213), Lilac (VWM214) before they immigrated in. The group also encountered George (VGDM006) on one occasion and unknown meerkats on six occasions this month.
- The group had one inter-group interaction with Ubuntu.
- All members are in good health.

The following authors contributed to this report:

Siómha Campbell, Life History.

Group Territories October 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.