



The Meerkatter

The Friends of the Kalahari Meerkat Project Report - www.kalahari-meerkats.com - August 2022

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A swarm of subgroups

The unusual winter rains led to an upsurge of pregnancies at the KMP. Pregnancies in meerkats were reported at almost every group, and with the pregnancies started the usual cycle of female evictions. Males, on the other hand, started roving with the advent of the rains. With group-less males and females scattered across the reserve, it is no surprise that August saw the creation of potentially four new meerkat subgroups.

The first subgroup was briefly mentioned in the last Meerkatter. On the 21st of July, Zulus yearling subordinate male littermates Bear (VZUM056), Mion (VZUM057) and Zuma (VZUM059) were spotted foraging alongside Hakuna Matata yearling subordinate females Lord Havelock (VHMF049), Yasha (VHMF051) and Seymour (VHMF053). Unfortunately, due to them being close to Heights farm, which we currently cannot access, there have been no further sightings this past month. As we cannot be sure whether they are still together, we have not created a new subgroup for them yet. However, the lack of individual encounters with any of our other groups is a promising sign that they are sticking together and staying out of trouble!

Next, we saw the formation of Zulus 4 when Gold Diggers adult subordinate males Beatrice (VGDM014) and Rogelio De La Vega (VGDM015) were found foraging with Zulus adult subordinate females Salazar (VZUF051), Helga (VZUF052) and Rowena (VZUF054) in the afternoon on the 5th of August. All five individuals had left their respective groups the previous day. Due to the close proximity of their groups at the time, it is unsurprising that the five ran into each other so quickly. Due to Beatrice being the radio-collared individual of Gold Diggers, we were able to make constant checks on Zulus 4. Unfortunately, this left Gold Diggers without a trackable individual, which made finding the group quite challenging.

Zulus 4 was declared an official subgroup on the 9th of August, as this was the third day that the subgroup was seen foraging together. There was further excitement for the subgroup as Salazar and Helga were both potentially pregnant when they left Zulus.

Giving birth within the subgroup would expedite the subgroup's progress into becoming a new official meerkat group. Alas, it was not meant to be for Zulus 4. Helga was seen trying to rejoin Zulus on the 17th of August, though that attempt was rebuffed, and she was back with Zulus 4 when they were next visited on the 19th. A couple more sightings followed, and the group was last seen fully together on the 23rd of August. On the 28th, Beatrice and Rogelio were found waking up with Gold Diggers and immigrated back into the group, effectively marking the end of Zulus 4. What this means for the females, especially Helga who all observers agreed was definitely pregnant when last spotted, remains to be seen.

Make-e-plan 5 was the next subgroup to be made, when former Brussels Sprouts 2 adult male Shandy (VHMM023) and sub-adult Love (VBSM003) were found foraging with former Make-e-plan yearling subordinate females Cassie (VMPF050), Sophie (VMPF055), Archie (VMPF057) and Hollie (VMPF058) on the 9th. The subgroup lasted until the 18th of August, when Shandy and Love's penchant for roving returned and they were found at a different burrow from the females. Since then, as previously mentioned, Love and Shandy have been trying to join Namaqua, while on the 26th, the females were found waking up at the same sleeping burrow as Make-e-plan, in a possible attempt to rejoin the group though they were promptly chased off. There is some hope yet for this subgroup though! Namaqua yearling subordinate male Fredi was seen with the females when they had an inter group interaction with Make-e-plan on the 30th. While he has joined the females, we are unsure if the group will last due to the females trying to rejoin Make-e-plan, but if they all do decide to settle down, this could lead to the reformation of Make-e-plan 5.

Our final subgroup is the most unlikely of them all. On the 9th of August, after a long afternoon search for a collarless Gold Diggers, this observer spotted a couple of individuals close to the group. Their dye marks matched up with those of the Runaways yearling subordinate male littermates Meenu (VRWM001) and Roger (VRWM005), who had left the group sometime between the 22nd of July and the 3rd of August. It seemed unlikely that it would be those individuals as they had been born quite a fair distance away and never known our reserve, yet on



the 19th, after further sightings, the individuals were finally transpondered and confirmed to be Meenu and Roger. For them to have made it all this way, back to the reserve where the females who formed Runaways are from, is quite remarkable! Furthermore, they were found with recently departed Gold Diggers yearling subordinate female littermates BMO (VGDF020) and Shelby (VGDF022), which means their travels were not in vain! Due to their lack of a radio collar, checks on the subgroup are infrequent but with luck, they could eventually be declared an official subgroup.



A rare photo taken in February of Gold Diggers yearling subordinate female Shelby (VGDF020) who is notoriously hard to photograph due to her status as a habituation individual. Photo credit: Masters student Thomas Berkowitz.

And thus ends the subgroup frenzy that rocked the month of August. Whether any more subgroups will be formed in the month of September remains to be seen but in the build-up to summer and times aplenty, you never know just when you will find a whole new group waiting around the corner.

Is this the end for Namaqua?

As you may know Namaqua have been suffering from tuberculosis since November 2019. Since the beginning of the last breeding season the group has only lost two meerkats, yearling subordinate female Hiccup (VNQF016) and adult subordinate female Megara (VNQF020). Things were not looking too bad for the group. However, at the beginning of June their health took a steep decline.

On the 5th of June yearling subordinate male Hanspeter (VNQM029), started to become very

skinny and lost a lot of weight. On the 17th he started to become very lethargic, and it was becoming clear to the observers that he was probably going to die. He was last seen on the 15th of July. Prior to Hanspeter's disappearance, on the 27th of June dominant male Umfana (VZUM034) started to show swellings on his forearms/ forepaws. On the 3rd of July he was being reported as skinny, then lethargic. Yearling subordinate male Sidney (VMPM059) was quick to follow Umfana, becoming lethargic and skinny on the 25th. Sidney was last seen on the 23rd of August and Umfana on the 28th. Both meerkats were incredibly skinny and lethargic when they were last seen and have probably succumbed to their tuberculosis. These latest spates of disappearances differ to Hiccup and Megara as their conditions are starting to decline far more rapidly and we are seeing multiple meerkats becoming sick at the same time in the group. Even the younger meerkats are succumbing. On the 28th of August sub-adult subordinate female Luisa (VNQF031) started to become lethargic and skinny.



Namaqua at the sleeping burrow. This photo was taken 2 days before yearling subordinate male Hanspeter (VNQM029) was last seen. He is the meerkat curled up at the front of the group. You can also see signs of dominant female Manzai's (VNQF013) pregnancy in this photo (the bipedal meerkat on the left of the group). Photo credit: Life History Coordinator Lila Chillingworth.

This had the observer team concerned as back in June dominant female Manzai (VNQF013) started to show signs of pregnancy and on the 8th of July, she was made officially pregnant. How was such a sick group of meerkats going to be able to care for and handle the extra stress of rearing pups? On the 8th of August Manzai gave birth. Tuberculosis was not the only threat to the pups' survival. The group was being beset upon by roving adult male Shandy (VHMM023) and sub-adult male Love (VBSM003)! Shandy and Love are no strangers to Namaqua. In June and July, whilst they were both roving males,



they approached Namaqua multiple times. We had hoped Shandy and Love had settled down into a new group when they were seen with Make-e-plan yearling subordinate females Cassie (VMPPF050), Sophie (VMPPF055), Archie (VMPPF057) and Hollie (VMPPF058) on the 9th of August. However, this subgroup did not last. On the 18th Shandy and Love were found away from the females. Three days later they reappeared at Namaqua. The males were seen going below, after the group, at Namaqua's babysitting burrow. The next morning (22nd) the encounters began!

Namaqua responded to the males waking up at their burrow by war dancing them away multiple times. This did not deter the males who did not retreat far and kept re-approaching the group. Interestingly, yearling subordinate male Fredi (VNQM028), who was displaying dominance behaviour by leading the war dancing and frenzy marking, was not aggravated by the presence of Love. Maybe Fredi did not see a sub-adult as a threat or struggled to differentiate Love from the sub-adults in his own group. During all the chaos of the encounters Manzaï approached Love and started to lead him away from the group. Once they were a fair distance away, she presented to Love and he mounted her. The sex lasted fourteen minutes, although the last three were when the actual copulation happened. It was great to see such a rare behaviour so close up and in such great detail. Maybe with Fredi acting as dominant, whilst Umfana was so weak and sick, Manzaï was motivated to find someone to mate with who was not so closely related to her. After, Manzaï headed back to the group with Love following closely behind. Upon Manzaï's return the group set off to forage and Shandy and Love followed. The two males continued to encounter the group all morning.



Sub-adult male Love (VBSM003) and dominant female Manzaï (VNQF013) mating. Photo credit: Life History Coordinator Lila Chillingworth

Shandy and Love continued to encounter the group for 6 days straight. During this time Umfana was incredibly skinny and lethargic. Just keeping up with the group consumed all of his energy. One possible that Shandy and Love spent so much time at Namaqua was because of the poor health of the dominant male, which would make a bid from dominance by them much easier than at other groups. On the day Umfana disappeared (29th) Shandy and Love were still encountering the group. Love woke up and was immediately chased off. Shandy tried to join the group but was unsuccessful

so stayed behind at the burrow. At the burrow yearling subordinate female Mia (VNQF027) was suckling the three pups and seemed very nervous with Shandy being so close. Something spooked her and she and the pups went below. Shandy followed. In the afternoon Shandy was found foraging with the group. He had finally managed to join them. Something to note is, Fredi had not woken up with the group that morning and continued to be absent in the afternoon session (he was later seen on the 30th with the Make-e-plan females). Whilst the group was foraging Shandy would sniff Mia, who would chatter in response. This indicates to us, that maybe Mia was in oestrus. The group returned to the burrow where disaster had been spelt for the pups.

Back at the burrow, Love had been loitering around. He was immediately chased off but did not go far. The group's return appeared to be going normally although there was no sign of the pups. That was until pup thirty-nine (VNQP039) desperately ran out the burrow. Its front left leg was bending in an unnatural angle, was covered in blood and it was struggling to run on it. Despite this the pup dragged itself to a little dip in the ground, where it spat and hissed aggressively at any meerkat that tried to approach it. The group was mystified. For half an hour they desperately all made move calls to try and encourage the pup to come back to the sleeping burrow. However, anytime they approached or tried to carry the pup, it would aggressively hiss at them, clearly terrified. Finally, after the rest had gone below, Manzaï was able to pick up the pup and take it below. The 29th was the last time all three pups were seen. From how pup thirty-nine behaved it suggests that it had most likely been attacked by a meerkat, probably with the aim of killing it. This would make sense for either Shandy or Love as they would not want to invest resources in pups that were not their own and could create competition for their future offspring. Another possibility is a neighboring group could have come across the babysitting burrow and attacked the pups. Either way we cannot say for certain.

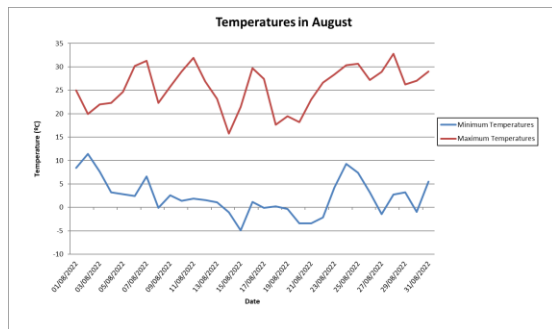
With the pups most likely dead, Namaqua has lost their next generation. There are only eight meerkats remaining in the group, with half of those being sub-adults. With the increased rate of meerkats becoming unwell and disappearing over the last few months, it raises the question whether there will be enough left to help raise the next generation? If not, will Namaqua slowly disappear with each individual who becomes sick?



Pregnancies in August 2022

Females pregnant in August	21
Females who aborted	2
Females who gave birth, litters lost	2
Females who gave birth, litter emerged	1
Females who gave birth, unknown outcome	10
Females still pregnant at the end of the month	6

Weather at the KMP



The average maximum temperature was 25.6 °C and the average minimum temperature was 2.3 °C. On the 28th temperatures rose to their highest of 32.8 °C. The coldest morning was on the 15th, with temperatures dropping to -4.9 °C. It only rained twice in August at the beginning of the month on the 2nd and 3rd. On the 2nd we had the most rain for the month with 9.8 mm. This was followed by 2mm on the 3rd.

August 2022 Life History Details

Recently the way in which we collect data at the groups changed. Due to this we created different categories, for each of the different ways data was collected at each group. These categories were:

Full data collection group (FDC)

We collected LH data at the group and regularly visited the group for full adlib and weights sessions.

Life History monitoring group (LHM)

Observers tended to visit these group for shorter amounts of time. We collected LH data and increased our visits when new pups needed to be habituated. We did not collect adlib data at these groups but collected morning and evening weights a few times per week.

Habituation group (HAB)

Habituating meerkats to our presence was the main goal at these groups. As the group's habituation

progresses, we started collecting LH and weights data as well. In a later stage, we tried to follow the group after morning weights, introduced lunch weights and started approaching the group in the afternoon.

Sub-group (SUB)

The amount of data we collected at these groups depended mainly on whether a radio-collared individual is present. If that is the case, we tried to collect LH, weights and adlib data, as it is very interesting to witness group dynamics within these newly formed groups. However, we did not always have a radio collar at these groups. In these cases, we focused on collecting LH data during opportunistic sightings.

Full Data Collection Groups (FDC):

Elrond's Council (FDC):

- There were 9 out of 16 individuals present at the end of August.
- Female dominance is still unsettled. Regular dominance competition behaviours are observed between yearling subordinate female Mojo Jojo (VECF038) and yearling female Snoop Kat (VECF039), who are the only remaining females at the group.
- Mojo Jojo was made officially pregnant on the 27th.
- Many of the males have been leaving and returning to the group this month. Thus far the departures have not been long lasting or permanent. dominant male Palestrina (VLM211) left and returned 4 times. He also left on the 31st and didn't return within the month. Adult subordinate male Pavlova (VECM022) left and returned 4 times. One of those times was to have an encounter with Alba. He also left on the 31st and didn't return within the month. Subordinate adult male Untitled (VECM025) left and returned to the group three times. Two of those occasions were to have encounters with Alba. Subordinate males: adult Charlie (VECM031) yearling Milo (VECM034) and sub-adult Chabal (VECM047) all left and returned twice this month. Subordinate males: adult Pucky (VECM023), yearling Ozzie (VECM033), yearling subordinate male Kuzco (VECM040), sub-adult subordinate male Survivor (VECM042) and sub-adult Petit Di Gio (VECM046) all left and returned once this month.
- Elrond's Council had no encounters or inter-group interaction this month.
- On the 30th a group split occurred and Mojo Jojo, Kuzco, Survivor, yearling subordinate male Shisharka (VECM041) and sub-adult subordinate male Karadoc (VECM049) became separated from the group, with the split not yet ended the next morning. From recent experiences, we do not believe these departures from the group will be permanent ones.
- All individuals at Elrond's Council seem to be in good health



Gold Diggers (FDC):

- There were 16 out of 17 members present at the end of the month.
- Adult subordinate female Juliet (VGDF009) returned to the group on the 21st however left again on the 25th in the post inter-group chaos. Adult subordinate females Fleabag (VGDF005) was found acting as part of the group on the 29th.
- Dominant female Goldeneye (VGDF007) gave birth on the 18th.
- The 25th was the last time juvenile male Shen Long (VGDM041) was seen. He has been given a leave line and has not returned to the group.
- Yearling subordinate females BMO (VGDF020) and Shelby (VGDF022) both emigrated out of the group on the 19th and 13th respectively. Subordinate adult males Beatrice (VGDM014) and Rogelio De La Vega (VGDM015) both emigrated out of the group on the 4th. However, their subgroup didn't last, and they both immigrated back into the group on the 28th.
- Subordinate yearling male Baymax (VGDM028) left and returned to the group three times. He left once because of the post inter-group chaos and once to go have encounters with Ubuntu.
- Gold Diggers had 11 encounters this month. One with subordinate yearling males Meenu (VRWM001) and Roger (VRWM005) on the 9th. One with subordinate adult male Gurke (VHMM036) on the 13th. Five with subordinate adult male Moteck (VLM261) on the 25th. All the rest were with unknown meerkats.
- The group had one inter-group interaction with Lazuli on the 25th.
- No group splits were observed this month.
- Habituation at Gold Diggers is considered *Advanced Progress* as habituation work is being done on Fleabag and Yearling subordinate female Ricky Baker (VGDF031). At the end of the month Fleabag can be followed at distances between 1-5m and Ricky Baker 1-3m.
- Adult subordinate female Juliet (VGDF009) is still being listed as 'not seen' due to observers struggling to identify her. Her habituation has suddenly declined, and it is hard to give her identifying marks.
- All individuals seem to be in good health.

Jaxx (FDC):

- There were 25 out of 28 meerkats present at Jaxx at the end of July.
- Dominant female Baloo (VJXF080) was made officially made pregnant this month.
- Yearling females Tuna Fish (VJXF145) and Lord Kinbote (VJXF151) were given their last seen again. This is not surprising, as we did not see their new group again this month.
- Subordinate adult male Tootles (VJXM139) returned on the morning of the 6th but then left the same day along with adult subordinate males Rincewind (VJXM131), Nibs (VJXM137) and Oliver (VJXM144) sometime after the morning session. Subordinate yearling males The Dude (VJXM142) and Cigarette Smoking Man (VJXM153) both left and returned on the 11th. On the 17th Vince Noir did not wake up with the group and has not been seen since.

- The group have one encounter with an unknown meerkat on the 11th.
- No inter-group interactions or group splits were observed at Jaxx this month.
- All individuals at Jaxx seem to be in good health.

Lazuli (FDC):

- All 16 individuals were present at the end of August.
- The dominant female Sigma gave birth on the 28th.
- Adult subordinate male Moteck (VLM261) left and returned three times. Once on the 8th to go roving at Ubuntu and on the 12th and 27th he returned later that day. On the 12th dominate male Odin (VLM266), Moteck, Yearling subordinate males Taco (VLM273) and Phar Lap (VLM275) and subordinate sub adult male Lord Escort (VLM282) all left in the morning. They all returned later that day. Taco left to go roving at Ubuntu on the 26th and returned the next day.
- No encounters were observed at Lazuli this month.
- They had 3 inter-group interaction this month. Two with Ubuntu on the 12th and 26th. One with Gold Diggers on the 25th.
- Two daily group splits occurred this month on the 25th and 29th.
- All individuals seem to be in good health.

Namaqua (FDC):

- There were 8 out of 13 members present at the end of August.
- Dominant male Shandy (VHMM023) emigrated into the group on the 29th. He was made dominant male on the 29th.
- Dominant female Manzaï (VNQF013) gave birth on the 7th. The on the 12th yearling subordinate female Mia (VNQF027) was seen aborting a 2cm pup which she immediately ate. A pregnancy was created and ended for her on this date.
- On the 15th yearling subordinate male Hanspeter (VNQM029) was given his last seen.
- Former dominant male Umfana (VZUM034) and yearling subordinate male Sidney (VMPM059) were last seen with the group on the 28th and 23rd, respectively. Both were in bad health, probably due to tuberculosis, and were still absent at the end of the month. The pups VNQP038, VNQP039 and VNQP040 were also absent at the end of the month. From the way VNQP039 was behaving on the evening of the 29th (see article above) we suspected they may have all been killed by another meerkat or meerkat group.
- Yearling subordinate male Fredi (VNQM028) left and returned to the group once, then on the 30th he emigrated out of the group.
- Namaqua had encounters with sub-adult male Love (VBSM003) on the 22nd, 23rd, 25th, 26th, 28th, 29th and 30th. They also had encounters with Shandy on the 22nd, 23rd, 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th and 29th.



- No inter-group interactions or group splits were seen in August.
- We suspect that the Sub-adult subordinate female Luisa (VNQF031) is also showing symptoms of tuberculosis. She had become skinny and lethargic.

Side Quest (FDC):

- All 12 meerkats were present at the end of the month.
- On the 20th 3 pups from dominant female Pumba's (VZUF048) litter emerged.
- Yearling subordinate female Amadu (VSIF002) was given her last seen on the 18th, however she may have been seen with litter mate yearling subordinate female Sky (VSIF003) on the 21st but we cannot say for certain.
- Yearling subordinate female Brie (VSIF005) returned on the 3rd.
- There were no individual encounters, inter-group interactions, or group splits observed during the month.
- All individuals appear to be healthy.

Ubuntu (FDC):

- There were 15 out of 16 individuals present at the end of the month.
- Dominant male Greebo (VHMM048) was made dominant male this month. Due to a change in the protocol, that individuals only need direct submissions from over half of the meerkats who are yearlings or older, Greebo was retroactively made dominant on the 6th of July.
- Adult subordinate female Cthulhu (VUBF035) was not found with the group on the 31st.
- On the 23rd dominant female Daisy (VBBF111) gave birth.
- The previous dominant male Ogg (VHMM047) was given hist last seen on the 1st.
- Yearling subordinate female Agazoth (VUBF039) left on the 22nd and returned on the 28th. Cthulhu's eviction came to an end on the 29th before leaving the group again on the 31st.
- Ubuntu had 5 encounters with adult subordinate male Moteck (VLM261) on the 9th. They encountered an unknown adult on the 13th. They had 2 encounters with 2 unknown adults on the 22nd. They encountered adult subordinate male Lupin (VWM234) on the 25th and 29th and three times on the 31st. On the 31st they also had 3 encounters with yearling subordinate male BarOne (VWM248) and one with yearling subordinate male Baymax (VGDM028). They had 2 encounters with yearling subordinate male Taco (VLM273) on the 26th. On the 29th they had an encounter with an unknown female.
- Ubuntu had 2 inter-group interactions with Lazuli on the 12th and 26th.
- Ubuntu had two daily group splits.
- Habituation at the group is now considered to be *complete*. Adult subordinate male Captain Barbosa's (VLM265) habituation has reached a point where observers can comfortably follow him whilst foraging and collect weights data from him. He is now no longer being classed as a habituation individual.

- All individuals in Ubuntu appear to be in good health.

Whiskers (FDC):

- All 19 members present at the end of the month.
- The dominant female Swift (VWF176) gave birth on the 19th. However, with the pups left on their own multiple times and the group changing burrows on the 26th, it was concluded the pups were lost before emergence.
- Adult subordinate females Luna (VWF235) and Laika (VWF236), yearling subordinate females Flake (VWF247) and Crunchie (VWF250) were all made officially pregnant this month.
- Adult subordinate male Lupin (VWM234) and yearling subordinate male Floki (VWM241) returned on the 1st of the month, while yearling subordinate male BarOne (VWM248) returned on the 4th. Lupin left 4 more times this month and returned thrice, while BarOne left twice and returned once more. Luna, Laika and Crunchie all left and returned twice, while yearling subordinate female Chomp (VWF251) left and returned a total of 3 times, finally staying put from the 21st onwards. Flake left on the 17th and returned on the 20th.
- They had one encounter with an unknown adult on the 4th.
- There were no inter-group interactions seen at Whiskers this month.
- One group split of an uncertain duration occurred on the 29th.
- All individuals at Whiskers seem to be healthy.

Zulus (FDC):

- All 8 individuals were present at the end of August.
- Dominant female Spruddel (VZUF028) aborted her litter on the 12th, with the group moving burrows the day after her weight loss was noted.
- Yearling subordinate males Bear (VZUM056), Mion (VZUM057) and Zuma (VZUM059) were given their last seen this month. However, given they were seen with yearling subordinate females Lord Havelock (VHMF049), Yasha (VHMF051) and Mooncake (VHMF053) from Hakuna Matata on the 21st of July near Heights, we believe they might be alive there despite not being seen again.
- Adult subordinate females Salazar (VZUF051), Helga (VZUF052) and Rowena (VZUF054) emigrated out of the group on the 4th.
- All individuals in Zulus appear to be healthy.

Life History Monitoring Groups (LHM):

Alba (LHM):

- There were 10 out of 11 individuals present at the end of August. On the 18th dominant female Pippin (VECF003) did not wake up with the group and has not been seen since. With her disappearance, female dominance at the group is now unsettled.
- On the 10th adult subordinate female Tolkien (VECF019) was found with the group and had been accepted back. On 20th yearling



subordinate females Kilie's (VECF036) eviction came to an end as she was found at with the group at the sleeping burrow.

- On the 7th Pippin gave birth. After her disappearance the group continued to look after the litter with Tolkien continuing to lactate, Kilie starting to lactate and babysitters being left. However, on the 28th both female stopped lactating and the group stopped leaving babysitters. It is too soon to officially kill off this litter however the signs are not good.
- On the 25th yearling subordinate female Moos (VECF035) was given her last seen.
- Alba has had a few encounters this month. On the 9th they had an encounter with dominant male Palestrina (VLM211) and adult subordinate males Pavlova (VECM022) and Untitled (VECM025). Untitled returned to encounter alba again, twice, on the 19th. Alba also had encounters with unknown meerkats this month. On the 9th they encounter two unknown meerkats. On the 12th an unknown female and on the 18th one unknown meerkat.
- No inter-group interaction or group splits were observed this month
- All individuals appear healthy.

Brussels Sprouts (LHM):

- There were 8 out of 9 individuals present at the end of August.
- On the 22nd we finally saw adult subordinate male Jack (VGDM010) submit to dominant male James (VGDM011). As we have already seen submissions from adult subordinate male Gurke (VHMM036), James could be made the dominate male.
- The dominant female Arabella (VMPP035) gave birth on the 27th. However, her litter has been classed as born and lost before emergence as no females had started lactating, no babysitters were left, and the group immediately changed sleeping burrow.
- Adult subordinate female Vivienne (VMPP038) was made officially pregnant this month.
- On the 28th sub-adult subordinate female Minnow (VBSF004) was not seen in a short session. On the 29th it was confirmed she was not with the group and given a leave line. She has not been seen since.
- No encounters, inter-group interactions or group splits were seen this month.
- Habituation at Brussels Sprouts is considered *Advanced Progress*. We are focusing our habituation efforts on Jack. With the group being visited less, his habituation has regressed a little. He is comfortable with observers approaching him to two meters and one meter if he is distracted by foraging. Luckily, he is still super keen for his egg reward, so getting his weight is not much of a problem.
- All individuals at Brussels Sprouts seem to be in good health.

Hakuna Matata (LHM):

- Hakuna Matata have not been seen at all this month.

- Due to this we cannot say if any of the meerkats that left last month have returned to the group.

Runaways (LHM):

- All 14 members were present at the end of the month.
- On the 19th dominant female Bigwig (VMPP022) gave birth. Yearling subordinate female Elsa (VRWF002) was made officially pregnant this month.
- Yearling subordinate males Meenu (VRWM001) and Roger (VRWM005) emigrated out of the group on the 3rd.
- Sub-adult subordinate female Venya (VRWF011) did not wake up with the group on the 28th but returned before the group left to forage and was accepted back. Yearling subordinate female Angel (VRWF004) and Elsa were both evicted on the 4th. Elsa was accepted back into the group on the 20th only to be evicted again almost immediately. On the 22nd this second eviction came to an end. Angel was accepted back into the group on the 21st.
- They had an encounter with 3 unknown meerkats on the 4th.
- The group had 1 daily group split on the 20th.
- No inter-group interactions were seen this month.
- All individuals seem to be in good health.

Habituation Groups (HAB):

Make-e-Plan (HAB):

- There were 13 out of 15 individuals present at the end of August.
- At the end of the month either juvenile male Shrimp (VMPP070) or Jude (VMPP071) were absent. Both meerkats have lost their ID marks and observers are struggling to tell who the remaining meerkat is. The group has also been visited quite infrequently which is exasperating this issue.
- Dominant female Bridget (VQLF011) was made pregnant this month.
- Subordinate adult males Priscilla (VMPP046) and Sketchy Bongo (VTSM019), Subordinate yearling male Cole (VMPP056) and Subordinate yearling female Bonxie (VMPP054) all received their last seen this month.
- Subordinate Yearling females Cassie (VMPP050), Sophie (VMPP055), Archie (VMPP057) and Hollie (VMPP058) emigrated out of the group on the 9th. Subordinate adult female Millewa (VMPP048) was to follow on the 16th. Cole did not wake up with the group on the 9th.
- Make-e-Plan had 7 encounters this month. On the 26th they had three with Cassie, Archie and Hollie and a fourth with just Archie. The rest were with unknown females.
- On the 30th they had an inter-group interaction with Make-e-plan 5.
- No group splits were observed in August.



- With adult subordinate male Sketchy Bongo (VTSM019) receiving his last seen on the 8th, the groups habituation is classed as *In progress* and habituation work now focuses on the litters born after he arrived at the group. These are: VMP2201, VMP2202, VMP2203, VMP2204, and VMP2205. Sketchy Bongo was an avid babysitter, and his poor habituation has rubbed off on many of the individuals, especially litter VMP2201. Also, the group went through periods where they were visited infrequently (radio collared individual lost their radio collar) which also negatively impacted their habituation. At the end of the month the focus was on approaching individuals and getting them to take rewards (egg or water) instead of running away. Subadult subordinate female Stinky (VMPF063) and Subadult subordinate males Wonky (VMPM062), Woozy (VMPM066), Oozy (VMPM067), juvenile males VMPM068, Shen (VMPM069), Shrimp (VMPM070), Jude (VMPM071) and Snapdragon (VMPM074) were our main focus.
- All individuals in the group appear to be healthy

Phoenix (HAB):

- 5 unmarked individuals were present at the end of the month.
- One unknown female is pregnant.
- No encounters or interactions were witnessed this month.
- The group's habituation status is still *In Progress*. We can approach the group to within 3-5 meters. They will stay sunning when slow body movements are performed. There is still only one juvenile meerkat that eats egg at Phoenix.
- We do not have a radio collared individual at the group and are still focusing on cage habituation.
- All individuals at Phoenix appear to be healthy.

Trackie-Daks(HAB):

- All 17 individuals were present at the end of the month.
- Adult subordinate female Hachi (VWF238) returned to the group on the 30th.
- Dominant female Fly (VWF237) gave birth on the 29th.
- Previous dominant female Bel-Hurricane (VWF231) was given her last seen on the 2nd.
- Trackie-Daks encountered an unknown individual on the 22nd.
- There were no inter-group interactions, or group splits observed during the month.
- The habituation level is currently *In Progress*. Our habituation efforts are mainly focused on the dominant male Coquette (VTSM014) and adult subordinate male Jiminy Cricket (VTSM007). Coquette's positive improvement continues as he can be groomed whilst drinking water and sometime without the water. Jiminy Cricket can be approached at the sleeping burrow up to 1 meter. Short follows have started at the group. Coquette can be followed between 2-5 meters. Jiminy Cricket is much better and can be followed between 1-2 meters.
- All individuals appear to be healthy.

Sub-Groups (SUB):

Gold Diggers 2 (SUB):

- On the 17th Yearling subordinate males Meenu (VRWM001) and Roger (VRWM005) were found waking up with yearling subordinate female Shelby (VGDF022). The subgroup Gold Diggers 2 (GT) was created on this day and all the individuals listed above immigrated into the group
- On the 19th yearling subordinate female BMO (VGDF020) immigrated into the subgroup when she was found waking up with the group.
- The subgroup was still together at the end of the month.

Make-e-Plan 5 (SUB):

- On the 9th adult male Shandy (VHMM023) and sub adult male Love (VBSM003) were found foraging together with Subordinate Yearling females Cassie (VMPF050), Sophie (VMPF055), Archie (VMPF057) and Hollie (VMPF058). The subgroup Make-e-Plan 5 (MV) was created on this day and all the individuals listed above immigrated into the group.
- On the 18th the group was disintegrated as Shandy and Love were found separately, away from the females. From the 21st onwards Shandy and Love started having encounters with Namaqua.
- On the 26th Cassie, Archie and Hollie left to have had encounters with Make-e-Plan. They were given return line when found back with the group on the 30th.
- On the 30th the subgroup was resurrected as Cassie, Archie, Sophie and Hollie were found with subordinate adult female Millewa (VMPF048) and yearling subordinate male Fredi (VNQM028).
- Millewa and Fredi immigrated into the group on the 30th.
- On the 30th Hollie was made officially pregnant.
- On the 30th they had an inter-group interaction with Make-e-plan.
- The subgroup was still together at the end of the month.

Zulus 4 (SUB):

- On the 5th adult subordinate females Salazar (VZUF051), Helga (VZUF052) and Rowena (VZUF054) and Subordinate adult males Beatrice (VGDM014) and Rogelio De La Vega (VGDM015) were found together acting as a group. The subgroup Zulus 4 (ZF) was created on this day and all the individuals listed above were immigrated into the group.
- On the 23rd Helga was made officially pregnant.
- On the 17th Helga left to go have encounters with Zulus. She was back with the group when they were next found on the 19th.
- On the 28th Beatrice and Rogelio De La Vega were emigrated out of the group as they were found waking up, back at Gold Diggers.
- With the emigration of all the males out of the subgroup, the subgroup was disintegrated on



the 28th. Salazar, Helga and Rowena were moved into the group unknown.

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