



# The Meerkatter

The Friends of the Kalahari Meerkat Project Report - [www.kalahari-meerkats.com](http://www.kalahari-meerkats.com) - December 2022

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## Lost Litters in the Breeding Season

It is the most wonderful time of the year! The September to April period is the busiest time of the year for the Kalahari Meerkat Project observers. With the arrival of summer comes the rainy season in the Kalahari. With an increase in food quantity around the desert, the meerkats respond to the feast by increasing their population numbers to take full advantage. This period is considered by us observers to be the meerkat breeding season. Since the start of September, we have observed multiple pregnancies formed amongst our females, yet sadly there has not been the large influx of pups that was expected. Here are all the pups that could have been from September to December, while sprinkling in some positive news of some adorable pups that survived.

Abortions were observed at Alba, Brussels Sprouts, Elrond's Council and Trackie-Daks. For Alba, subadult subordinate female Maya (VALF003) was determined to have aborted on the 31<sup>st</sup> of October, due to having lost a considerable amount of weight shortly after being confirmed pregnant. The same scenario was reported for Brussels Sprouts dominant female Arabella (VMPPF035) and Trackie-Daks dominant female Fly (VWF237), who aborted on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of October respectively. The most interesting abortion observed was for Elrond's Council dominant female Snoop Kat (VECF039) on the 18<sup>th</sup> of September. She was observed discharging an amniotic sac, which she then proceeded to consume. This pregnancy was in its early stages as we had not even noticed that she was pregnant as the time.

Alba had three litters born in November, with dominant female Tolkien (VECF019) giving birth at the start of the month, while subadult subordinate females Rani (VALF002) and Madhubala (VALF006) gave birth at the end of the month. Even though there were lactaters and babysitters for the group, they were probably only for Tolkien's pups; Tiramisu (VALM007), Cleopatra (VALF008) and Felix Jaeger (VALM009). The whole group moved burrows on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December and Rani and Madhubala's litters are considered lost before emergence.

Lazuli adult subordinate female Dumpling (VLF272) saw something similar happen to her litter, which was born on the 7<sup>th</sup> of December. Dominant female Sigma (VLF230), who had given birth to a litter earlier last month, moved the group with her litter soon after

Dumpling's litter was born, leaving them possibly abandoned, though we cannot confirm having never seen Dumpling's pups.

Gold Diggers have had unfortunate luck this breeding season with three litters lost before emergence. Dominant female Goldeneye (VGDF007), adult subordinate female BMO (VGDF020) and yearling subordinate female Yoriki (VGDF033) gave birth on 31<sup>st</sup> of October, the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November, and the 19<sup>th</sup> of December respectively. All three litters were considered to have been lost before emergence soon after birth. While infanticide is potentially the reason for the loss of the first two litters, with other pregnant females in the group at the time, the loss of the third litter has the most evidence for infanticide, with Goldeneye awaking the night after Yoriki gave birth as having somehow gained weight overnight, and with possible red blood marks around her face. Goldeneye is pregnant once more, so there is hope that Gold Diggers will have a new litter of pups soon.



Gold Diggers dominant female Goldeneye (VGDF007) with visible red marks on her face on the morning that yearling subordinate female Yoriki (VGDF033) gave birth. Photo Credit: Life History Coordinator Maahir Jusabani.

Jaxx dominant female Baloo (VJXF080) gave birth on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October. However, observers never saw any pups, with the group moving sleeping burrows on the 7<sup>th</sup>. It is suspected that yearling subordinate females Scully (VJXF149) and Gray (VJXF150) may have had a hand in their disappearance, being pregnant at the time. The same logic applies to Ubuntu subordinate female Agazoth (VUBF039), who gave birth on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December while dominant female Cthulhu (VUBF035) and yearling subordinate female Artemis (VUBF044) were both pregnant. Given the lactations and babysitting

information we have collected, we can conclude the litter was lost before emergence.

Whiskers dominant female Luna (VWF235) and yearling subordinate female Crunchie (VWF250) have had horrible luck with their litters, with each of them losing two litters before emergence this breeding season, with both of them giving birth in September and December. On both occasions, there were other females within the group who gave birth after them, thus making infanticide a possible reason for the loss of those litters, though this allowed the seven pups born in September to have a better chance of survival, with all seven of them still alive at the time of writing.

Zulus dominant female Sprudde (VZUF028) gave birth on the 8<sup>th</sup> of November, however there were no lactations or babysitters recorded for the litter. There were no other pregnant females within the group, so the loss of this litter is more likely due to Sprudde's complications with litters rather than any other external factor. This marks Sprudde's eighth unsuccessful litter out of a total of eleven litters, a very poor success rate for a dominant female.

Finally, though Side Quest dominant female Pumba's (VZUF048) litter is considered to have successfully emerged, out of the three pups seen, only pup Toupie (VSIF019) was able to be given markings and added to the database, with the other two pups not seen since shortly after their emergence. Toupie however is an energetic and wonderful pup who is much beloved by observers here at the KMP.



Side Quest pup Toupie (VSIF019) taking a nap after a long morning foraging. Photo Credit: Life History Coordinator Maahir Jusabani.

These are all the litters we have sadly lost over the past few months. However, we are only at the midpoint of the current breeding season, and with plenty more females being confirmed as pregnant, hopefully the arrival of more cute pups is just around the corner!

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## The Adventures of Captain Barbosa

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The month of December has been a transitional month for Ubuntu. There has been a lot of drama on both the male and female sides of the group. The power vacuum left by former dominant female

Daisy's (VBBF111) death resulted in dominance competition between adult subordinate females Cthulhu (VUBF035), Masekind (VUBF037) and Agazoth (VUBF039), with a victor finally emerging. On the male side, beloved adult subordinate male Captain Barbosa (VLM265) was shown the exit door by dominant male Greebo (VHMM048). This led to him having a bunch of adventures during his time as an inadvertent rover. Due to the proximity of Ubuntu to the KMP's main farmhouse, Barbosa was seen by the observer team quite frequently, and we were able to track his movements somewhat accurately.

Before we get to the star of the article though, here is a quick update on Ubuntu's female dominance. After a month and a half without a dominant female, Cthulhu was officially confirmed as Ubuntu's new dominant female on the 17<sup>th</sup> of December. While she had not yet received submissions from more than half the eligible females in the group, Masekind, Agazoth and yearling subordinate female Artemis (VUBF044) had all left the group by that point, possibly evicted by a heavily pregnant Cthulhu. Given she was the only eligible female left within the group who could assume the role, Cthulhu was finally awarded the position. All three females have since returned to the group at separate points, and have directly submitted to Cthulhu, cementing her position as Ubuntu's new dominant female.

Now back to the meerkat, the myth, the legend himself; Captain Barbosa! On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December, an observer noticed a commotion within the group. Greebo had begun to viciously attack Barbosa. Barbosa managed to extricate himself and flee, which resulted in him being evicted from the group. His eviction did not last long as one and a half hours later, he managed to rejoin the group without any further troubles. This brief eviction only acted as a precursor for what would come later in the month for Barbosa.

On the 17<sup>th</sup>, there was a lot of activity, with Masekind, Agazoth and Artemis, who were not part of the group at that time, trying and failing to rejoin Ubuntu. Barbosa had been observed acting as part of the group that session. The next morning, Barbosa did not wake up with the group. Given observers were recording babysitting information for Agazoth's litter, the observer assumed Barbosa was being a good babysitter. Barbosa had instead somehow left the group, as he was spotted by the observer some distance away. The group also noticed him and proceeded to wardance and chase him away. This marked the start of Barbosa's adventure. Later that morning, on the way back from Ubuntu, the observer noticed him foraging with Masekind. In the evening, the two meerkats were joined by Agazoth and Artemis, forming their own little group.

Observers were hopeful that Barbosa and the other females would form their own subgroup, but they instead seemed to be focused on rejoining Ubuntu. On the 19<sup>th</sup>, the subgroup approached Ubuntu in the evening. They went up and down Ubuntu's sleeping burrow several times before eventually being chased out by the group. During the fracas, Barbosa was seized by Greebo, who proceeded to attack him

viciously. Several other members of the group joined in and attacked Barbosa before he eventually managed to get free and escape.



Adult subordinate male Captain Barbosa resting in the shade. Photo Credit: Life History Coordinator Maahir Jusabani.

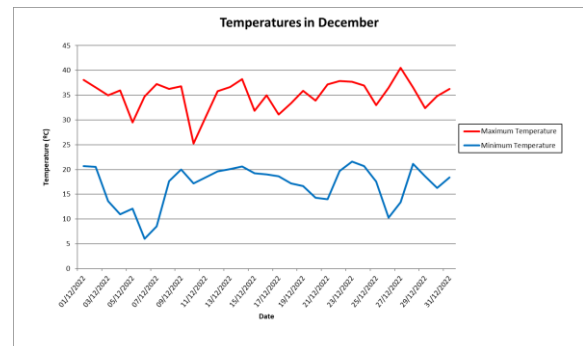
On the 23<sup>rd</sup>, an observer headed out to look for Ubuntu. During her search, she found Barbosa with some females, but they were not the Ubuntu females, but rather Gold Diggers adult subordinate females Fleabag (VGDF005), Juliet (VGDF009) and yearling subordinate female Poki (VGDF029) as well as an undyed female suspected to be Gold Diggers adult subordinate female Shelby (VGDF022). Barbosa had found some new females to forage with! Finally, the odds looked good for a new subgroup! What would they be called? Captain's Crew perhaps, or Barbosa's Angels. The answer, it turned out, would be nothing, as one hour later, Barbosa once more made an appearance at Ubuntu, sans the Gold Diggers females. The subgroup had dissolved immediately, and Barbosa once more resumed his quest to rejoin Ubuntu.

Sadly, as of the end of the month, Barbosa has not yet rejoined the group. He has still been sighted a couple more times, meaning he is staying alive, and is currently still staying close to the group. What the future holds for Captain Barbosa, we do not know. Here at the KMP, we want only the very best for our beloved meerkat.

## Pregnancies in December 2022

<b>Females pregnant in December</b>	<b>21</b>
Females who aborted	0
Females who gave birth, litters lost	7
Females who gave birth, litter emerged	0
Females who gave birth, unknown outcome	7
Females still pregnant at the end of the month	7

## Weather at the KMP



Temperatures in December have been extremely hot with an average max temperature of 35.1 °C, with the hottest day being on the 27<sup>th</sup> of December with temperatures peaking at 40.5 °C. The coldest morning was on the 6<sup>th</sup> of December with a temperature of 6.0 °C. The total rainfall recorded for the month was 66.6 ml.

## December 2022 Life History Details

Due to the large number of groups we are covering, we have made some changes to the way we are collecting data at the KMP. There are four different levels of data collection, that we will briefly introduce here.

### Full data collection group (FDC)

We collect LH data at the group and regularly visit the group for full adlib and weights sessions.

### Life History monitoring group (LHM)

Observers tend to visit these groups for shorter amounts of time. We collect LH data and increase our visits when new pups need to be habituated. We do not collect adlib data at these groups but collect morning and evening weights a few times per week.

### Habituation group (HAB)

Habituating meerkats to our presence is the main goal at these groups. As the group's habituation progresses, we start collecting LH and weights data as well. In a later stage, we try to follow the group after morning weights, introduce lunch weights and start approaching the group in the afternoon.

### Sub-group (SUB)

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



## **Full Data Collection Groups:**

### **Elrond's Council (FDC):**

- All 17 individuals were present at the end of December.
- Dominant male Palestrina (VLM211) left the group 4 times on the 9<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>. He returned back to the group all 4 times. Adult subordinate male Pavlova (VECM022) joined Palestrina on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>, while adult subordinate male Pucky (VECM023) also joined them on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Adult subordinate males Charlie (VECM031), Ozzie (VECM033) and Milo (VECM034) also left the group on the 19<sup>th</sup>, though at a later time, and had returned to the group by the next morning.
- Elrond's Council had encounters on the 29<sup>th</sup>, seeing 3 unknown meerkats at the start of the morning, and a further 2 meerkats, possibly part of the same 3 meerkats, later in the morning.
- They had no inter-group interactions or group splits recorded this month.
- All individuals at Elrond's Council seem to be in good health.

### **Gold Diggers (FDC):**

- There were 12 out of 20 members present at the end of December.
- Yearling subordinate female Yoriki (VGDF033) was found to have given birth on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Unfortunately, that litter has been determined to have been lost. While we cannot confirm this, the most likely cause for the loss is infanticide, with dominant female Goldeneye (VGDF007) waking up with red blood marks on her face and having gained weight overnight.
- Goldeneye was confirmed as officially pregnant on the 24<sup>th</sup>.
- Adult subordinate male littermates Beatrice (VGDM014) and Rogelio De La Vega (VGDM015) left the group 4 times, and returned thrice, leaving them absent from the group as of the end of the month. It is expected that they will return again given their previous roving patterns. Adult subordinate female littermates Fleabag (VGDF005) and Juliet (VGDF009) were seen away from the group on the 17<sup>th</sup>, and adult subordinate female BMO (VGDF020) was found to have left the group on the 19<sup>th</sup>. All 3 females are yet to return at the end of the month. Yearling subordinate male Jojo (VGDM032) left the group on the 29<sup>th</sup>. Finally, at the end of the month, yearling subordinate female Tuna Fish II (VGDF026) was evicted from the group.
- Gold Diggers had 2 encounters with Lazuli adult subordinate male Moteck (VLM261) on the 4<sup>th</sup>.
- Gold Diggers had no inter-group interactions or group splits recorded in December.
- Habituation at Gold Diggers is considered *Advanced Progress* as habituation work is being focused on Fleabag, Juliet and subadult subordinate female Dizle (VGDF040). Dizle was made a hab individual this month as her habituation levels deteriorated and she became extra jumpy around observers. Fleabag remains the most skittish individual at the group prior to her departure and is not comfortable with

observers closer than 2m. Juliet has had great progress this past month and can be weighed more frequently using the water bottle.

- Habituation work on yearling subordinate female Ricky Baker (VGDF031) is considered complete, with Ricky Baker constantly approachable, and she can be weighed more frequently.
- Juvenile female Triss Merigold (VGDF045) has developed a peculiar swelling on her left rib that deflates and then refills multiple times over the course of a day.

### **Jaxx (FDC):**

- All 21 meerkats were present at Jaxx at the end of December.
- Yearling subordinate females Scully (VJXF149), Gray (VJXF150) and Queen Jane (VJXF159) all returned back to the group this month.
- Dominant female Baloo (VJXF080) gave birth on the 21<sup>st</sup>.
- Yearling subordinate female Jub Jub (VJXF160) left the group on the 12<sup>th</sup>, while yearling subordinate female Quetzal (VJXF163) left the group on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Both females had returned by the end of the month after Baloo gave birth.
- Yearling subordinate male Jack of Hearts (VJXM159) was given his Last Seen this month.
- Jaxx had encounters with an unknown male on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, and an encounter with an unknown meerkat on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.
- No inter-group interactions were observed at Jaxx this month.
- Jaxx had one daily group split recorded on the 31<sup>st</sup>.
- All individuals at Jaxx seem to be in good health.

### **Lazuli (FDC):**

- All 24 individuals were present at the end of December.
- Dominant female Sigma's (VLF230) litter produced a total of 4 pups, including the 300<sup>th</sup> individual to be a part of Lazuli!
- Adult subordinate female Dumpling (VLF272) gave birth on the 7<sup>th</sup>. However, with the group moving burrows on the 13<sup>th</sup>, Dumpling's litter is considered to have been lost before emergence.
- Adult subordinate male Moteck (VLM261) left the group on the 4<sup>th</sup> to go roving at Gold Diggers before waking up with the group the next morning.
- Lazuli had 2 encounters with Whiskers adult subordinate female Laika (VWF236) on the 18<sup>th</sup>. Laika was joined by Whiskers adult subordinate female Emily Bronte (VWF243) for one of the encounters.
- Lazuli had no inter-group interactions or group splits recorded this month.
- All individuals seem to be in good health.

### **Namaqua (FDC):**

- There were 7 out of 8 members present at the end of December.
- Former dominant female Manzai (VNQF013) did not wake up with the group on the 8<sup>th</sup>. She was last seen on the 5<sup>th</sup> and was very weak, barely able to move around and unable to join the group foraging, instead lying down close to the burrow

the whole morning. It is suspected that she finally succumbed to tuberculosis.

- Dominant female Mia (VNQF027) is now considered to be the new dominant female given she is the only eligible female left within the group.
- Subadult subordinate male Love (VBSM003) had his radio collar removed on the 31<sup>st</sup> after having a bad reaction to it. With Shandy also having similar reactions in the past, and the other individuals in the group not eligible to be outfitted with a collar due to their TB symptoms, this leaves Namaqua without a radio-collared individual.
- Namaqua had an encounter with an unknown male on the 21<sup>st</sup>.
- No inter-group interactions or group splits were seen in December.
- Mia and subadult subordinate female Pika-Magenta-Sloan (VNQF036) still retain submandibular lumps from the last month, while subadult subordinate males Calen Du Lee (VNQM035) and Bruno (VNQM037) have both developed lumps by the end of the month.

#### Side Quest (FDC):

- 10 out of 11 meerkats were present at the end of the month.
- Dominant female Pumba (VZUF048) was made officially pregnant on the 6<sup>th</sup>.
- Juvenile male Sbeve (VSIM016) was given his Last Seen this month.
- Subadult subordinate male Spike Spiegel (VSIM014) left the group on the 15<sup>th</sup> and is still absent from the group at the end of the month.
- There were no individual encounters, inter-group interactions or group splits recorded this month.
- All individuals appear to be healthy.

#### Ubuntu (FDC):

- There were 13 out of 18 individuals present at the end of the month.
- Dominant female Cthulhu (VUBF035) was finally made dominant on the 17<sup>th</sup> as the only eligible female left within the group at the time.
- Both Cthulhu and yearling subordinate female Artemis (VUBF044) became officially pregnant at the start of the month.
- Adult subordinate female Agazoth (VUBF039) gave birth on the 10<sup>th</sup>, while Cthulhu gave birth on the 19<sup>th</sup> and Artemis on the 27<sup>th</sup>. Agazoth's litter has been classified as lost before emergence due to the group leaving the pups on their own constantly, and no sign of lactations.
- An evictions was seen this month at Ubuntu, with adult subordinate female Masekind (VUBF037) evicted by Cthulhu on the 15<sup>th</sup>.
- Barbosa and Masekind were all out of the group once more by the 18<sup>th</sup>, along with Agazoth and Artemis. Artemis had also left and returned to the group once before this. Masekind would return to the group on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, while Agazoth and Artemis were back on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, with Barbosa the only one of that group not returning at the end of the month. Subadult subordinate males Asani (VUBM045), Rufaro (VUBM046), Kwame (VUBM047) and Jaivyn (VUBM048) all left the

group on the 24<sup>th</sup> and have not returned by the end of the month.

- Ubuntu had an encounter with an unknown adult on the 16<sup>th</sup>.
- No inter-group interactions were observed at Ubuntu this month.
- Ubuntu had one daily group split on the 15<sup>th</sup>.
- All individuals in Ubuntu appear to be in good health.

#### Whiskers (FDC):

- 18 out of 22 members were present at the end of the month.
- Adult subordinate female Virginia Woolf (VWF244) returned to the group in the middle of the month.
- Virginia Woolf, alongside yearling subordinate females Flake (VWF247) and Crunchie (VWF250) were all confirmed as pregnant. By the end of the month, all 3 females, as well as dominant female Luna (VWF235) who was pregnant at the end of last month, had all given birth. Unfortunately for Luna's and Crunchie's litters, with the group moving burrows quite soon after their birth, the litters are considered to have been lost before emergence.
- Adult subordinate males Lupin (VWM234), Floki (VWM241) and Oscar Wilde (VWM245) alongside yearling subordinate males Barone (VWM248) and KitKat (VWM249) all left the group at the start of the month. KitKat returned to the group but then left again on the 17<sup>th</sup>. Lupin was sighted once in the middle of the month close to Whiskers, so he has not been moved out of the group yet, but Floki, Oscar Wilde and Barone have all been emigrated out of the group at the end of the month.
- Adult subordinate females Laika (VWF236) and Emily Bronte (VWF243) have still not rejoined the group, but with constant sightings this month, they have not been moved out of Whiskers yet.
- Whiskers had encounters with an unknown adult on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>, and with 2 unknown individuals on the 17<sup>th</sup>, as well as an encounter with an unknown male on the 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Whiskers had an inter-group interaction with Hakuna Matata on the 17<sup>th</sup>.
- Whiskers had no group splits recorded this month.
- All individuals at Whiskers seem to be healthy.

#### Zulus (FDC):

- All 10 individuals were present at the end of December.
- Adult subordinate females Salazar (VZUF051), Helga (VZUF052) and Rowena (VZUF054) were all immigrated back into the group this month, with Salazar and Helga rejoining on the 6<sup>th</sup>, while Rowena was back a week later on the 13<sup>th</sup>.
- Yearling subordinate female Spoekies (VZUF062) was made officially pregnant on the 29<sup>th</sup>.
- Dominant male Scuzi (VWM213) was given his Last Seen this month.

- Yearling subordinate male Tazara (VZUM064) left and rejoined the group twice on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and the 29<sup>th</sup>.
- Zulus had encounters with Salazar, Helga and Rowena on the 4<sup>th</sup>. Gold Diggers rover adult subordinate male Beatrice (VGDM014) encountered them on the 3<sup>rd</sup> while his littermate Rogelio De La Vega (VGDM015) encountered them on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>. Gold Diggers yearling subordinate female Poki (VGDF029) was also encountered on the 6<sup>th</sup> alongside an unknown, undyed female, who is potentially Gold Diggers adult subordinate female Shelby (VGDF022). Finally, there were 2 encounters with unknown adults on the 6<sup>th</sup>, and an encounter with an unknown male on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.
- Zulus have had no inter-group interactions or group splits this month.
- All individuals in Zulus appear to be healthy.

### **Life History Monitoring Groups:**

#### **Alba (LHM):**

- There were 11 out of 12 individuals present at the end of December.
- Subadult subordinate females Rani (VALF002) and Madhubala (VALF006) both had their litters lost before emergence with the group moving burrows early in the month.
- Dominant female Tolkien (VECF019) was confirmed as officially pregnant on the 21<sup>st</sup>.
- Adult subordinate female Kilie (VECF036) left the group twice and returned once, leaving her absent from the group at the end of the month.
- Alba had an encounter with an unknown meerkat on the 11<sup>th</sup>.
- Alba have not had any inter-group interactions or group splits this month.
- All individuals appear healthy.

#### **Brussels Sprouts (LHM):**

- There were 10 out of 11 individuals present at the end of December.
- Dominant male Gurke (VHMM036) assumed dominance on the 7<sup>th</sup> after receiving a direct submission from adult subordinate male James (VGDM011), who was the only other eligible male in the group.
- James returned to the group at the start of the month, while adult subordinate male Jack (VGDM010) left the group around the same time.
- No encounters, inter-group interactions or group splits were seen this month.
- Habituation at Brussels Sprouts is considered *Advanced Progress*. Jack is the individual that requires habituation work but since he left the group at the start of the month and has not been seen since, there has been no progress made. If he does not return to the group, this would render habituation at Brussels Sprouts complete.
- All individuals at Brussels Sprouts seem to be in good health.

#### **Hakuna Matata (LHM):**

- Hakuna Matata were seen once this month on the 17<sup>th</sup>.
- This sighting was during an inter-group interaction with Whiskers. Most individuals are now unmarked and cannot be identified.

#### **Runaways (LHM):**

- All 18 members were present at the end of December.
- Runaways were only visited twice this month. Both times, subadult subordinate male Adolin (VRWM012) was not seen, but given they were both short sessions, we cannot confirm his departure yet.
- Yearling subordinate females Angel (VRWF004) and Hrairoo (VRWF008) were made officially pregnant on the 17<sup>th</sup> after being visited by a senior observer, and dominant female Bigwig (VMPF022) was made pregnant on the 30<sup>th</sup> after a visit from a different senior observer.
- Angel and Hrairoo were confirmed as having given birth on the 30<sup>th</sup>.
- Runaways had no encounters, inter-group interactions or group splits recorded this month.
- All individuals seem to be in good health.

#### **Vetkoeks (LHM):**

- All 4 individuals were present at the end of the month.
- Vetkoeks were sighted twice this month within our reserve.
- Dominant female Mooncake (VHMF053) was considered pregnant in those two sightings and with both sightings being made by senior observers, an official pregnancy for her has been made.
- The group has no radio-collared individual but if seen consistently enough on our reserve, will be outfitted with one eventually. There was hope that Mooncake, if pregnant, will give birth within our reserve.

### **Habituation Groups:**

#### **Make-e-Plan (HAB):**

- There were 15 out of 18 individuals present at the end of October.
- Subadult subordinate male Woozy (VMPM066) was given his Last Seen this month.
- Subadult subordinate male Wonky (VMPM062) was moved out of the group this month but has not been given his Last Seen yet.
- No encounters, inter-group interactions and group splits were observed in December.
- The group's habituation is classed as *In Progress* with habituation work focused on the litters born into the group this year. The main focus for the observers is getting the group accustomed to hand movements and grooming. Most of the individuals within the group are now weighable, which is a promising sign for the future. Special attention is still being given to subadult subordinate male Jude (VMPM071), who is the most skittish individual within the group. He is fine with an observer at 5m away

provided they are at the burrow when he wakes up, otherwise he is extremely unapproachable.

- All individuals in the group appear to be healthy.

**Phoenix (HAB):**

- Phoenix have not been seen for the whole of December.
- The group's habituation status is still *In Progress*. We hope the lack of sightings has not caused their habituation levels to regress.
- All individuals at Phoenix appeared to be healthy last month.

**Trackie-Daks (HAB):**

- All 21 individuals were present at the end of the month.
- 4 pups have emerged as part of adult subordinate female Hachi's (VWF238) litter.
- Yearling subordinate male George (VTDM008) was moved out of the group this month but has not yet been given his Last Seen.
- There were no encounters, inter-group interactions, or group splits observed during the month.
- The habituation level is currently *In Progress*. Habituation efforts are focused on dominant male Coquillet (VTSM014). He was not weighed in December but would approach the scale for water. During group follows, he can be followed at 3-8m on a good day. Now that Hachi's litter has emerged, extra attention to their habituation is being provided!
- All individuals appear to be healthy.

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**The following author contributed to this report:**

Maahir Jusabani, Life History Coordinator