



# The Meerkatter

The Friends of the Kalahari Meerkat Project Report - [www.kalahari-meerkats.com](http://www.kalahari-meerkats.com) - June 2023

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## Ubuntu – 'I am because we are'

The behaviour of meerkats is a remarkably interesting study, which is why the Kalahari Meerkat Project has been able to collect around 30 years' worth of meerkat behaviour. Meerkats are social mammals who live in groups of around ten to twenty-five individuals. Typical group composition includes two dominant individuals, other subordinate adults, yearlings, sub-adults, juveniles, and pups. In some areas of behaviour, the group dynamics can reflect a human family, such as conflict between family members or different individuals vying for the dominant position. The similarities end in how we deal with these conflicts, with meerkats tending to use their teeth more.

Ubuntu is one of our older groups on the reserve and closest to the main farmhouse. The group has had many conflicts and disasters over the last few years. When looking at the dominance in recent years, they have had quite an intense turnover. The group was seen for the first time in September of 2016. Dominant male Scar (VUBM021) only became officially dominant in April 2018, because before this time, dominance could not be determined. Dominant female Logi (VBBF104) was dominant from the formation of the group and was dominant until 2017, when her littermate, Daisy (VBBF111), took over the dominance position. Scar and Daisy kept the peace between the Ubuntu family until Scar disappeared in April 2021.

Dominant male Mr. Worldwide (VUBM031) became dominant of the group, but when the kat is away, the mice will play, and when Mr. Worldwide went roving and did not return soon after, then-subordinate male Jumper (VTSM017) who was part of the group, took the lead when well-known adult subordinate male Captain Barbosa (VLM265) submitted to him, making him the dominant male of Ubuntu.

The catastrophes of Ubuntu come in to play here. In April 2022 Jumper was hit by a car on the main road, and since Captain Barbosa was the only viable male in the group, he finally had his chance to become dominant male. This was a short-lived victory, because a month later, adult males Ogg (VHMM047) and Greebo (VHMM048) from Hakuna Matata immigrated into the group. Barbosa instantly submitted to them, and Ogg became dominant. Ogg left the group in September 2022, either to go roving or because he was predated. Barbosa continued to

submit to Greebo, making him the new dominant male.

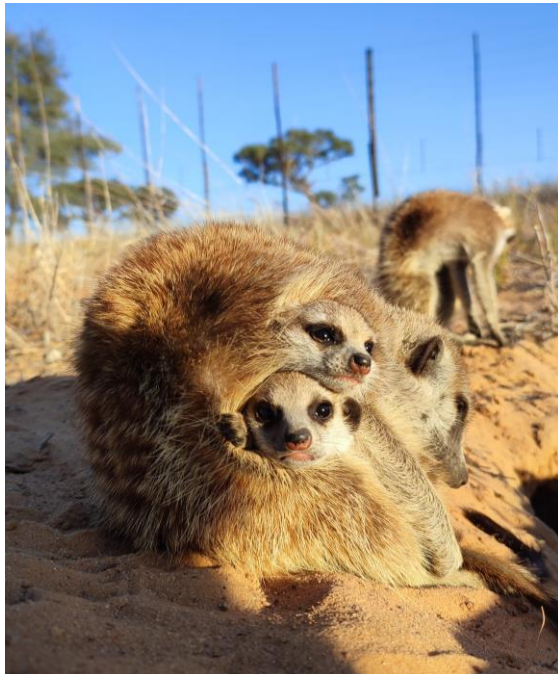
The dominance turnover continued on the females' side, as Daisy died from what we presume was a snake bite in October 2022. As with human society, when the matriarch is gone, the daughters will rise up, and adult females Cthulhu (VUBF035), Masekind (VUBF037), Agazoth (VUBF039) and Artemis (VUBF044) all vied for the position. Cthulhu came out on top. April seems to be cursed however, because on the 5th of April 2023, Cthulhu was hit by a truck on the main road while trying to cross. There has been an increased amount of dominance assertions from Agazoth and Masekind, while Artemis left the group on the 19<sup>th</sup> of May. She has not returned to the group at the time of writing, even though the dominance position has been settled.

The word Ubuntu means 'I am because we are', which we associate with humanity. We can see Greebo does not conform to this way of life, because since the beginning, we can see Captain Barbosa has had a rough time, and Greebo has not made this easier. Every time Barbosa tries to join the group, he is chased off, but will continue to be sighted by observers around the group. He is probably banking on the other Ubuntu individuals following the Ubuntu life and accepting him back into the group. Human families tend to have a family member that they will tolerate at Thanksgiving and Christmas, and I think Barbosa, bless his heart, fills this role.



Subadult subordinate male Wobble (VUBM064) standing in a field of devil's thorn flowers when he was just under two months old. Photo credit: Life History Coordinator Annelise van Eeden

Another disaster that has befallen the group in the last year was that they were attacked by an unknown predator, potentially a terrestrial predator based on the injuries that the group sustained. This occurred between the 19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> of January, because when an observer went there on the 21<sup>st</sup>, the group had sustained multiple minor injuries. This potentially had a negative effect on the pups that had been born around that time, at least for pup Wobble (VUBM064), who was born a week later than the two older pups, Stokkies (VUBF062) and Bruindtjie (VUBF063). He lost his index finger on his left hindfoot to the predator. He started foraging with the group when he was only around 55 grams, where usually pups start foraging with the group when they are nearly double that size. Since then, he has gained weight slowly, and the most recent pups born to Cthulhu before she died, have caught up to him weight-wise. He would not have survived if the group did not look after him by pup feeding and allolactating for him and his older sisters.



Dominant female Cthulhu's (VUBF035) litter, pups Fibbertijlbbet (VUBM066) and Scallywag (VUBF067) being cuddled by sub-adult subordinate female Muffin (VUBF052). Photo credit: Life History Coordinator Annelise van Eeden

'I am because we are'. The observers on the reserve spend a lot of time with the meerkats, and we form a bond with them. When the meerkats go through disasters, we feel it as well and so this group that is so near to the farmhouse is also near to our hearts, and therefore it is fitting that they are called Ubuntu.

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## Runaways – Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

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The group Runaways was first seen on the 9<sup>th</sup> of October 2020 near Sox Dam. The group consisted of six Make-e-Plan individuals, four adult females Bigwig (VMPF022), Scylla (VMPF025), Cirilla (VMPF026) and Hope (VMPF029) and two adult

males, Kratos (VMPM024) and Mushu (VMPM028). They had split from the main Make-e-Plan group on the 7<sup>th</sup> of October 2020. The group was jokingly called Fake-e-Plan until they were made an official group on the 7<sup>th</sup> of November 2020. The reason the group was called Runaways was because they were found consistently moving away from our reserve until they settled in their current territory on Matlepanen and The Heights.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of November, Kratos and Mushu left the group, leaving the females as a coalition of females. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of November 2020, the roving coalition from Jaxx known as the wine boys, adult males Merlot (VJXM121), Shiraz (VJXM122) and Grigio (VJXM126), all joined Runaways. Merlot left again on the 30<sup>th</sup> of November 2020 after competing aggressively for dominance with adult male The Worm's Heart (VCRM010), who was also trying to join the group Runaways at the time. Merlot went below with then Fake-e-Plan on the 30<sup>th</sup> of November but did not emerge the following day. The Worm's Heart was seen later (on the 9<sup>th</sup> of December 2020) acting as part of an unknown subgroup with adult female Mildred (VCRF009) and adult male Trash (VCRM008). Grigio was last seen on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December 2020 but was not seen again. Both Hope and Cirilla were evicted on the 27<sup>th</sup> of October, two weeks before Bigwig was declared pregnant, and Scylla was evicted again on the 13<sup>th</sup> of November 2021, a week after Bigwig was declared pregnant. None of these females were seen again. Dominant female Bigwig and dominant male Shiraz became dominant of the group on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2021 and 10<sup>th</sup> of December 2020, respectively, after receiving enough direct submissions from the other individuals in the group.

We sometimes have trouble following Runaways because they go onto the farm The Heights. Due to circumstances, we have not been allowed onto The Heights since around June of 2021, and therefore, when the group goes onto The Heights, we cannot record life history information on them. There have been a few cases over the last few months where Bigwig was heavily pregnant, but then they went onto The Heights and when they returned to Matlepanen farm, she had already given birth. However, because there was no sign of the new litter, we had to assume that the pups were either lost before emergence, or that they were predated after foraging with the group.

Jumping ahead to this year, on the 19<sup>th</sup> of May, an observer went out to the group and found the predated body of Bigwig. The group had split, presumably after the predator attack, and adult subordinate female Elsa (VRWF002) and yearling subordinate female Hrairoo (VRWF008) as well as Bigwig's litter of four pups, Thunder (VRWP021), Flame (VRWP022), Fire (VRWP023) and Storm (VRWP024) were found alive near where Bigwig was found. At around the time of Bigwig's death, she was the only individual showing signs of lactating for the pups. Yearling subordinate female Adolin (VRWF012) was possibly lactating at the time, Hrairoo and Elsa had allolactated before this date, but they had stopped lactating on the 28<sup>th</sup> of April.



Therefore, when Bigwig was killed, there was not much the pups had in terms of sustenance, and they were still quite small and dependent on helpers for pup-feeding and teaching them to forage.



Dominant female Bigwig's (VMPPF022) litter, pups Flame (VRWM022) and Fire (VRWM023). Photo credit: Life History Coordinator Annelise van Eeden

In the case of the mini 'group' that formed after Bigwig was predated, Hrairoo and Elsa looked after the pups as best they could. Two of the pups went missing on the 21<sup>st</sup> of May, and the other two were last seen on the 24<sup>th</sup> of May. The two females, Hrairoo and Elsa, along with the two surviving pups, were followed by an observer when we could not find the main group. The females were seen leaving the pups behind when they were trying to move from the burrow where the group was last seen, to the babysitting burrow, but they always went back for the pups. The pups would beg very loudly, probably because they had not been fed properly for a few days and neither of the females that were with them were allolactating. The two females and two pups could not be followed again for a few days, because they did not have a radio collar to track them. When the females were seen again, the pups were no longer with them.

One of the staff members helped the meerkat observers find the main group, as he has experience tracking animals. Adult female Angel (VRWF004) was collared with a radio collar so that observers could track the main group. Angel has been acting as dominant, but we have not made her officially dominant yet because we have not observed enough direct submissions from the other females in the group.

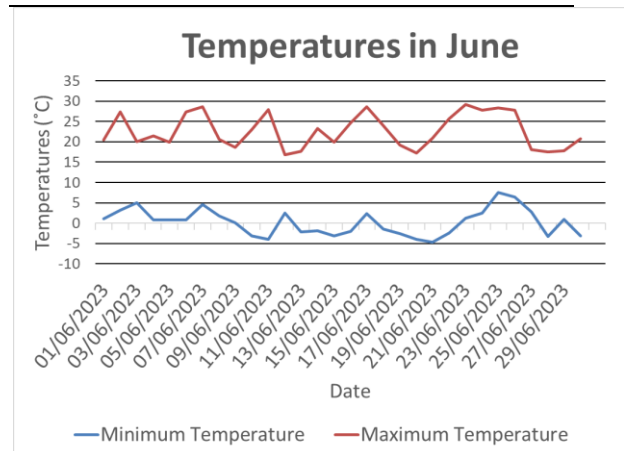
A few days later, Hrairoo and Elsa had found the main group but had not been accepted back into the group yet. Elsa was accepted back into the group on the 8<sup>th</sup> of June, after an observer saw the group mob her down a sleeping burrow and accept her at the time when the group was going below for the night. Hrairoo was noted trying to rejoin the group on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> of June but was chased away by the group. The group was not visited again for a week, as there were not enough observers to send out to all the groups. An observer was sent out to the group on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June, where Hrairoo was seen foraging with the group, meaning she had returned to the group successfully.

We hope that Runaways will have a more peaceful time and that Angel will potentially be a good dominant female. Shiraz is now in a conundrum because Angel is most probably his daughter, and therefore he would want to leave the group. We will see what the outcome is.

### Pregnancies in June 2023

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

### Weather at the KMP



The temperatures in June were quite steady, there was a streak of warmer days towards the end of the month. The average minimum temperature was 0.2°C and the average maximum temperature was 22.7°C. The hottest day was on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June, at 29.2°C, which is quite warm for winter. The coldest day was on the 21<sup>st</sup>, and was -4.7°C.

### June 2023 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:**

### **Alba (FDC):**

- 16 of 17 individuals were present at the end of June.
- Male dominance at Alba has become unsettled as adult subordinate male Ozzie (VECM033) has started asserting dominance on the current dominant male Pucky (VECM023) and other males in the group, leading to submissions. Former dominant male of Elrond's Council, adult subordinate male Palestrina (VLM211) has also started asserting dominance on other males in the group, including Pucky. However, no direct submissions were observed and therefore no dominance has been settled at the end of the month.
- Adult subordinate female Kilie (VECF036) left on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June and was still absent at the end of the month. She did appear to the group on the 26<sup>th</sup> and was seen by an observer waking up at the same sleeping burrow but left before the group was up.
- Alba had no encounters this month.
- Alba had an inter-group interaction with Zulus on the 30<sup>th</sup>, as the territories they are using are overlapping slightly.
- Alba also had one daily group split this month, on the 21<sup>st</sup> of June.
- All individuals appear healthy.
- Alba is now a full data collection group and regular *Adlib* is being collected on the individuals, due to an increase in the volunteer team.

### **Brussels Sprouts (FDC):**

- All 8 individuals were present at the end of June.
- Adult male James (Sawyer) (VGDM011) left Brussels Sprouts on the 7<sup>th</sup> of June and was seen again with the group on the 8<sup>th</sup>. He left the group with yearling subordinate male Chill (VBSM005) on the 12<sup>th</sup> and returned the same day. He left the group for the third time, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and was seen back with the group on the same day. Chill left the group on the 12<sup>th</sup> and returned on the same day. He also left on the 25<sup>th</sup> and returned on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

- No encounters, inter-group interactions or group splits were seen this month.
- All individuals at Brussels Sprouts seem to be in good health.

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

- All 14 individuals were present at the end of May.
- We still cannot confirm male dominance at Elrond's Council.
- The new pups, Croqueta (VECM052) and Fiufiu (VECM053) are good with hands and eat egg and drink water.
- Elrond's Council had no encounters, inter-group interactions or groups splits observed this month.
- One of the pups sustained an injury when they started foraging with the group. where it looked like its right forearm was nearly bitten through. However, it did not slow the pup down and the wound has healed well and now all the individuals at Elrond's Council seem to be in good health.

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

- There were 17 out of 18 members present at the end of June.
- Sub-adult subordinate male Corndog (VGDM044) has been given his Last Seen this month.
- Adult subordinate male Beatrice (VGDM014) left on the 29<sup>th</sup> of June and returned on the same day. Adult subordinate male Rogelio De La Vega (VGDM015) left on the 28<sup>th</sup> of June and has not returned at the end of the month.
- They had no encounters, inter-group interactions or group splits observed this month.
- Yearling subordinate female Dizle (VGDF040) has a slight cloudy white patch in her left eye, and we are watching to see if it develops, but apart from that, all the individuals at Gold Diggers appear to be in good health.

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

- All 22 meerkats were present at Jaxx at the end of June.
- Adult subordinate female Scully (VJXF149) left the group before the 9<sup>th</sup> of June and was back with the group on the same day.
- No encounters, inter-group interactions or group splits were observed at Jaxx this month.
- All individuals at Jaxx seem to be in good health.

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

- 25 of 26 individuals were present at the end of the month.
- Former dominant female Sigma (VLF230) was bitten by a snake on the 5<sup>th</sup>. She did not go down with the group and her body was recovered the next day.
- Adult male Moteck (VLM261) did not wake up with the group on the 14<sup>th</sup> but returned to the group later in the morning of the 14<sup>th</sup>. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of June, adult subordinate female Pichu (VLF272) left the group and has not returned by the end of the month.

- Lazuli had three encounters observed this month, that all happened on the same day. The first was with Dik-Diks adult female Juliet (VGDF009). The second was with adult female Tuna Fish II (VGDF026) and the last one was with an unknown adult. The group chased these individuals away every time.
- Dominant male Odin (VLM266) mated with Juliet on the 16<sup>th</sup> of June.
- They had one inter-group interaction with Ubuntu on the 6<sup>th</sup> of June. They also had four inter-group interactions with Dik-Diks this month, one on the 15<sup>th</sup> of June and three on the 16<sup>th</sup> of June.
- They had two group splits, one of uncertain duration on the 15<sup>th</sup> of June and reunited on the 24<sup>th</sup> of June. There was also a daily group split on the 24<sup>th</sup> of June, which included other individuals, as there was an overlap in the time period when the group splits were occurring.
- All individuals seem to be in good health.

#### **Side Quest (FDC):**

- All 11 meerkats were present at the end of the month.
- There were no encounters or inter-group interactions this month.
- There was one daily group split recorded this month, on the 5<sup>th</sup> of June.
- All individuals appear to be healthy.

#### **Ubuntu (FDC):**

- All 17 individuals were present at the end of the month.
- Adult female Agazoth (VUBF039) received enough direct submissions on the 4<sup>th</sup> of June to become the official dominant female of Ubuntu.
- Adult subordinate male Captain Barbosa (VLM265) was given his Last Seen this month.
- There was one inter-group interaction between Ubuntu and Lazuli that occurred on the 6<sup>th</sup> of June.
- Also on the 6<sup>th</sup> of June, the group encountered Lazuli dominant male Odin (VLM266), as well as adult subordinate males Moteck (VLM261) and Taco (VLM273) after the inter-group interaction with Lazuli.
- There were no group splits this month.
- The meerkats at Ubuntu appear to be in good health.

#### **Whiskers (FDC):**

- All meerkats were present at Whiskers at the end of the month.
- Adult subordinate females Laika (VWF236) and Emily Bronte (VWF243) left on the 28<sup>th</sup> of June. Laika and Emily Bronte appeared to the group on the 29<sup>th</sup> and they were chased away. Only Laika returned and was accepted into the group on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June. Emily Bronte has yet to return at the end of the month.
- Both sub-adult subordinate female Thunderbird (VWF261) and sub-adult subordinate male Pit Lord (VWM260) were given their Last Seen this month.

- The group has had no encounters, inter-group interactions or group splits this month.
- All individuals at Whiskers seem to be healthy.

#### **Zulus (FDC):**

- All 10 individuals were present at the end of June.
- There is still no dominant male at Zulus, but adult males Willow (VZUM063) and Tazara (VZUM064) have started displaying dominance behaviour. The outcome has not been confirmed as yet.
- The group had no encounters or group splits this month.
- They had an inter-group interaction with Alba on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June. The Alba individuals managed to attack adult male Tazara (VZUM064), and he and adult male Willow (VZUM063) were separated from the group. Willow was seen foraging with the group later that day, but Tazara has yet to return at the end of the month.
- All individuals in Zulus appear to be healthy.

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

##### **Dik-Diks (LHM):**

- 10 out of 10 members were present at the end of this month.
- The female dominance status of this group has still not been settled, with no direct submissions having been observed. The male dominance status has however been established, as yearling male Rufaro (VUBM046) has received direct submissions from yearling subordinate males Kwame (VUBM047) and Jaivyn (VUBM048), while Asani (VUBM045) has left the group and is yet to return, which makes Rufaro officially dominant.
- Adult female Fleabag (VGDF005) mated with Jaivyn on the 16<sup>th</sup> of June. On the same day, dominant male Odin (VLM266) of Lazuli mated with Juliet.
- Dik-Diks had five intergroup-interactions with Lazuli in the month of June. There was one intergroup-interaction on the 15<sup>th</sup>, which caused a group split of the Dik-Diks individuals. Then there were four intergroup-interactions on the 16<sup>th</sup>, at various times throughout the day.
- On the 16<sup>th</sup> of June, dominant male of Lazuli, Odin (VLM266) encountered the group after the intergroup interaction with Lazuli. He tried to join Dik-Diks as dominant male. Adult subordinate male Moteck (VLM261) also joined the group Dik-Diks and was foraging with the group for a few hours. However, after another interaction with Lazuli, Odin and Moteck ended up in the wrong group and was back in Lazuli, the group they were trying to leave.
- After the intergroup-interaction on the 15<sup>th</sup>, there was an overnight group split. The next morning, the individuals in the group split appeared to the main group and they were chased away. They returned to the main group later that day. There was another daily group split from the main group on the 16<sup>th</sup> of June.

- Habituation at this group is considered *Advanced Progress*. Adult females Fleabag (VGDF005), Juliet (VGDF009) and Shelby (VGDF022) are still the main focus of habituation at this group. Juliet is more comfortable, while Fleabag is getting more wary of observers. Shelby is doing well, and some observers have almost managed to weigh her. The juveniles are habituated, although hand-habituation is still our main focus. Of the juveniles, juvenile male Jaskier (VDDM001) requires the most attention to get him to a comfortable habituation level.
- All individuals appear to be healthy.

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

- 14 out of 14 members were present at the end of June.
- There is still no confirmed female dominance at the group. However, yearling female Hrairoo (VRWF008) submitted to adult female Angel (VRWF004).
- Adult subordinate female Elsa (VRWF002) and yearling subordinate female Hrairoo (VRWF008) have officially returned to the group. They appeared to the group and tried to re-join on the 8<sup>th</sup> of June. Elsa was accepted into the group on the 8<sup>th</sup> after being mobbed, but Hrairoo was not accepted. She was seen trying to re-join on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, but the group chased her away. The exact date was not observed when Hrairoo returned, but she was seen acting as part of the group on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June.
- Yearling female Adolin (VRWF012) left on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June and returned to the group on the same day.
- Yearling subordinate male Kaladin (VRWM015) was given his Last Seen this month, along with pups Flame (VRWM022) and Fire (VRWM023).
- Runaways had no encounters; inter-group interactions or group splits recorded this month.
- All individuals seem to be in good health.

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

- 6 out of 7 individuals were present at the end of the month.
- Male dominance is still unsettled with a lot of dominance competition between adult males Mion (VZUM057) and Zuma (VZUM059).
- Adult male Bear (VZUM056) left the group on the 13<sup>th</sup> of June, which could possibly be because of the increased dominance competition between Mion and Zuma. He has not returned to the group at the end of the month.
- Pup Flicka (VVKF008) was given her Last Seen this month.
- No encounters, inter-group interactions or group splits were seen this month.
- All individuals appear healthy.

#### **Habituation Groups:**

##### **Cape Crusaders (HAB):**

- The female dominance of this group has been established, as adult female Timon (VZUF049) received a direct submission from adult female Sky (VSIF003). This makes her the official

dominant of Cape Crusaders. Male dominance at this group is currently unknown.

- Cape Crusaders had no encounters, inter-group interactions or group splits.
- The habituation of this group is classed as *In Progress*. The adult females of this group are already habituated. Most habituation work is focused on the adult males and juveniles, who still remain wary of observers. The group now feels comfortable enough to leave the burrow when an observer is sitting 5m away from the sleeping burrow. One of the males has been marked enough to be put on the marksheet, but we are trying to check if he has a transponder before we assign a code to him. The other adult males that have been observed are still quite skittish and will go below when observers are standing 5m away but will only go below if the observer crawls to 3m away.
- The individuals of this group appear to be healthy.

##### **Hakuna Matata (HAB):**

- Hakuna Matata were not seen this month.

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

- All 19 individuals were present at the end of June.
- No encounters or group splits were observed in June.
- An inter-group interaction with an unknown group of meerkats occurred on the 15<sup>th</sup> of June. There were 6-7 individuals in the unknown group and Make-e-Plan chased them away.
- The group's habituation is classed as *In Progress*. The group can still be consistently weighed, except for yearling subordinate male Jude (VMPM071). Longer morning follows have been implemented to habituate the group to having observers around. Thus far the group does not mind observers walking between the group members while they forage. Jude is still very wary around observers but has improved from last month. He will allow observers to crouch at 1m at the sleeping burrow. However, while foraging, he still is skittish. Subadult male Waxillium (VMPM083) as well as adult female Archie (VMPF057) are receiving follow habituation. They are jumpy around observers but are sometimes weighable.
- All individuals in the group appear to be healthy.

##### **Phoenix (HAB):**

- Phoenix have been seen three times this month even though we have been assigned frequent visits. During those visits we have seen approximately 11-14 individuals within the group.
- The group's habituation status is still *In Progress*. We focused on distance training this month. The group is comfortable with observers standing and sitting at 5m. There is still only one juvenile that will consistently eat egg.
- All individuals at Phoenix appeared to be healthy.



**Trackie-Daks (HAB):**

- 21 out of 22 individuals were present at the end of the month.
- Subadult subordinate male Kotelet (VTDM023) left the group around the 19<sup>th</sup> of June and has not returned at the end of the month.
- Sub-adult subordinate male Chipmunk (VTDM027) was given his Last Seen this month.
- There were no encounters, inter-group interactions, or group splits observed during the month.
- The habituation level is currently *In Progress*. Dominant male Coquillet (VTSM014) is still the focus of habituation. All other individuals are consistent in all other aspects of habituation, including Moon-Moon (VTSM022) as he has been better with weighing, marking, hand habituation, egg, and water. Coquillet is most comfortable at the sleeping burrow or if observers stay around 3m away. He does allow observers to touch him, and he does sometimes drink water, but is wary of the scale. The habituation of the pups has also gone well. There is only one pup, VTDP035, that needs hand habituation. She eats egg and comes into the scale for egg and water but will not let observers touch her for very long.
- All individuals appear to be healthy.

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

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