



The Meerkatter

The Friends of the Kalahari Meerkat Project Report - www.kalahari-meerkats.com - July 2023

Always a bridesmaid, never a bride.....	1-2	Pregnancies in July.....	3
Tracking Trackie-Daks.....	2	Weather at the KMP.....	3
Dik-Diks vs Lazuli.....	2-3	Life History Details.....	3-7

Always a bridesmaid, never a bride

Dominant females of cooperative breeders, such as meerkats, are the main breeders of the group. They will use low- or high-level aggression to keep the subordinate females in their groups in line. Low-level aggression includes dominance assertion such as hip slamming, chinning, or charging at the subordinate individuals. High-level aggression includes evicting the individuals, especially in the cases of subordinate females. Aggression levels may increase as breeding season approaches, as the dominant females need to ensure that the subordinate females do not become pregnant, and to prevent the subordinate females from appropriating the dominant female's position.

There are various meerkat groups here at the Kalahari Meerkat Project where the dominant female uses high-level aggression to assert her dominance over subordinate females who could potentially become dominant. Two such groups are Alba and Whiskers. The group Alba was created on the 25th of November 2021, which consisted of then-dominant female Pippin (VECF003), adult subordinate females Orc (VECF012), Moos (VECF035) and Kilie (VECF036), and current dominant female Tolkien (VECF019), along with dominant male Jay-A-Rod (VWM216). Pippin chased away her competitor, Orc, who was last seen on the 6th of June, after emigrating out of Alba and was chased away every time she tried to return. Pippin then evicted the next competitor, Tolkien, on the 9th of July 2022. Tolkien tried to go below with the group on the evening of the 9th, and Pippin exploded out of the burrow, attacking, and chasing her away. The rest of the group emerged and joined in the chase. Tolkien retreated to the furthest burrow at the sleeping burrow and went below with adult male Godric (VZUM053) following behind. Tolkien left again on the 19th of July and returned on the 10th of August 2022. However, the bridesmaid of this tale is Kilie. Kilie has had the worst luck and was evicted on the 25th of June and was only allowed back with the group on the 20th of August. Pippin went missing on the 17th of August 2022 and Tolkien received enough direct submissions on the 21st of August 2022 to become dominant.

Tolkien then implemented the same strategy that she experienced, and as soon as she became dominant, she continued to evict Kilie. Kilie is the next viable candidate for the dominant position, which is why it is understandable that Tolkien would chase her away but does not really explain why Pippin also had it out

for Kilie. At the time of writing, Kilie has not returned to the group, and there are no signs that Tolkien is pregnant. Hopefully, if Tolkien does become pregnant and given birth, she will allow Kilie back into the group to contribute to raising the pups.



Dominant female Tolkien (VECF019) with her pups, Tiramisu (VALM007), Cleopatra (VALF008) and Felix Jaeger (VALM009). Photo credit: PhD student Tommaso Sacca.

The next group is well-known to many of us, Whiskers. Straight out of a Meerkat Manor® episode, Whiskers is all about the drama. Dominant female Luna (VWF235) became the dominant female on the 19th of September 2022, ten days after beloved previous dominant female Swift (VWF176) presumably died. In the time it took Luna to take the dominant position, she had chased out adult subordinate females Laika (VWF236) and Emily Bronte (VFW243), and when they tried to rejoin to the group on the 12th of September 2022, the whole group chased them away. They returned on the same day they left, the 12th of September, when Luna asserted her dominance on them, and they submitted in response. Laika, Emily Bronte and adult subordinate female Virginia Woolf (VWF244) are the individuals most likely to become the next dominant female. Luna uses high-aggression tactics to keep these capable females in line. Laika and Emily Bronte are the two females evicted most often, although Virginia Woolf has also recently been evicted once in the last year. In the month of July, Laika left the group or was evicted by Luna eight times, and Emily Bronte four times. During their eviction period, Laika appeared to the group seven different times, and Emily Bronte appeared to the

group five times. Most of those times, they were chased away, but returned to the group by the end of the day or soon thereafter.

As stated previously, the reason why the dominant females use aggression on subordinate females is because the dominant female is trying to prevent the subordinates from taking over as dominant (or subsequently becoming pregnant). However, Luna focuses her aggression on Laika and Emily Bronte, and so the other females have had a chance to give birth and some of the litters have survived. None of the Whiskers' litters currently in the group are from Luna. Several of the litters are from Swift, but since Luna has become dominant, Laika has been able to give birth twice, once alongside adult subordinate female Chomp (VWF251). During a period when Laika was evicted, she gave birth to subadult subordinate females Kylie (VWF265), Bruce (VWF266) and Sheila (VWF267), and was accepted back into the group early enough after the birth for the pups to survive, and the other females in the group to allolactate and look after the pups. Luna should possibly start focusing her attention on Chomp, because she has also managed to give birth three times in the last year. It is unsure how many of the pups in her litter emerged without genetic analysis, but being allowed to stay in the group, not be evicted and give birth, is either an impressive feat or pure luck on her part. Whilst Laika and Emily Bronte have not yet reached their full potential of becoming dominants maybe one day they will be the bride in their own story.

Tracking Trackie-Daks

Trackie-Daks is a group that has been monitored since December 2020. The dominant female of Tswana and all the mature females were not seen with the group Tswana since November 2020. Only the adult males Sushi (VTSM006), Jiminy Cricket (VTSM007), Petit Lu (VTSM011), Coquillet (VTSM014), Jumper (VTSM017), Sketchy Bongo (VTSM019), and three juveniles, female Fergalicious (VTSF020), and males Marvin Gaye (VTSM021) and Moon-Moon (VTSM022) remained. They were considered a subgroup called Tswana 2 because they only had one juvenile female. As discussed in the September 2022 article *A New Trackies Timeline*, three Whiskers females were found foraging with the group on the 6th of December 2021, adult females Bel-Hurricane (VWF231), Fly (VWF237) and Hachi (VWF278). The ten individuals who were born to Bel-Hurricane, Fly and Hachi on the 27th of January 2022, who were the focus of habituation (as is done with pups) have grown up and at the time of writing they all survived and are yearlings now.

This group has been a habituation group for the last three years. There have been great observers who have dedicated a lot of time to get the individuals habituated to hands, eating egg, and being weighed in the scale. Their patience has paid off and the group consists of very politely eggy individuals (except Fly who will bite your fingers if they have egg on them and she has a strong bite, so observers beware!).



The group Trackie-Daks sunning in the morning sun. Photo credit: A great observer (TD's #1 fan) Bieke Maex.

On the 8th of July 2023, this lovely group had their first *adlib* session! This consists of observers following the group around for 2.5 hours collecting behaviour data and the meerkats' weights. Dominant male Coquillet (VTSM014) has improved greatly in his habituation level and has been weighed nine times in the last two months. He drinks water and allows observers to groom him, but around the scale observers must be slow as he is still quite jumpy. During follows he will keep an eye on observers when they are walking around the group but overall, he is doing well. This is an exciting time for Trackies (as they are affectionately known as) as they are a beloved group, and we look forward to working more with these meerkats.

Dik-Diks vs Lazuli (AKA the most chaotic session I have had here)

On the 15th of June 2023, Dik-Diks had an inter-group interaction with Lazuli. When Lazuli saw Dik-Diks, they started war-dancing and Dik-Diks retreated very quickly. As they retreated, Dik-Diks split up and adult females Juliet (VGDF009), Shelby (VGDF022), juvenile males Jaskier (VDDM001), Regis (VDDM004) and juvenile female Ciri (VDDF003) were separated from the rest of the group. They went below at a different sleeping burrow and appeared to the main group the next morning, which was the 16th of June. The main group did not see the separated group but sensed their presence and chased them off. At 9 a.m., dominant male Rufaro (VUBM046) then mated with adult female Fleabag (VGDF005). At 10:16, in some weird form of *déjà-vu*, Dik-Diks had another inter-group interaction with Lazuli. The inter-group interaction allowed Lazuli's dominant male Odin (VLM266) the opportunity to mate with adult female Tuna Fish II (VGDF026). Odin and Lazuli's adult subordinate male Moteck (VLM261) then found the main group of Dik-Diks and joined them. Odin and Moteck chased away the resident males, Rufaro, and yearling subordinate males Kwame (VUBM047), Jaivyn (VUBM048), along with Tuna Fish II, which caused a second group split.



Adult female Tuna Fish II (VGDF026) batting away dominant male Odin (VLM266) after they mated. Photo credit: Master's student Livio Flueler.

Odin finally found another group where he could become dominant! He immediately started asserting dominance on Moteck, and Moteck submitted to him. Fleabag (the suspected but unconfirmed dominant of Dik-Diks) however, did not want to be near him and chattered at him whenever he approached. The reason why we suspect Odin stayed at this group, was because after the death of previous Lazuli dominant female Sigma (VLF230), her daughter, dominant female Dumpling (VLF272), took over. She is potentially Odin's daughter and to avoid inbreeding, he must leave the group. However, in some evil twist of fate, the group Dik-Diks (with a very smug Odin) encountered Lazuli again at around 12:30. He, along with Moteck, possibly got confused as to which side they were on, met up with Lazuli and while Dik-Diks was running away from the much larger group, Odin and Moteck stayed with Lazuli.



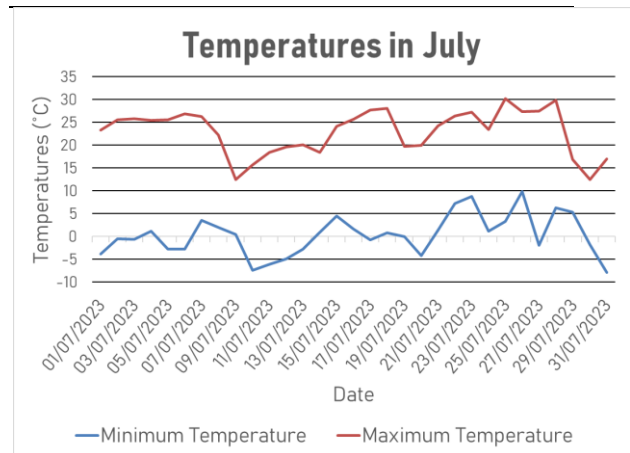
Dominant male Odin from Lazuli looking for the group Dik-Diks after the inter-group interaction on the 16th of June. Photo credit: Life History Coordinator Annelise van Eeden

The females Juliet, Shelby and Ciri all returned to the main Dik-Diks group at around 10:45. Rufaro, Kwame and Tuna Fish was found with the main group around 13:00, when an observer went out to observe what was happening with the group and to record group movements. Jaivyn, Jaskier and Regis were only seen with the group again at 16:30 that evening. This concludes the very chaotic session of group movements, encounters and inter-group interactions (which usually is divided up into separate groups and various days, not all at once!).

Pregnancies in July 2023

Females pregnant in July	2
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	2

Weather at the KMP



The temperatures in July fluctuated a little bit. There was a significant drop in temperature around the 10th of July and at the end of July. The average minimum temperature was 0.3°C and the average maximum temperature was 23°C. The hottest day was on the 25th of June, at 30.1°C, which is an indication of the end of winter. The coldest day was on the 31st, and was a chilly -7.9°C. There was one day where it rained 1mm, on the 4th of July.

July 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):

- 14 of 16 individuals were present at the end of July.
- Male dominance at Alba has been settled as adult subordinate male Ozzie (VECM033) received direct submissions from more than half of the eligible males in the group including the previous dominant male Pucky (VECM023), as well as adult subordinate males Palestrina (VLM211) and Charlie (VECM031).
- Adult subordinate female Kilie (VECF036), who left on the 25th of June, made ten appearances to Alba between the 3rd and 17th of July. She was often sighted on the edge of the group and ignored by close group members, however, was not accepted by the dominant female Tolkien (VECF019). She was accepted and officially returned to the group on the 20th of July. Kilie and yearling subordinate female Rani (VALF002) then left together on the 22nd of July and returned to the group in the morning of the 25th of July. Kilie was evicted later that day by dominant female Tolkien but accepted back into the group in the afternoon of the 25th. On the 26th of July, Kilie left before the group awoke. She made two more appearances to the group on the 28th and 29th of July.
- Palestrina and yearling subordinate male Nigoni (VALM004) left the group on the 31st of July after an inter-group interaction with Zulus. Palestrina and Nigoni were seen around Zulus. Nigoni was accepted by the group Zulus and went below at the same sleeping burrow, however Palestrina did not go below with them.
- Palestrina and Kilie remain absent from the group at the end of this month.
- Alba had two inter-group interactions with Zulus on the 31st of July.
- Alba had no group splits this month.
- All individuals appeared healthy.

Brussels Sprouts (FDC):

- All 8 individuals were present at the end of July.
- Subordinate adult male James (Sawyer) (VGDM011) left Brussels Sprouts on the 1st of July and returned later that day. He left again on the 4th of July and returned to forage with the group on the same day. On the 13th of July James and yearling subordinate Chilli (VBSM005) left the group and Chilli returned

later that day. James returned and was accepted by the group the next morning on the 14th of July. James left again on the 16th of July and returned the same day. He left the group for a final time on the 29th of July and returned later that day.

- James appeared to subordinate yearling female Totoro (VBSF001) at the sleeping burrow on the eve of the 13th of July, while he was not acting as part of the group.
- There were no inter-group interactions or group splits this month.
- All individuals at Brussels Sprouts seemed to be in good health.

Elrond's Council (FDC):

- All 14 individuals were present at the end of July.
- Male dominance remains unconfirmed at Elrond's Council.
- The new pups, Croqueta (VECM052) and Fiufiu (VECM053) are good with hands, eat egg and drink water.
- Elrond's council had two encounters with an unknown adult on the 27th of July. In both encounters the unknown adult tried to approach and the group war-danced and chased the unknown individual away.
- No inter-group interactions or groups splits were observed at Elrond's council during this month.
- All the individuals at Elrond's Council appeared to be in good health.

Gold Diggers (FDC):

- All 17 members present at the end of July.
- Adult subordinate male Rogelio de la Vega (VGDM015) returned to the group on the 1st of July. Rogelio de la Vega and adult subordinate male Beatrice (VGDM014) both left on the 2nd of July, Beatrice returned later that day, whilst Rogelio de la Vega returned to the group the next day on the 3rd of July. Rogelio de la Vega and Beatrice both left on the 6th of July and returned to the group the same day. Beatrice left on the 18th of July and returned on the 23rd of July. Rogelio de la Vega, Beatrice, and adult subordinate male Baymax (VGDM028) left the group on the 26th of July and were seen at Lazuli. The next day, 27th of July, yearling subordinate male Vegeta (VGDM038) left and was also seen at Lazuli. On the 28th of July, all four males returned to the group. Beatrice left the group again on the 31st of July and returned on the same day.
- They had no encounters or group splits this month.
- They had an inter-group interaction with Dik-Diks on the 2nd of July, Gold Diggers war danced and chased Dik-Diks who retreated.
- The cataract that was noticed last month in yearling subordinate female Dizle's (VGDF040) left eye has now been noted down as a permanent injury as it did not develop any further nor disappear. All other members of the group appeared to be in good health.

Jaxx (FDC):

- All 22 individuals were present at Jaxx at the end of July.
- Dominant female Baloo (VJXF080) was made officially pregnant on the 24th of July.
- Adult subordinate male Fred (VJXM146) was evicted and chased out of the group on the 10th of July. Fred was accepted back into the group the following morning on the 11th of July. Adult subordinate male The Dude (VJXM142) left on the 13th of July and returned on the 16th of July. Adult subordinate female Queen Jane (VJX158) left on the 27th of July and returned the same day.
- No encounters, inter-group interactions or group splits were observed at Jaxx this month.
- All individuals at Jaxx appeared to be in good health.

Lazuli (FDC):

- All 25 of the individuals were present at the end of the month.
- Adult subordinate female Pichu (VLM274) was given her Last Seen on the 26th of July.
- Dominant male Odin (VLM266) left on the 3rd of July and returned later that day. Odin and adult subordinate male Moteck (VLM261) left on the 23rd of July and returned on the morning of the 26th of July. Later that day on the 26th, Odin, Moteck as well as adult subordinate male Taco (VLM273), adult subordinate male Phar Lap (VLM275) and yearling subordinate male Lord Escort (VLM282) left the group but returned in the evening. At first the group war danced however the males were soon accepted at the sleeping burrow. On the 27th of July, Odin, Moteck, Taco, Phar Lap, Lord Escort and yearling subordinate male Monster (VLM290) left the group and returned the same evening.
- On the 26th of July Lazuli had an encounter with three adult males from Gold Diggers: Rogelio de la Vega (VGDM015), Beatrice (VGDM014) and Baymax (VGDM028). The group chased away the males who retreated in response. Rogelio de la Vega reappeared, and the group war danced and chased him away. Later, on the 26th, Lazuli encountered three unknown adult males who retreated when the group war danced and chased the individuals. On the 27th of July, the group had three separate encounters with Rogelio de la Vega, Beatrice and Baymax.
- There were no inter-group interactions or group splits observed at the group this month.
- All individuals seemed to be in good health.

Trackie-Daks (FDC):

- All 21 individuals were present at the end of the month.
- Subadult subordinate male Kotelet (VTDM023) has been 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 *Incomplete*. Dominant male Coquillet (VTSM014) has been weighed three times in the last month, where his

last weight was taken in January 2023. He is currently keen on water and is still jumpy around observers at the scale but with careful and slow movements from observers, he can easily get into the scale. 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.

- All individuals appear to be healthy.

Side Quest (FDC):

- All 10 meerkats were present at the end of the month.
- Dominant Female Pumba (VZUF048) was made officially pregnant on the 9th of July.
- Yearling subordinate female Betelgeuse (VSIF010) left on the 30th of June and was given her Last Seen on the 30th of July.
- There were no encounters, inter-group interactions or group splits this month.
- The group are suspected to have ring worm. Although the disease is not fatal, precautions are being taken to ensure that it not spread to other groups and the groups was otherwise in good health.

Ubuntu (FDC):

- All 17 individuals were present at the end of the month.
- Subordinate adult male Subigubi (VUBM050) left and returned to the group on the 20th of July.
- There were no group splits, encounters or inter-group interactions this month.
- At the beginning of the month (1st-3rd) the group did not get up from their sleeping burrow. An African Wild Cat was spotted sitting at the sleeping burrow leading us to believe this was the reason the group were below during this period. On the afternoon of the 3rd of July, the group was found foraging. Subigubi was found to have what appeared to be a bite mark across his head which was swollen. The rest of the group were unharmed. By the end of the month, he recovered well, and the group seemed to be in good health.

Whiskers (FDC):

- 22 out of 23 meerkats were present at Whiskers at the end of July.
- Adult subordinate female Emily Bronte (VWF243) returned and woke up with the group on the morning of the 1st of July. Emily Bronte and adult subordinate female Laika (VWF236) left later the same day and returned to forage with the group on the same day. Both females were later evicted on the 1st and chased away by the entire group. They appeared after their eviction and were chased away by the group however they were reaccepted and returned to the group in the afternoon of the 1st. On the 3rd of July Laika was evicted following an attack by the dominant female Luna (VWF235). Laika appeared to dominant male Brea (VLM157) the

3rd. Laika appeared on the edge of the group on the 5th of July and was accepted back into the group on the 6th of July. Later, on the 6th Laika was evicted and chased away by Luna joined by the whole group however she returned later that day to the group. On the 12th of July Laika was evicted again following an attack from Luna and to the group later that day. On the 13th of July Laika left in the morning and returned in the evening. Sub-adult subordinate female Mage (VWF258) left on the 21st of July. On the 22nd of July, Laika and Emily Bronte were seen leaving in the morning and returned on the 24th of July. On the 25th of July Emily Bronte and Laika left the group, they reappeared and were chased away by 8 individuals from the group. However Adult subordinate female Virginia Woolf (VWF244) joined the two females and left the group. On the 26th of July Laika and Emily Bronte made multiple appearances to the group throughout the day. In the evening of the 26th Laika, Emily Bronte and Virginia Woolf appeared at the sleeping burrow, whilst Laika and Eily Bronte retreated, Virginia Woolf remained and returned to the group. Laika and Emily Bronte returned to the group on the 27th of July.

- Mage remained absent from the group at the end of July.
- The group had no inter-group interactions or group splits this month.
- All individuals at Whiskers seem to be healthy.

Zulus (FDC):

- 8 out of 11 individuals were present at the end of July.
- There is still no dominant male at Zulus, but adult males Willow (VZUM063) and Tazara (VZUM064) have been displaying dominance behaviour.
- Tazara returned to the group on the 1st of July but left again on the 31st along with Willow and yearling subordinate male Robin (VZUM066).
- On the 13th of July, the group encountered Brussels Sprouts yearling male Chilli (VBSM005) after an inter-group interaction, who attempted to mount Willow a number of times before he was chased off. On the 31st of July, the group also encountered Alba adult male Palestrina (VLM211) three times and yearling male Nigoni (VALM004) once. Palestrina was chased away by the group, however Nigoni was accepted by the group and went below with them. Therefore, Nigoni has emigrated into the group,
- They had three inter-group interactions this month. One interaction happened with Brussels Sprouts on the 13th of July and two with Alba on the 31st of July. Brussels Sprouts were chased off by the group. When they had the first interaction with Alba, Alba war-danced at them and they retreated. In the second interaction, Zulus alarmed at Alba and Alba ignored them.
- All individuals in Zulus appear to be healthy.

Life History Monitoring Groups:

Dik-Diks (LHM):

- All 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 group did not have any encounters or group splits.
- They did have one inter-group interaction with Gold Diggers on the 2nd of July. The group retreated very quickly after Gold Diggers war-danced at them.
- Habituation at this group is considered *Advanced Progress*. Adult females Fleabag (VGDF005), Juliet (VGDF009) and Shelby (VGDF022) and juvenile male Jaskier (VDDM001) are the main focus of habituation at this group. Targeted follow habituation has been implemented and these individuals are becoming more comfortable with being followed and weighed. We will continue follow habituation.
- All individuals appear to be healthy.

Runaways (LHM):

- 11 out of 12 members were present at the end of July.
- There is still no confirmed female dominance at the group.
- On the 20th of July, the group was tracked, and the observer found that adult subordinate male Max (VRWM006) and yearling subordinate female Venya (VRWF011) had left, because they did not wake up with the group.
- On the 6th of July, when an observer went to the group, he tracked and found adult female Angel (VRWF002), who had the radio collar on. She was found forging with adult female Elsa (VRWF004), yearling male Ilai (VRWM009), subadult males Gonna (VRWM018), Coco (VRWM019) and Wiske (VRWM020). The group had split for an uncertain duration, because the dominant male Shiraz (VJXM122), along with other individuals in the group were not with the group that was found, and it was assumed that they were on The Heights farm, as the usual burrows were checked and no activity was observed. We followed Shiraz as the main group because he is the only dominant individual at this time, so the individuals who were with the Angel were considered split from the main group.
- Max (VRWM006) was given his Last Seen, along with Venya (VRWF011), because they had last been seen on the 22nd of June, but could only be confirmed missing on the 20th of July 2023.
- Runaways had no encounters; inter-group interactions or group splits recorded this month.
- Ilai had a wound that covered most of his left eye. It is unknown what caused this injury, but there are quite a few individuals who have gone missing over the last few months and the previous dominant female, Bigwig (VMFP022)

was predated, so there may be a predator in the area. All other individuals seem to be in good health.

Vetkoeks (LHM):

- 6 out of 6 individuals were present at the end of the month.
- Male dominance has been settled at this group, as adult male Zuma (VZUM059) submitted to adult male Mion (VZUM057) on the 27th of June.
- Adult male Bear (VZUM056) was given his 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):

- As of July, there were 9 individuals present at this group, including 4 wild adult male meerkats.
- Male dominance at this group remains unknown.
- The group moved burrows giving juvenile subordinate female Rosetta (VCCF004) her first move on the 22nd of July.
- Cape Crusaders had no encounters, inter-group interactions or group splits.
- The habituation of this group is classed as *In Progress*. The adult females are well habituated. The juveniles of this group are becoming more confident with observers and the scale but remain a working progress. The four adult males remain the least habituated however are now more comfortable with observers standing and sitting at 2-5m. One of the adult males is now on the marksheet and we are able to top up his dye mark more consistently. Whilst distance habituation remains the focus at cape crusader we are also working towards their scale and movement habituation.
- 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 July.
- No intergroup-interactions or group splits were observed in July.
- An encounter happened with adult female Magali (VUBF023) on the 9th of July. The group saw her and chased her
- An inter-group interaction with an unknown group of meerkats occurred on the 15th 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 *Incomplete* as there are only specific individuals at this group that require habituation. Yearling subordinate male Jude (VMPPM071) is still the focus of habituation at this group. He will forage at 10-15 meters from observers. The longer

morning follow habituation is going well, and the group is weighed quite consistently. Follow habituation on specific individuals, subadult male Waxillium (VMPPM083) as well as adult female Archie (VMPPF057) has gone well. They are less jumpy around observers, but we are still working on weighing them consistently.

- All individuals in the group appear to be healthy.

Phoenix (HAB):

- Phoenix were not seen from the 13th of June, and they were only seen again on the 23rd of July. They may have left the reserve because there was no sign of them at any of their usual burrows, or they may have been using burrows that we do not know about. When they were seen again, around 11-12 individuals were consistently noted.
- The group's habituation status is still *In Progress*. We started cage habituation again as there have been more individuals eating egg. There is the sub-adult individual that still consistently eats egg, but an adult female also has become interested in egg, and we are hopeful that with time, we will be able to capture an adult to deploy a radio collar on them.
- All individuals at Phoenix appeared to be healthy.

The following author contributed to this report:

Annelise van Eeden, Life History Coordinator
Annabella Turner, Life History Coordinator Trainee