



# The Meerkatter

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

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## (Yet Another) Dominance Update

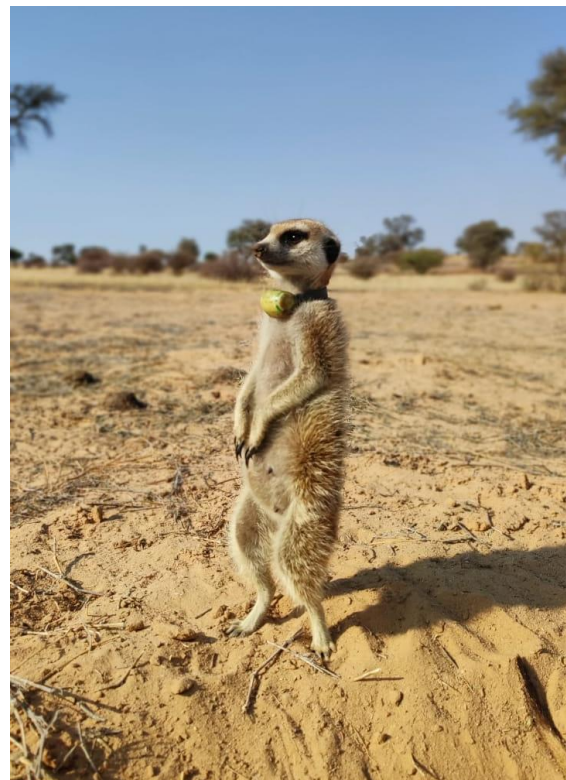
New dominants taking over! Run for your lives!

I have written about dominant females in many of the articles in the last few months. The reason why I focus so much on the dominant females is because they are such a key part to the meerkat groups that we study. The dominant females are the ones who will usually give birth and thus ensure that the groups survive.

There have been a couple of new groups that have formed over this year. These groups are Dik-Diks, Cape Crusaders and Near-Death Experience. This is exciting as it means that we have new individuals to study, or in the case of Dik-Diks, individuals we know that we can study further. A new group is classified here at the KMP as consisting of more than 2 individuals of opposite sex, i.e., two males and a female or two females and a male (as in the case of the group Side Quest with dominant female Legolas (VECM009) and dominant female Pumba (VZUF048) and adult subordinate female Timon (VZUF049)). New groups have interesting dynamics because the groups usually consist of male and female individuals who probably did not grow up together. There are cases when either the males or females are littermates, as stated in the case of Side Quest, where Timon and Pumba were littermates.

In the group Dik-Diks, there are four females who are from the same natal group, Gold Diggers, and the males are all from Ubuntu. In Vetkoecks, the males, dominant male Mion (VZUM057) and adult subordinate males Zuma (VZUM059) and Bear (VZUM056) are all from the group Zulus and are littermates. The reason why the dynamic of new groups is interesting, especially when there are individuals from the same litter, is because the dominance competition that they played at when they were young, come into play again and we can observe who becomes dominant in the end. For example, the dominant female of Trackie-Daks, Fly (VZF237) and adult subordinate female Hachi (VWF238) are from the same litter, and Fly used her superior weight and aggression to assert her dominance over Hachi and took the dominant position when they encountered and joined Trackie-Daks in 2022, when previous dominant female Bel-Hurricane (VWF231) disappeared. For interest's sake, on the 30<sup>th</sup> of August of this year, Trackie-Daks encountered the evicted Whiskers females Laika (VWF236), Virginia Woolf (VWF243), Emily Bronte

(VWF244) and Chomp (VWF251). Laika is the littermate of Fly and Hachi, but because they have been separated for just less than two years, they might not recognise each other, and therefore the group did not accept the females. There are quite a few males in Trackie-Daks that could become dominant of a new group, if the Whiskers females stick around for long enough, we might be looking at a new group forming. Laika is the oldest of the four females, but the last time the females were weighed, both Virginia Woolf and Chomp were heavier than Laika, so it would be interesting to see what the outcome of the dominant position would be.



Dominant female Timon (VZUF049) of Cape Crusaders when she was pregnant, just before she was found predated. Photo credit: Life History Coordinator Annelise van Eeden

In the last few months, we have lost four dominant females: adult females Cthulhu (VUBF035) at Ubuntu, Bigwig (VMPF022) at Runaways, Sigma (VLF230) at Lazuli, and very recently, Timon (VZUF049) at Cape Crusaders. We have, however, also gained four dominant females (in the sense that they had become dominant of their group); adult females Fleabag (VGDF005) at Dik-Diks, Agazoth

(VUBF039) at Ubuntu, Dumpling (VLF272) at Lazuli and by default as being the only eligible female, Sky (VSIF003) at Cape Crusaders. We have not lost any dominant males, except dear adult male Godric (VZUM053) at Alba, who disappeared on the 27<sup>th</sup> of January 2023 after the Elrond's Council males immigrated into the group. We have confirmed four new dominant males though; adult males Mion (VZUM057) at Vetkoeks, Rufaro (VUBM046) at Dik-Diks, and Ozzie (VECM031) at Alba. Ozzie had taken the dominant position from Pucky (VECM023) who took the position after Godric was kicked out.

When there is a turnover of new dominant individuals, these individuals usually will mark their territory more to assert their position and dominance. What this means for the observers is that we have to be more conscious about where the dominant individuals are, especially when we are doing weights, as the dominants mark the scale as their property, and because we are nearby, we are also considered their property. This leads to observers being anal marked quite frequently, and let me tell you, the anal glands of a new dominant individual smells pungent, so it is fun all round. The subordinates receive a lot more dominance assertions and the observers have to do more laundry because our hands or clothes get anal marked. Therefore, (metaphorically) run for your lives!

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## Rovers: Keep Your Eyes Peeled!

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Rovers are defined by the Meerkat Project as the individuals in the group, usually natal subordinate males, who leave their group to find dominant or subordinate females from other groups to mate with or try to immigrate into a new group. If the group is large, the chances that they would be able to get close to the dominant females are lower, as they, along with the resident dominant male, will stand guard and chase off the intruders when they can, but the roving males often still try and mate with subordinate females.

Such examples of roving males can be found at the group Gold Diggers. Gold Diggers was established in August of 2017, when a male from the habitation group was captured and collared. There were at least 14 individuals observed in the group. About a year later, the group was habituated enough that there were many individuals marked and entered in the database. This meant that we could follow Gold Diggers' group movements. Dominant male Shrew (VUBM018) took the dominant position in August of 2020, along with adult female Cleo (VGDF013). She disappeared a year later, which then gave adult females Fleabag (VGDF005) and Juliet (VGDF009) the chance to fight for the dominant position. Juliet took the position for a while, but dominant female Goldeneye (VGDF007) took the position from her on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2022, after an inter-group interaction with an unknown group. Fleabag continued to fight with Goldeneye for the dominant position, but she lost every time. Fleabag and Juliet then left on the

17<sup>th</sup> of December and made a new group Dik-Diks, where Fleabag became dominant.



Dominant female Goldeneye (VGDF007) with other Gold Diggers' individuals at the sleeping burrow, with grumpy dominant male Shrew (VUBM018) in the background and adult subordinate male Rogelio de la Vega (VGDM015) looking at the camera. Photo credit: Senior volunteer James Robertshaw

The two roving males of the group Gold Diggers (that give Life History Coordinators gray hairs) are adult males Beatrice (VGDM014) and Rogelio de la Vega (VGDM015). These two males have (excluding group splits), left their group a combined total of 41 times since they were old enough to rove at the age of 6 months. They have started their own sub-group with Zulus adult subordinate females Salazar (VZUF051), Helga (VZUF052) and Rowena (VZUF054) on the 5<sup>th</sup> of August 2022. However, this sub-group did not last long, as the males were seen with their natal groups on the 28<sup>th</sup> of August 2022. Beatrice and Rogelio usually stick together when they go roving, as they are often seen together at the groups they are encountering (of which in the last two years there have been 14), which is more than the average male (and observers are therefore sure to look out for their markings during roving season).

Males that have started roving in the last year, are adult subordinate male Subigubi (VUBM050) from Ubuntu who has been roving around the group Vetkoeks, adult subordinate male Chili (VBSM005) from Brussels Sprouts who has been seen at Zulus and Gold Diggers, adult subordinate male The Dude (VJXM142) from Jaxx who has been seen with an unknown group of meerkats around the Lonely Farm, adult male Tazara (VZUM064) from Zulus who has visited Brussels Sprouts, Gold Diggers and Alba, adult subordinate male Baymax (VGDM028) from Gold Diggers who has been seen at Lazuli and Zulus, adult subordinate male Zuma (VZUM059) from Vetkoeks who has been sighted at Whiskers, adult subordinate male Palestrina (VLM211) from Alba who has encountered Zulus, Lazuli's adult subordinate males Moteck (VLM261) and Taco (VLM273) who approached Ubuntu and dominant male Odin (VLM266) who have tried to join Dik-Diks, and encountered Ubuntu.

There have been cases where the roving males have mated with dominant females, however. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of November 2022, the group Zulus encountered Rogelio, but because the group was distracted by the evicted females Salazar, Helga, and Rowena, trying

to re-join the group, dominant female Spruddel (VZUF028) had time to slip away from the group and she was seen mating with Rogelio at the sleeping burrow. This encounter demonstrates that it is possible for roving males to spread their genes to other groups. And persistence pays off, especially in groups that do not have an established dominant male, or the group is smaller, and the roving males are able to get close to the group.

We are unsure why Rogelio and Beatrice have not left their group to start a new group, possibly because Gold Diggers is a well-established group and their territory is good (even though it is sandwiched between Lazuli, Brussels Sprouts, Zulus and Dik-Diks, which for Rogelio and Beatrice, is probably a good thing). They may want to leave and start a group when they are a bit older and put their roving days behind them, or they might encounter possible evicted females from the surrounding groups that they might start a group with.

Who knows...? What I do know is that the 'Wanted posters' of Rogelio and Beatrice are posted in a scent form on all the trees of the surrounding groups' burrows. full this breeding season, and they probably have a busy schedule giving the Life History Coordinators more gray hairs.

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### Pregnancies in August 2023

Females pregnant in August	9
Females who aborted	0
Females who gave birth, litters lost	0
Females who gave birth, litter emerged	1
Females who gave birth, unknown outcome	2
Females still pregnant at the end of the month	6

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### Weather at the KMP

Unfortunately, the weather data for this month has malfunctioned and can therefore not be used. The issue is currently being investigated and will hopefully be resolved by the next Life History report.

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### August 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.

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### Full Data Collection Groups:

#### Alba (FDC):

- 16 of 17 individuals were present at the end of August.
- Dominant female Tolkien (VECF019) was made officially pregnant on the 11<sup>th</sup> of August and is still pregnant at the end of the month.
- Yearling male Nigoni (VALM004) has immigrated back into Alba, after an unsuccessful attempt to join the group Zulus. Adult subordinate male Palestrina (VLM211) returned to the group on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August, after encountering Zulus the day before. Adult subordinate male Pucky (VECM023) was evicted on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August, made an appearance to the group on the same day alongside adult subordinate female Kilie (VECF036), and was found waking up with the group on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of August. He left again on the 14<sup>th</sup> of August as he was seen having an encounter with Brussels Sprouts and returned on the 15<sup>th</sup>.
- Kilie, who left on the 26<sup>th</sup> of July, made fourteen appearances to Alba between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> of August. She was often sighted on the edge of the group and ignored by close group members, however, was not accepted by Tolkien. She would go below at the same sleeping burrow as the rest of the group, but after the group had gone below, and woke up before the group was up and left when the group's individuals woke up. She appeared to the group on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> of August, and in those times, she was ignored by the group. The only times her presence evoked a response was on the 11<sup>th</sup> where she was chased by Tolkien, and the 16<sup>th</sup>, where she was chased by dominant male Ozzie (VECM033).
- Kilie remains absent from the group at the end of this month. We are noting if she is allowed to return to the group after Tolkien has given birth, and if this means that she is still considered part of the group.



- Alba had no encounters, inter-group interactions or group splits this month.
- All individuals appeared healthy.

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

- 7 out of 8 individuals were present at the end of the month.
- Subordinate adult male James (Sawyer) (VGDM011) left Brussels Sprouts on the 14<sup>th</sup> of August where he was seen leaving the group. He was found foraging with the group in the afternoon of the same day.
- On the 18<sup>th</sup> of August, Brussels Sprouts had an overnight group split after the inter-group interaction with Zulus. The group split ended the next day when the individuals returned at various times. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of August, the observer found the group in a split of uncertain duration. Sub-adult subordinate male Joep (VBSM007) did not return from this group split, but the rest of the individuals returned on the 26<sup>th</sup> of August.
- Joep is still absent at the end of this month.
- There was an intergroup interaction on the 18<sup>th</sup> of August with Zulus. Brussels Sprouts retreated when Zulus started war-dancing towards them.
- There were no encounters observed 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 August.
- Male dominance remains unconfirmed at Elrond's Council.
- Elrond's Council had no encounters, inter-group interactions or group splits 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.
- On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of August, adult subordinate males Beatrice (VGDM014) and Baymax (VGDM028), along with adult subordinate female Yorki (VGDF033) and yearling subordinate male Vegeta (VGDM038) were evicted but seen waking up with the group the next morning. On the 7<sup>th</sup>, Beatrice left Gold Diggers and had an encounter with Lazuli. He returned to his natal group the same day. He left again with adult subordinate male Rogelio de la Vega (VGDM015) on the 12<sup>th</sup> (and both returned the same day), and alone on the 29<sup>th</sup> (and returned on the evening of the 30<sup>th</sup>). Rogelio de la Vega left Gold Diggers on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and returned on the same day.
- The group had five encounters with adult male Tazara (VZUM064) on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of August. The group chased him away. On the 19<sup>th</sup> of August, the group had an encounter with adult male Chili (VBSM005) from Brussels Sprouts and later in the day with two unknown sub-adults.
- They had a group split of uncertain duration on the 19<sup>th</sup> of August. They returned to the main group on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of August.
- They had no inter-group interactions this month.

- All members of the group appeared to be in good health.

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

- All 22 individuals were present at Jaxx at the end of August.
- Dominant female Baloo (VJXF080) gave birth between the 24<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> of August. The pups have not yet emerged and so the outcome of this litter is unknown.
- On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of August, it was observed that adult subordinate female Gray (VJXF150) was not acting as part of the group. She appeared to the group and was chased away. However, she was observed to have returned to the group by the next morning, therefore it is assumed that she re-joined the group the previous evening. She left again on the 24<sup>th</sup>, along with adult subordinate male Cigarette Smoking Man (VJXM153). Cigarette Smoking Man returned on the same day, and went below with the group, but Gray was only observed to have returned on the 27<sup>th</sup> of August. Adult subordinate male The Dude (VJXM142) left the group on the 24<sup>th</sup>, where he was observed to approach an unknown group of eight meerkats. They did not chase him away, and he was accepted into the group. The observer lost sight of him, but when he went back in the evening, The Dude had returned to Jaxx and seem to be accepted.
- The group encountered an unknown adult meerkat on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August, two unknown meerkats on the 5<sup>th</sup> and three unknown adult meerkats on the 24<sup>th</sup> of August. The group saw these individuals and chased them away.
- No 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.
- Dominant female Dumpling (VLF272) was made officially pregnant on the 13<sup>th</sup> of August.
- Adult subordinate males Moteck (VLM261) and Taco (VLM273) left before the 21<sup>st</sup> of August, as they did not wake up with the group. However, they were seen foraging with the group later that day. Adult subordinate female (VLF278), yearling subordinate female Ruby (VLF288) and sub-adult subordinate female Audumbla (VLF296) were absent from the group on the 29<sup>th</sup> and it is assumed that they had left the group. They were seen again with the group on the 30<sup>th</sup> of August.
- On the evening of the 7<sup>th</sup> of August, Lazuli had an encounter with adult male Beatrice (VGDM014) from Gold Diggers.
- Lazuli had two daily group splits this month. One occurred on the 13<sup>th</sup> of August, and the other occurred on the 15<sup>th</sup>.
- There were no inter-group interactions observed this month.
- All individuals seemed to be in good health.

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

- 12 meerkats were present at the end of this month.
- Dominant Female Pumba (VZUF048) gave birth on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August, and of this litter, two pups emerged on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> of August, respectively.
- The group encountered the unmarked Cape Crusaders males on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> of August.
- Side Quest also had two inter-group interactions with Cape Crusaders on the 14<sup>th</sup> of August. One of the males tried to approach yearling subordinate female Motoko Kusanagi (VSIF013) but the group chased him away.
- There were no group splits this month.
- The group was suspected to have ring worm, but the patches have healed, and the group appears to be healthy at the end of the month.

#### **Trackie-Daks (FDC):**

- All 21 individuals were present at the end of the month.
- Trackie-Daks encountered the evicted Whiskers adult subordinate females Laika (VWF236), Emily Bronte (VWF243), Virginia Woolf (VWF244) and Chomp (VWF251), on the 30<sup>th</sup> of August. They war-danced at the females. The females stood their ground at first, and then retreated.
- There were no inter-group interactions, or group splits observed during the month.
- The habituation level is currently *Incomplete*. Dominant male Coquillet (VTSM014) has been weighed quite consistently throughout the month, including his first two lunch weights in nearly a year. He is keen on water and will eagerly come into the scale, except at lunch time where he is slightly more wary. 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 1m away while he is foraging.
- On the 29<sup>th</sup> of August, adult subordinate female Hachi (VWF238) appeared to have a submandibular lump on her left cheek. We are unsure at this time if the lump is a potential tuberculosis (TB) lump, but this group has had TB before, and so it is not an unreasonable assumption. All other individuals appear to be healthy.

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

- All 17 individuals were present at the end of the month.
- Dominant female Agazoth (VUBF039) was made officially pregnant on the 5<sup>th</sup> of August, and she gave birth on the 19<sup>th</sup>. The outcome of this litter is unknown.
- Yearling subordinate female Muffin (VUBF052) left on the 4<sup>th</sup> of August. She appeared to the group twice, once on the 10<sup>th</sup> and once on the 20<sup>th</sup> of August. She returned to the group on the evening of the 21<sup>st</sup>. However, she was evicted

on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of August, where the group chased her away, and she woke up with the group on the 24<sup>th</sup> of August. Yearling subordinate female Evikutty (VUBF051) left the group around the 16<sup>th</sup> of August. She appeared to the group on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> of August and had returned to the group on the evening of the 21<sup>st</sup>, as she woke up with the group and was accepted.

- There were no group splits, encounters, or inter-group interactions this month.
- At the beginning of the month (1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup>) 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 3<sup>rd</sup> of July, the group was found foraging. Yearling subordinate male Subigubi (VUBM050) 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):**

- 18 out of 22 meerkats were present at Whiskers at the end of August.
- Adult subordinate female Laika (VWF236) left the group before the 2<sup>nd</sup> of August and returned to the group in the evening. She was then evicted on the 10<sup>th</sup> of August, when dominant female Luna (VWF235) chased her away. She was with the group again on the evening of the 10<sup>th</sup>, as she woke up with the group on the 11<sup>th</sup>. On the 11<sup>th</sup> of August, Laika, along with adult subordinate females Emily Bronte (VWF243), Virginia Woolf (VWF244) and Chomp (VWF251), were foraging at the edge of the group, and suddenly, the group started chasing and war-dancing at the females, and the females retreated. Yearling subordinate male Scrabble (VWM253) was not seen with the group on the 8<sup>th</sup> of August and was seen with the group again on the afternoon of the 10<sup>th</sup>. Sub-adult subordinate female Sheila (VWF267) was not found with the group on the 10<sup>th</sup> of August but returned on the same day.
- Whiskers encountered adult subordinate male Zuma (VZUM059) from Vetkoeks on the 15<sup>th</sup> and an unknown adult meerkat on the 18<sup>th</sup> of August.
- Sub-adult subordinate female Mage (VWF258) has been given her Last Seen this month.
- Laika, Emily Bronte, Virginia Woolf and Chomp are still absent at the end of this month.
- The group had no 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 August.
- There is still no dominant male at Zulus.
- Dominant female Spruddel (VZUF028) was made officially pregnant on the 18<sup>th</sup> of August and is still pregnant at the end of the month.

- Yearling male Nigoni (VALM004) emigrated out of Zulus when he did not wake up with the group on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of August, and every time he tried to re-join the group, he would be chased away. He encountered the group twice on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, once on the 4<sup>th</sup> and three times on the 8<sup>th</sup> of August, after which he left Zulus alone and returned to his natal group, Alba. Adult subordinate males Willow (VZUM053) and Tazara (VZUM064) as well as yearling subordinate male Robin (VZUM066) returned to the group on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August after being absent at the end of last month.
- On the 18<sup>th</sup> of August, the group had an inter-group interaction with the group Brussels Sprouts. Brussels Sprouts retreated when Zulus started war-dancing towards them.
- There were no group splits observed this month.
- 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 finally been settled. On the 28<sup>th</sup> of August, an observed witnessed direct submissions from adult subordinate females Juliet (VGDF009), Shelby (VGDF022) and Tuna Fish II (VGDF026) to dominant female Fleabag (VGDF005).
- Fleabag was made officially pregnant on the 19<sup>th</sup> of August and is still pregnant at the end of the month.
- The group did not have any encounters, inter-group interactions or group splits this month.
- Habituation at this group is considered *Advanced Progress*. Fleabag, Juliet, and Shelby and juvenile male Jaskier (VDDM001) are the main focus of habituation at this group. Targeted follow habituation has been the focus of this group's habituation and the individuals have shown improvement. The females allow observers to get to around 2 meters from them while foraging, and Jaskier, being the most skittish individual, allows follows at around 3 meters. We will continue longer follow habituation.
- All individuals appear to be healthy.

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

- 11 members were present at the end of August.
- We are allowed limited access back onto the farm The Heights, and therefore we have been able to see the group more often and follow their movements.
- There is still no confirmed female dominance at the group, as no direct submissions have been observed.
- Sub-adult female Stokkie (VRWF017) was given her Last Seen this month, as she was not with the group from the 28<sup>th</sup> of July.
- Runaways had no encounters; inter-group interactions or group splits recorded this month.
- Yearling subordinate male Ilai (VRWM009) has healed from his injuries and no other individuals

have sustained suspicious injuries at the end of this month.

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

- All 6 individuals were present at the end of the month.
- Dominant female Mooncake (VHMF053) was made officially pregnant on the 19<sup>th</sup> of August, and she is still pregnant at the end of the month.
- Adult subordinate male Zuma (VZUM059) left his group around the 15<sup>th</sup> of August, as he had an encounter with the group Whiskers. He was seen to be back with Vetkoeks on the 16<sup>th</sup> of August.
- No encounters, inter-group interactions or group splits were seen this month.
- All individuals appear healthy.

### **Habituation Groups:**

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

- In August, nine individuals were consistently seen at this group.
- Male dominance at this group remains unknown.
- Dominant female Timon (VZUF049) was made officially pregnant on the 7<sup>th</sup> of August, and because we do not see them often, she had given birth on the 9<sup>th</sup> of August. The outcome of this litter is still unknown.
- On the 15<sup>th</sup> of August, an observer tracked the group using the radio collar than Timon was wearing and found her predated body. We are unsure what had caused her demise. Adult female Sky (VSIF003) took the dominant position (and was collared with the radio collar) as she was the only eligible female left in the group.
- Cape Crusaders had two inter-group interactions with Side Quest on the 14<sup>th</sup> of August.
- They had no encounters 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. The four adult males remain the least habituated however are now more comfortable with observers standing and sitting at 2-5m.
- 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 August.
- An encounter happened with adult female Magali (VUBF023) on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of August.
- No inter-group interactions or group splits were observed in August.
- The group's habituation is classed as *Incomplete* as there are only specific individuals

at this group that require habituation. Yearling subordinate male Jude (VMPM071) is still the focus of habituation at this group. He will forage at 10-15 meters from observers. Follow habituation on specific individuals, and general hand habituation is the focus of this month. The individuals subadult male Waxillium (VMPM083) as well as adult female Archie (VMPF057) are the focus of follows. Most individuals are jumpy around observers' hands, and is therefore the next habituation focus.

- All individuals in the group appear to be healthy.

**Phoenix (HAB):**

- Phoenix were seen quite consistently this month, and there have been 12 individuals nearly every time.
- 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. The adult female as well as the sub-adult male entered the cage while eating egg, which is very promising.
- All individuals at Phoenix appeared to be healthy.

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

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