



The Meerkatter

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

Squirrel Friends: The Story of Magali.....	1-2	Pregnancies in September.....	3
Hey Jude.....	2-3	Weather at the KMP.....	3
		Life History Details.....	3-7

Squirrel Friends: The Story of Magali

Magali's story begins with Ubuntu and leads us through evictions, the rise and fall of new groups, periods of solitude, dominance, and finally the company of squirrels.

Adult female Magali (VUBF023) was born into Ubuntu on the 2nd of March 2019 to Daisy (VBBF111), the dominant female of Ubuntu. She was one of four in her litter which included her sister Mameuf (VUBF026) and two brothers Rupert Holmes (VUBM024) and Michel (VUBM025). Her brothers both left the group during roving season and were last seen on the 28th of December 2020.

In her time at Ubuntu, she was the possible mother of two successful litters born on the 18th of February 2021 and the 19th of January 2022. During her second pregnancy she was evicted on the 8th of January 2022 however was accepted back into the group on the same day. This was likely due to, her mother and dominant female, Daisy (VBBF111) having recently given birth on the 2nd of January. Dominant females often evict subordinate females just before they give birth, as this period is when subordinate females are most likely to be a threat to their pups. They also evict pregnant subordinate females which often causes the subordinate females to abort due to the stress of being evicted. This is advantageous for the survival of the dominant female's own pups as it reduces pup competition. Therefore, it is truly remarkable that Magali was accepted back into the group and kept her pregnancy during her eviction.

Another subordinate female (the future dominant female of Ubuntu) Cthulu (VUBF035) gave birth on the 21st of January 2022, a couple of days after Magali and there were eight pups in total. Of that litter there are four individuals that are alive, well and remain part of Ubuntu today – yearling subordinate males Subigubi (VUBM050) and Beans (VUBM053), and yearling subordinate females Evikutty (VUBF051) and Muffin (VUBF052). In cases like this the exact mother of pups is uncertain without a genetic analysis, however both females cared for the pups by lactating and babysitting.

On the 9th of July 2022, Magali, Mameuf and another yearling subordinate female Welma (VUBF043) did not wake up with the group and were given their last

seen. Mameuf and Welma were never seen again however after nine long months observers were surprised when Magali made a reappearance on the 13th of April 2023. She was found in the company of yearling subordinate male Love (VBSM003) and previous dominant male of Namaqua Shandy (VHMM023) – and with this a new group, Near Death Experience, was formed. Love and Shandy were the last surviving members of Namaqua, a group that disintegrated following an epidemic of tuberculosis (TB) that spread throughout the entire group until only males Shandy, Love and sub-adult subordinate male Bruno (VNQM037) remained. Namaqua officially disintegrated on the 22nd of February 2023, as without females present in the group it became a same sex coalition. Shandy, Love and Bruno were all observed to have TB lumps. Bruno was last seen on the 18th of March and was presumed dead from succumbing to TB and therefore never made it to Near Death Experience.



Dominant female Magali, yearling subordinate male Love and dominant male Shandy in Near-Death Experience. Photo Credit: Zurich Independent researcher Livio Flueler.

Since Magali was the only female in the group, she was considered dominant. Magali, Shandy and Love remained in Near-Death Experience for just over a month but over that time Love and Shandy's condition got progressively worse until the 23rd of May, when both males did not wake up at the sleeping burrow. They were given their Last Seen and presumed to have succumbed to TB leaving

Magali alone again. However, her story does not end there...



Magali with the Squirrel group Fools. Photo Credit: Ground Squirrel Observer David Homoláč.

Since the end of Near-Death Experience, Magali has been sighted many times by observers often around Gannavlake (GV) farmhouse, our other field base on the reserve. This coincides with Make-E-Plan territory, where she had two encounters: on the 9th of July and 23rd of August this year. On both occasions Magali was unsuccessful in her attempts to join the group and was war danced and chased away. However, in a twist of fate she has found herself a new group, something rather unexpected, a scurry of squirrels! Yes, you heard right – a scurry of squirrels! Observers from the KRC's ground squirrel project have frequently seen Magali with the squirrel group called Fools. In fact, with time she has slowly become more habituated to the squirrel ways to the point where Magali will get into the scale for nuts! It is not uncommon to observe meerkats, ground squirrels and yellow mongooses interact with each other and share the same sleeping burrow, however Magali seems like a special case. In many ways Magali is an extraordinary case, having successfully given birth at around the same time as dominant female Daisy and surviving Near Death Experience without contracting TB. As an observer I became intrigued by her story and look forward to seeing where her journey next takes her.

Hey Jude

"Hey Jude, don't be afraid..." - The Beatles

The meerkat that requires the most habituation at the group Make-e-Plan is yearling subordinate male Jude (VMPM071).

Jude was born to either then-yearling subordinate females Cassie (VMPF050), Bonxie (VMPF054) or Sophie (VMPF055) on the 15th of April 2022. As described in the May 2022 Meerkatter, Jude, along with his 12 littermates, had a rough start to life. The reason they had a tough time was because they were abandoned after heavy rains experienced at the Kuruman River Reserve. The Make-e-Plan group did not return to the babysitting burrow on the 22nd of May and the group was only found again on the 24th of May. Dominant female Bridget (VQLF011) had

given birth to three pups, subordinate males Patrys (VMPM068), Shen (VMPM069) and Shrimp (VMPM070), slightly before the other pups were born, and these pups were still with the group, along with Snapdragon (VMPM074). Of the thirteen pups that were abandoned, only two survived. When the two surviving pups, Ranger (VMPM073) and Jude were reunited with the group, they were described as energetic and keen for egg rewards and observers could work on their habituation. Unfortunately, Ranger was last seen on the 13th of September 2022.

The experience that Jude has had around people has probably not been very positive. When current dominant male Sushi (VTSM018) and adult subordinate male Sketchy Bongo (VTSM019) joined the group on the 21st of November 2021, Sketchy Bongo babysat various litters over the next few months and influenced the pups' habituation to humans, as he was not comfortable with observers nearer than two meters. He would typically emerge from below in a burrow entrance at a distance of 15 meters from the observers and only allow slow movements at two meters. He was not seen at the group anymore from the 4th of July 2022. However, the damage was done because Jude treats observers in exactly the same way as Sketchy Bongo. (Sketchy Bongo, however, did not have an effect on the habituation on the other individuals that he babysat). For the whole time I have been at the project, Jude has not allowed people to follow him at anything closer than 10 meters. He does sometimes get very invested in foraging and does not realise that the observer has happened upon him until it is too late to bolt. Usually this results in an awkward stare-down until the observer backs away slowly or Jude gathers the courage to bail to the nearest bolt hole. He is better at the sleeping burrow and allows observers to get as close as three meters from him.

At the time of writing, Jude is just over a year and half old. He was weighed a few times in the months of May and June in 2022, but there was a dry spell of more than a year when not a single weight was collected of him. However, on the morning of the 27th of September 2023, an observer went to the group and started an egg frenzy near Jude, as he is still a very big fan of egg, and this is the only way he sometimes approaches observers. The observer stayed back from the scale and threw egg into the scale, and he slowly but surely climbed into the scale! The first weight in more than a year! Unfortunately, his tail was still resting on the ground the first time he climbed into the scale, and the second time the Velcro connecting the scale to the weight box did not stick properly and caused him to slide slightly (pictured below). When another observer went in the afternoon session, he managed to get Jude into the scale again, and this time there were no qualms, and he collected the weight. Jude is now a good average of 578 grams.



The first-time yearling subordinate male Jude (VMPM071) has showed an interest in being weighed in nearly a year! Whilst the weight was not able to be recorded at this time due to the scale being lopsided and Jude only being partially in the scale – this was great progress. Photo credit: Observer Charlotte Bendell.

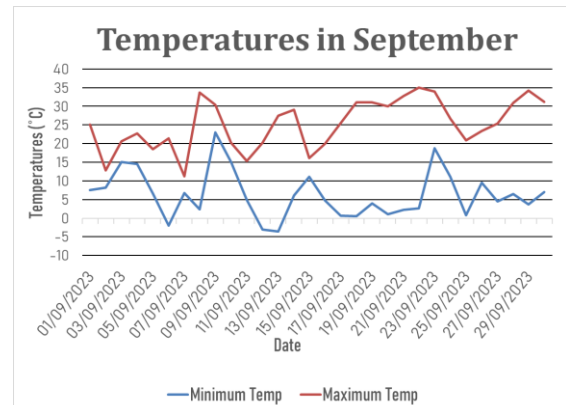
It is interesting to compare his current weight with that of his surviving littermates. On the same day (in the same session) that Jude was weighed, Patrys weighed 665 grams, Shen 606 grams, Shrimp 644 grams and Snapdragon 684 grams. Jude's weight in comparison to his littermates is at the lower end, but he seems to have overcome the malnutrition from his childhood and has grown well.

We look forward to journeying along with him on the road to habituation, so that he is able to behave normally in his group without feeling threatened and no longer be afraid of humans.

Pregnancies in September 2023

Females pregnant in September	2
Females who aborted	0
Females who gave birth, litters lost	1
Females who gave birth, litter emerged	1
Females who gave birth, unknown outcome	5
Females still pregnant at the end of the month	2

Weather at the KMP



There was a significant spike in temperature around the 9th of September and a steady increase in temperature towards the end of the month. The average minimum temperature was 6.3°C and the average maximum temperature was 25.2°C. The hottest day was on the 22nd of September, at 35.0°C, which is an indication of the beginning of summer. The coldest day was on the 13th, and was a chilly -3.5°C. It rained on the 23rd and 24th of September giving a total of 1.2mm rainfall this month.

September 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 17 individuals were present at the end of September.
- Adult male Ozzie (VECM033) *lost his dominance* on the 6th of September, when he submitted to adult male Palestrina (VLM211). There was a lot of dominance assertions witnessed between all the eligible males and many injuries were sustained. Male dominance is uncertain at the end of the month.
- Dominant female Tolkien (VECF019) gave *birth* on the 15th of September, and the outcome of this litter is unknown at the end of the month.
- Adult males Palestrina (VLM211), Pucky (VECM023), Charlie (VECM031) and Ozzie (VECM033) left before the 5th of September, as they did not wake up with the group. They were seen returning to the group in the afternoon of the 5th.
- Adult subordinate female Kilie (VECF036) returned to the group on the 1st of the month, as she woke up and acted as part of the group. However, in the afternoon of the same day she was evicted. Kilie appeared to the group on the 5th and the group ignored her. On the 9th yearling subordinate female Madhubala (VALF006) did not wake up with the group. Yearling subordinate female Maya (VALF003) left mid-session on the same day. Kilie, Maya and Madhubala appeared to the group on the 10th. Maya appeared to the group on the 12th and was allowed to return to the group but was evicted on the same day, when Tolkien attacked her. Madhubala and Kilie appeared to the group together on the 12th as well. They have not been seen since, except for an opportunistic sighting of Madhubala at Zulus on the 19th.
- Kilie, along with Maya and Madhubala, remain absent from the group at the end of this month.
- Alba encountered Make-e-Plan adult subordinate females Sophie (VMPPF055), and Archie (VMPPF057), and an unknown adult on the 23rd of September. The group saw and war-dance-chased them away. During all this chaos, yearling male Nigoni (VALM004) mated with Archie.
- Alba had no inter-group interactions or group splits this month.
- Due to the dominance change and continuous dominance assertions, Palestrina, Pucky, Charlie and Ozzie have sustained injuries. These injuries are healing well. All other individuals appeared healthy.

Brussels Sprouts (FDC):

- All 7 individuals were present at the end of the month.
- Dominant female Arabella (VMPPF035) was made officially pregnant on the 18th of September and is still pregnant at the end of the month.
- Sub-adult subordinate male Joep (VBSM007) was given his *Last Seen* this month.
- There were no encounters, inter-group interactions or group splits 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 September.
- *Male dominance* remains *unconfirmed* at Elrond's Council.
- Dominant female Snoop Kat (VECF039) was made officially pregnant on the 21st of September and is still pregnant at the end of the month.
- Adult male Milo (VECM034) left the group on the 30th of September and returned in the afternoon.
- 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):

- 18 of 20 members were present at the end of September.
- Dominant female Goldeneye (VGDF007) gave *birth* on the 6th of September and of this litter, three pups have emerged.
- Adult subordinate male Beatrice (VGDM014) left the group on the 1st, as he did not wake up with the group on the 2nd but returned to the group on the same day. He left again on the 8th with adult subordinate male Baymax (VGDM028), and they both returned on the 9th. Yearling subordinate male Vegeta (VGDM038) left independently of them on the 8th and returned on the 9th. Adult subordinate male Rogelio de la Vega (VGDM015) left on the 9th, as he was seen encountering Lazuli, and was seen foraging with the group again on the 11th. Beatrice, along with Baymax, left before the 17th as they did not wake up with the group, returned on the 17th. Rogelio left on the 19th and had encounters with Lazuli and returned to the group on the evening of the 20th. Beatrice and Rogelio left again on the 24th, where Beatrice and Rogelio encountered Lazuli for the full day. They returned on the 24th as they were seen waking up with the group on the 25th. On the 25th, Rogelio, Vegeta and Beatrice left the group, where Beatrice and Rogelio roved at Lazuli alongside adult subordinate male Subigubi (VUBM050) of Ubuntu. Vegeta and Beatrice returned on the evening of the 25th, while Rogelio was only observed waking up with the group the next morning. Rogelio left Gold Diggers on the 27th, encountered Lazuli and was found foraging with his home group on the 28th. On the 30th of September, both Beatrice and Rogelio chased dominant male Odin (VLM266) and adult subordinate male Moteck (VLM261) of Lazuli away but kept running on, possibly to go roving themselves.
- Rogelio and Beatrice were absent at the end of this month.
- The group had one encounter with Odin on the 8th of September, where Vegeta chased him away. The group then had an encounter with Lazuli males Odin, Moteck, adult subordinate males Taco (VLM273), Phar Lap (VLM275) and

yearling subordinate males Lord Escort (VLM282), Girdle (VLM287) and Monster (VLM290) on the 8th. The group continuously chased them away, but the males kept returning. The group encountered Odin on the 25th, along with yearling subordinate male Ringo (VUBM059) of Ubuntu and an unknown adult. On the 30th of September, Odin and Moteck had five encounters with Gold Diggers, with the group chasing them away at various times during the day.

- They had one inter-group interaction on the 8th of September, where they war-danced towards Lazuli and then retreated.
- They had no group splits this month.
- All members of the group appeared to be in good health.

Jaxx (FDC):

- 22 of 25 individuals were present at Jaxx at the end of September.
- Of dominant female Baloo's (VJXF080) litter, three pups were marked.
- Igglybuff (VJXP186) did not wake up with the group on the 21st of September, when the other 2 pups had their first emerge. There was a martial eagle observed in the vicinity at the time and the pup is assumed to have been predated. Adult subordinate male The Dude (VJXM142) was not seen with the group when an observer went there for a babysitting stop and he has not been sighted again. On the 30th, after an inter-group interaction with an unknown group of meerkats, one of the pups Cleffa (VJXP187) got separated from the group and was not seen again in the afternoon. Adult subordinate males Fred (VJXM146) and Cigarette Smoking Man (VJXM153) were also evicted on this day, when the group turned on them after the inter-group interaction and chased them away. Yearling subordinate female Jub Jub (VJXF160) was evicted shortly before the inter-group interaction started, when Baloo chased her away. The three individuals returned to the group that same evening.
- The Dude, along with the two missing pups, are absent at the end of the month.
- The group encountered two unknown adult meerkats on the 30th of September. The group saw these individuals and dominant male Leonard (VLM221), Fred and Cigarette Smoking Man chased them away (which led to Fred and Cigarette Smoking Man's eviction).
- Jaxx had an inter-group interaction with an unknown group of meerkats consisting of eight individuals on the 30th. The groups fought and then the unknown group retreated.
- They had an overnight group split on the 27th of September, where the individuals returned to the main group on the 28th.
- 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) gave *birth* on the 8th of September and lost approximately 237g. The litter outcome remains unknown at the end of this month.
- Dominant male Odin (VLM266) left Lazuli towards Gold Diggers on the 8th along with adult subordinate males Moteck (VLM261), Taco (VLM273) and Phar Lap (VLM275) and yearling subordinate males Lord Escort (VLM282), Girdle (VLM287) and Monster (VLM290). Moteck returned later that morning and left again in the afternoon of the 8th. On The 10th Odin, Taco, Girdle, Lord Escort and Moteck returned to Lazuli. Phar Lap and Monster returned to the group on the 12th of September. Odin left on the 25th of September and returned later that day. Odin and Moteck left again on the 30th of September and returned that evening.
- Lazuli encountered adult subordinate male Rogelio de la Vega (VGDM015) from Gold Diggers twice on the 9th, Lazuli war-danced and Rogelio retreated on both occasions. Lazuli had five encounters on the 19th of September: two with Ubuntu's yearling subordinate male Subigubi (VUBM050) and three with Rogelio. During these encounters Rogelio approached Dumpling and mated with her. On the 22nd Subigubi encountered Lazuli and was chased away. Rogelio and Gold Diggers subordinate adult male Beatrice (VGDM014) encountered Lazuli on the 24th and were seen but ignored by the group. On the 25th Rogelio and Subigubi had two encounters with Lazuli and Beatrice had one encounter. The final encounter this month occurred on the 27th of September when Rogelio was seen and ignored by the group.
- Lazuli had one intergroup interaction with Gold Diggers on the 8th Of September, both groups war-danced and Lazuli retreated
- Lazuli had seven daily group splits on the 15th, 18th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 23rd and 27th of this month. They also had an overnight group split on the 20th of September.
- All individuals seemed to be in good health.

Side Quest (FDC):

- 12 meerkats were present at the end of this month.
- The two pups from dominant female Pumba's (VZUF048) most recent litter; Basil (VSIM026) and Sybil (VSIF025) started foraging with the group on the 26th of August and moved sleeping burrow for the first time on the 31st of August.
- Side Quest had no encounters, inter-group interactions, or group splits this month.
- The group appears to be healthy at the end of the month.

Trackie-Daks (FDC):

- 15 out of 21 individuals were present at the end of the month.
- Yearling subordinate male Raclette (VTDM017) was not found with the group on the 23rd and returned later that morning. On the 27th Raclette

left again along with adult subordinate male Moon Moon (VTSM022) and yearling subordinate males Princess Carolyn (VTDM013), Hamish (VTDM014), Trimazz (VTDM015) and Frida (VTDM005). These males remained absent at the end of the month.

- On the 27th of September, Trackie-Daks had an encounter with adult subordinate male Rollo (VWM240) and yearling subordinate males Scrabble (VWM253) and Clue (VWM255) from Whiskers. The Whiskers males continuously tried to approach the group and were repeatedly chased away, Rollo repeatedly approached yearling subordinate female Futret Minor (VTDF019) and was repeatedly rejected.
- Trackie-Daks had one intergroup interaction with Whiskers on the 22nd and successfully chased Whiskers away.
- Trackie-Daks had one daily group split on the 7th of September.
- The habituation level is currently *Incomplete*. Dominant male Coquillet (VTSM014) has been weighed quite consistently throughout the month. 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. Following an encounter with the Whiskers males Rollo, Scrabble and Clue, Coquillet became more comfortable around the observer at the time and approached them to less than 1 metre.
- On the 29th of August, adult subordinate female Hachi (VWF238) appeared to have a submandibular lump on her left cheek. We are continuing to track this injury and the swelling appears to have gone down. All other individuals appear to be healthy.

Ubuntu (FDC):

- 16 out of 17 individuals were present at the end of the month.
- Yearling subordinate male Subigubi (VUBM050) left on the 4th and had an encounter with Vetkoeks but returned the following day on the 5th. He left again on the 10th and appeared to Ubuntu in the evening with evicted Whiskers adult subordinate females Laika (VWF236), Emily Bronte (VWF243) and Virginia Woolf (VWF244) and returned on the 12th. He left again on the 19th and returned on the 23rd, during this period he had three encounters with Lazuli. Subigubi left on the 25th and had two more encounters at Lazuli before returning back to Ubuntu in the evening of the 25th. He left for the final time this month on the 29th and returned the following day on the 30th.
- Yearling subordinate male Ringo (VUBM059) left on the 25th and had an encounter with Gold Diggers before returning later that day.

- Yearling subordinate female Muffin (VUBF052) was evicted by Agazoth on the 23rd, whereby Agazoth attacked her and the whole group joined in chasing Muffin away. Following this Muffin made multiple appearances to the group; twice on the 23rd, twice on the 26th and on the morning of the 27th, each time the group war danced towards her and chased her away.
- On the 10th of September Ubuntu encountered evicted adult subordinate female Chomp (VWF251) and the whole group chased her away. Later that day they also encountered the evicted Whiskers females; Laika, Emily Bronte and Virginia Woolf which they chased away. They had another encounter on the 25th with an unknown individual, Ubuntu war danced, and the individual retreated. On the 27th Ubuntu encountered adult subordinate male Zuma (VZUM059) from Vetkoeks.
- Ubuntu had two inter-group interactions with Vetkoeks this month. On the 10th the groups saw, war-danced and fought each other. Ubuntu was observed excavating the Vetkoeks sleeping burrow while Vetkoeks moved below. The second intergroup interaction occurred on the 27th and was very brief resulting in Ubuntu chasing Vetkoeks away.
- Muffin remains absent at the end of this month.
- All members of Ubuntu appeared to be in good health at the end of the month

Whiskers (FDC):

- 17 out of 18 meerkats were present at Whiskers at the end of September.
- Dominant female Luna (VFW235) gave *birth* between the 9th and 11th of September and the outcome of this litter is still unknown at the end of this month.
- On the 27th of September adult subordinate male Rollo (VWM240), yearling subordinate males Scrabble (VWM253), Clue (VWM255) and Battleship (VWM257) and adult subordinate female Crunchie (VWF250) all left the group. Crunchie was seen away from the group with four Trackie-Daks males: Adult subordinate male Moon Moon (VTSM22) and yearling subordinate males Raclette (VTDM17), Hamish (VTDM14) and Princess Carolyn (VTDM13). Rollo, Scrabble and Clue had an encounter with Trackie-Daks later that day. All individuals returned later that evening on the 27th.
- Dominant male Brea (VLM157) left the group on the 30th of September following an alarm call and remains absent at the end of the month.
- Adult subordinate females Laika (VWF236), Emily Bronte (VWF243), Virginia Woolf (VWF244) and Chomp (VWF251) have been emigrated out of the group following their eviction on the 11th of August as it has been a suitable amount of time for them to be considered not part of the group.
- On the 27th the group had an encounter with yearling subordinate male Frida (VTDM005) and Battleship chased him away. Frida returned the following morning on the 28th and encountered

the group twice before being chased away by Scrabble.

- On the 22nd Whiskers had an inter-group interaction with Trackie-Daks as their territories are slightly overlapping. Both groups war danced towards each other, but Trackie-Daks chased Whiskers away by the end.
- Whiskers had a group split of uncertain duration which ended on the 17th of September where the following individuals were found to be separated from the group; Scrabble, sub-adult subordinate female Medusa (VWF263), sub-adult subordinate female Kylie (VWF265) and sub-adult subordinate female Bruce (VWF266).
- We celebrated Brea's birthday on the 15th of September as he reached 14 years old – the oldest recorded meerkat in our database.
- All individuals at Whiskers seem to be healthy, however we have noted significant weight loss in Brea which we have attributed to his old age.

Zulus (FDC):

- All 10 individuals were present at the end of September.
- Dominant female Sprudde (VZUF028) gave *birth* between the 20-22nd of this month and the outcome of this litter remains unknown at the end of the month.
- There is still no *dominant male* at Zulus.
- Adult subordinate male Willow (VZUM063) left on the 18th and returned on the 19th of September.
- Zulus had a brief encounter with yearling subordinate female Madhubala (VALF006) from Alba on the 19th of September, the group watched closely as she passed by their sleeping burrow and swiftly moved on.
- Zulus had one group split on the 11th following an alarm call which lasted one hour.
- 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.
- Dominant female Fleabag (VGDF005) gave *birth* on the 14th of September, the outcome of this litter remains unknown at the end of this 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 with adult subordinate females Juliet, and Shelby and subadult male Jaskier (VDDM001) are the main focus of habituation at this group. In the last month these individuals have made great progress in their scale habituation allowing us to get consistent weights for the whole 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):

- 10 out of 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.
- Adult female Angel (VRWF004) received direct submissions from the majority of the other eligible females in the group including adult subordinate females Elsa (VRWF002) and Hrairoo (VRWF008), and yearling subordinate females Feora (VRWF010) and Adolin (VRWF012). She became officially *dominant* on the 20th of September.
- On the 21st of September, adult subordinate females Elsa, Hrairoo and yearling subordinate females Dalinar (VRWF016) and Adolin left the group and returned in the evening to the sleeping burrow.
- Yearling subordinate male Coco (VRWM019) left the group on the 8th of September and remains absent at the end of this month.
- Runaways had no encounters; inter-group interactions or group splits recorded this month.
- The individuals of this group appear to be healthy.

Vetkoeks (LHM):

- All 6 individuals were present at the end of the month.
- Dominant female Mooncake (VHMF053) gave *birth* on the 9th/10th of September. The litter was *lost* before emergence on the 18th of September, following observations of no babysitting, end of lactation in the only eligible female and moving sleeping burrows.
- Adult subordinate male Zuma (VZUM059) left his group around the 27th of September, as he had an encounter with the group Ubuntu. He was seen to be back with Vetkoeks on the 28th of September.
- Vetkoeks encountered Ubuntu adult subordinate male Subigubi (VUBM050) on the 4th of September and chased him away.
- Vetkoeks had an intergroup interaction on the 10th and 27th of September with Ubuntu. On the 10th both groups war danced and fought, and Ubuntu excavated Vetkoek's sleeping burrow.
- There were no recorded group splits at Vetkoeks this month.
- All individuals appear healthy at the end of the month.

Habituation Groups:

Cape Crusaders (HAB):

- In September, 8 individuals were consistently seen at this group.

- *Male dominance* at this group remains *unknown*. A submission was observed, but because we have not checked the adult males for transponders yet, due to their habituation level, we cannot assign codes and behaviours in the database.
- Cape Crusaders had no encounters, inter-group interactions or group splits.
- The habituation of this group is classed as *In Progress*. The adult female is well habituated. The sub-adults of this group are becoming more confident with observers and the scale, and sub-adult male Oggy (VCCM006) readily eats egg. The adult males have been marked more frequently as they have become comfortable with people, and observers can get as close as 3 meters while standing and at 1 meter while laying down. We will continue movement habituation and hopefully be able to check for transponders in the adult males soon.
- 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 September.
- On the 23rd of September adult subordinate females Sophie (VMPPF055) and Archie (VMPPF057) left the group and had an encounter with Alba. They returned to the group on the 23rd.
- Adult subordinate female Bonxie (VMPPF054) was evicted on the 25th after being attacked by dominant female Bridget (BQLF011) multiple times, however she was accepted back into the group later that afternoon.
- Make-e-Plan had two group splits this month, a daily split on the 20th of September and an overnight split on the 22nd of September.
- Make-e-plan had no encounters or intergroup interactions this month.
- 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. This month a breakthrough has been made with Jude, he will now drink water from observers, eat egg and we have recorded his first ever weight in over a year. We will continue with scale habituation as well as follow habituation on specific individuals, and general hand habituation. The individuals subadult male Waxillium (VMPM083) as well as adult female Archie (VMPPF057) are the focus of follows. Most individuals are jumpy around observers' hands and therefore hand habituation will also be focused on.
- All individuals in the group appear to be healthy.

Phoenix (HAB):

- Phoenix were seen twice at the beginning of this month on the 1st where 11 individuals were sighted and on the 3rd, where 12 individuals were

sighted. However, the group has not been seen since, until the end of this month.

- The group's habituation status is still *In Progress*. We continued with cage habituation 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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