



The Meerkatter

The Friends of the Kalahari Meerkat Project Report – www.kalahari-meerkats.com – October 2024

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Spring Clean

The month of October has been busy for observers at the Kalahari Research Centre. Breeding season is starting to pick up and nearly every day has been action packed. From rovers, inter-group interactions, pregnancies and births (not to mention pup-events), near-death experiences, actual death, and even a snake bite. Among the many interesting events to unpack and report on, the most exciting would be the sudden change in group size and composition noticed within our current main data collection groups. This was most noted in groups where dominant females have recently been reported as pregnant. Currently, four of our groups are going through a major spring clean: Lazuli, Trackie-Daks, Gold Diggers and Ubuntu.



Dumpling and Rogelio de la Vega sunning. Photo credit: Sofya Melnikova, Life History Coordinator.

The situation at Lazuli started to develop on the 6th this month when adult subordinate males Subigubi (VUBM050), Girdle (VLM287) and yearling subordinate males Tahini (VLM301) and Baba Ghanoush (VLM302) started to leave the group and shortly return after, most notably on the 11th when all the individuals mentioned above, as well as yearling subordinate female Pita (VLF303) and yearling subordinate males Kush (VLM298) and Tinashe (VLM310) left Lazuli just before an inter-group interaction broke out with Gold Diggers. The following morning, yearling subordinate female Coffee (VLF297) and Pita were seen waking up at a distance from the group and ran away before the

group was up and have not been seen since. On the 16th, a group split of uncertain duration was reported involving adult subordinate females Tuna Fish IV (VLF283), Brynhildr (VLF293) and yearling subordinate female Mist (VLF294) as well as Kush who has since returned but has been seen leaving and returning multiple times by observers. Lazuli's group count has plummeted from 19 to 11 and the only adult who has stayed with the group consistently since the 11th is Subigubi. Lazuli dominant female Dumpling has been made officially pregnant on the 16th and delivered her litter on the 30th this month. With no opportunistic sightings of the missing individuals, and with a litter to raise, we are hoping the missing individuals will rejoin the group now that Dumpling needs helpers to raise her litter.

Other groups are also experiencing a surge of leave lines predominantly coming from males. Once and again, the rovers are on the move - subordinate males conduct frequent extraterritorial forays, during periods of peak female fertility, which give rise to matings with females in other groups.¹ Throughout the month of September, Trackie-Daks dominant male Coquillet (VTSM014) and adult subordinate males Guardy McGuardface (VTDM012) and Krokot (VTDM022) were actively roving at Ubuntu. While Boubou (VTDF028) delivered her litter this month: Fishstick (VTDP044), Hope (VTDF045), Mulan (VTDF046), Jonesy (VTDP047) and Peely (VTDM048) have already emerged and joined the group on their first forage, Trackie-Daks males have continued to leave and return to the group mid-session, this time, joined by yearling subordinate male Gary (VTDM033) and sub-adult subordinate male Kanto (VTDM036). On the 12th, Krokot and Guardy McGuardface left the group during a morning session and have not been seen since. Observers confirmed that Guardy McGuardface was not babysitting. Since Boubou's night out in July, he was fitted with a radio collar and has not been found with the group or the babysitting burrow since he left on the 12th.

On the 8th of October, an observer collecting babysitting data on Trackie-Daks saw two slender mongooses emerge from the group's sleeping burrow with something resembling a pup in one of their jaws (slender mongooses are opportunistic vertebrate and invertebrate hunters²). As Boubou saw this, she ran back to the sleeping burrow and the group followed her only to find that Coquillet, Krokot, Guardy McGuardface and Kanto were seen running in the opposite direction of the sleeping burrow. Boubou has also been seen separating from the group in an attempt to follow Coquillet and Gary while the males left to rove.



Trackie-Daks returning to their sleeping burrow in the evening, after a long day of foraging. Photo credit: Sofya Melnikova, Life History Coordinator.

On the 15th, observers heard her make lost calls while searching for the dominant male only to find herself alone and struggling to rejoin with the rest of the group. It is not the first time a dominant male has left the group in search of breeding opportunities, and we have previously witnessed collective leavings of roving males, eventually immigrating into different groups. A good example would be in January 2023 when previous Elrond's Council dominant male Palestrina (VLM211), adult subordinate male littermates Charlie (VECM031) and Pucky (VECM023), as well as adult subordinate male Ozzie (VECM033) immigrated into Alba and overthrew former dominant male Godric (VZUM053).

The comings and goings of males is not a novelty for our observers, the question remains whether they will remain gone and if so, for how long? This month, we have had a number of surprising reappearances from males such as former Trackie-Daks adult subordinate males Moon Moon (VTSM022) and Raclette (VTDM017). Moon Moon was known as the meerkat with a missing left hind leg (suspected to be caught in a snare and later amputated in March 2021) and was last seen in January this year. Raclette, who was last seen on the 14th of October 2023, roving at Whiskers, has now been seen again, roving at Whiskers on the 19th this month. This said, there have been several occurrences of Trackie-Daks males leaving the group who have to this day not returned. With so many males leaving the past few months, we do wonder what this will look like for Trackie-Daks as a group.

While males leave on their own accord, females are having a hard time remaining in groups such as

Ubuntu and Gold Diggers. On the 12th of October, adult subordinate female Ricky Baker (VGDF031) was evicted during a morning session when the group war danced and chased her away while adult subordinate female Maya II (VGDF039) woke up at a different sleeping burrow entrance and did not act as part of the group on the 17th. A few weeks later, an observer saw the eviction of yearling subordinate female Serafina Pekkala (VGDF049) wherein dominant female Goldeneye (VGDF007) attacked her and blocked her down a bolt hole before chasing her away from the group. Ricky Baker and Serafina have been seen since their evictions. Both females went down the same sleeping burrow after the group went down and were seen foraging at a distance from the group days after their last sighting with Gold Diggers.



Ubuntu's dominant female Agazoth evicting yearling subordinate female Tiddlywink this month. Photo credit: Sofya Melnikova, Life History Coordinator.

In a similar manner, Ubuntu's dominants Agazoth (VUBF039) and Greebo (VHMM048) have been evicting females, as well as males this month, reducing the number of individuals from 16 to 9. Most notably on the 14th of October, yearling subordinate female Bruindtjie (VUBF063) did not wake up with the group and as soon as the group emerged from their sleeping burrow, both dominants initiated the eviction of four males - adult subordinates Beans (VUBM053) and Libby (VUBM058), and yearling subordinate littermates Flibbertijbbet (VUBM066) and Hooligan (VUBM068) – as well as yearling subordinate female Stokkies (VUBF062). The evictions did not end here, as on the 24th of October adult subordinate female Martini (VUBF061) was attacked by Agazoth resulting in Martini's blood being shed, and the subsequent chasing and eviction of the female from the group. Only an hour later, with Martini's blood still around Agazoth's jaw, yearling subordinate female Tiddlywink (VUBF069) was attacked down a bolt hole and blocked from escaping by the dominant female.

Although typically not witnessed, Tiddlywink was seen fighting back and biting the dominant female while making an escape from the bolt hole, both females have been seen in Ubuntu's territory foraging together but have not rejoined the group yet.

Goldeneye and Agazoth have been made officially pregnant this month - breeding females are typically known to evict subordinate females during later stages of gestation.² It was curious, however, to see subordinate males being evicted at Ubuntu. The first male eviction was reported on the 5th of October (preceding Ubuntu's mass eviction on the 24th of October). Following Greebo's run-in with an automobile on the main road, an observer remained with the group to ensure Greebo's physical well-being did not deteriorate as he is the individual wearing the radio-collar for Ubuntu. It was a busy day for the group, as Ubuntu also had an inter-group interaction with Vetkoeks (once again, on the side of the main road) who reportedly stood their ground and made Ubuntu retreat. Amidst the group's collision, Libby was seen being attacked and chased away from the group by Greebo. Libby remained at a distance from the group and was chased away multiple times by other group members for the remainder of the session. He did eventually join the group going below and emerged with the group the following morning.

To be dominant, is to dominate, as this was demonstrated to our observers this month in several groups, and this might very well be explained, as when a pregnant dominant female feels threatened (such as with the risk of infanticide from subordinate females), or a dominant male feels weakened (such as after a collision with an automobile), it might lead to acts of dominance exertion such as the expulsion of group members who might challenge their dominance. It is an understandable strategy, but could be risky, as helpers are responsible for most aspects of parental care (including babysitting, carrying and feeding pups) and parents contribute relatively little to some cooperative activities.³

We have witnessed in the past evicted individuals rejoining their home groups, such as most recently when adult subordinate female Mojo Jojo (VECF038) rejoined Elrond's Council once dominant female Snoop Kat (VECF039) gave birth. We will have to wait and see whether the females, in particular, will be accepted back to their groups, as the risk of infanticide reduces when allowing the females to rejoin after giving birth. Sometimes, however, the end of something might be the beginning of something new, and there are instances where evicted females join roving males to create their own sub-groups. We will keep our readers posted as we know there is much more to come this breeding season.

References

¹ Young et al, 2007. Subordinate male meerkats prospect for extra-group paternity: alternative reproductive tactics in a cooperative mammal.

² Graw, Beke, and Marta Manser. "Life History Patterns and Biology of the Slender Mongoose (*Galerella Sanguinea*) in the

Kalahari Desert." *Journal of Mammalogy*, vol. 98, no. 2, 2017, pp. 332-38.

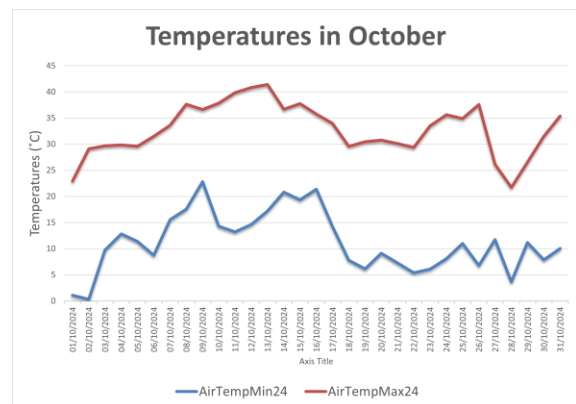
³ Clutton Brock et al, 1988. Infanticide & expulsion of females in a cooperative mammal.

⁴ Stephens et al, 2005. Dispersal, Eviction, and Conflict in Meerkats (*Suricata suricatta*): An Evolutionarily Stable Strategy Model.

Pregnancies in October 2024

Females pregnant in October	15
Females who aborted	1
Females who gave birth, litters lost	4
Females who gave birth, litter emerged	3
Females who gave birth, unknown outcome	1
Females still pregnant at the end of the month	6

Weather at the KMP



With summer on its way, the temperatures keep rising. The average minimum temperature was 11.5°C and the average maximum temperature was 33.2°C. The hottest day was on the 13th of October, at 41.4°C. The coldest day was on the 2nd with a temperature of 0.3°C. It only rained once this month, on the 16th of October with 0.4 millimetres of rainfall.

October 2024 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):

- All 13 individuals were present at the end of October.
- Dominant female Cleopatra (VALF008) gave birth this month. Three pups, Chia (VALP023), Xue (VALP024) and Bachue (VALP025) have emerged and have had their first sleeping burrow move.
- Sub-adult subordinate female Yumi (VALF022) was given her Last Seen this month.
- On the 3rd, adult subordinate male Palestrina (VLM211) left the group and returned later in the afternoon. On the 5th and the 6th, Palestrina was roving at Zulus, he was back with Alba in the morning of the 7th. On the 12th, Palestrina was seen leaving the group in the morning, he woke up with the group on the 13th. Yearling subordinate male Apollo (VALM010) was roving at Brussels Sprouts on the 15th and returned to the group in the evening. On the 16th, Palestrina was roving at Brussels Sprouts and returned to the group in the evening. Palestrina and Apollo were seen leaving the group on the 17th, Apollo was roving at Brussels Sprouts, and both returned the same evening. On the 18th, Apollo and yearling subordinate male Patrick (VALM011) were seen leaving the group twice, they returned the same day. On the 23rd, Palestrina left the group and returned shortly the same day. On the 24th, Palestrina was roving at Zulus with Brussels Sprouts' adult subordinate male Gurke (VHMM036), Palestrina was back with Alba on the morning of the 25th. On the 30th, Palestrina left the group in the morning and returned in the evening the same day. Palestrina and Patrick left the group in the morning of the 31st during an encounter with Nightwatch dominant female Yoriki (VGDF033). Patrick returned to the group shortly after. Apollo left the group twice on the 31st, he returned once the same morning and returned in the evening with Palestrina. Palestrina was accepted by the

group and later attacked and chased away by the dominant male Pucky (VECM023). Palestrina is yet to return by the end of the month.

- Alba had three encounters on the 15th of October with Brussels Sprouts adult subordinate male Gurke (VHMM036). Both times Gurke approached the group, who war danced and chased him away, Gurke retreated and returned several times. On the 31st, the group had an encounter with Nightwatch dominant female Yoriki (VGDF033). The group war danced and chased Yoriki, who retreated. Palestrina, Apollo and Patrick approached Yoriki resulting in sex between Yoriki and Palestrina and later between Yoriki and Apollo.
- Alba had no group splits or inter-group interactions observed this month.
- All individuals appeared healthy at the end of the month.

Brussels Sprouts (FDC):

- All 5 members of the group were present at the end of the month.
- Dominant female Arabella (VMPF035) was made officially pregnant this month.
- Adult subordinate male Gurke (VHMM036) left on the 5th and was seen back with the group on the 8th. On the 15th, Gurke was roving at Alba, he approached the group multiple times who war danced and chased him away, he returned to Brussels Sprouts the same evening. On the 21st, Gurke left the group and returned the same evening. On the 24th, Gurke was roving at Zulus with Alba's adult subordinate male Palestrina (VLM211), Gurke was back with Brussels Sprouts on the morning of the 25th.
- Brussels Sprouts had four encounters with Alba adult subordinate male Apollo (VALM010) this month. On the 15th and the 17th, dominant male James (Sawyer) (VGDM011) attacked and chased away Apollo who retreated and stayed at a 50m distance from the group. On the morning of the 16th, the group war danced and chased Palestrina away who retreated and returned several times.
- There were no group splits or inter-group interactions observed this month.
- All members of the group appeared to be in good health.

Elrond's Council (FDC):

- 17 out of 18 members of the group were present at the end of October.
- *Male dominance* remained *unconfirmed* at Elrond's Council.
- Adult subordinate female Mojo Jojo (VECF038) has returned from the previous month, she was seen foraging with the group on the 10th of October.
- Dominant female Snoop Kat (VECF039) gave birth this month. Five pups, Furiosa (VECP061), Goujon (VECP062), Romanov (VECP063), Natsel (VECP064) and Bazooka (VECP065) have emerged from the sleeping burrow and have joined the group on their first forage.

- On the 6th, adult males Perceval (VECM048), Tower (VECM050), Ivory (VECM051) as well as yearling males Croqueta (VECM052), Fiufiu (VECM053), Hoid (VECM055), Nightblood (VECM066) and sub-adult subordinate male Mozart (VECM058) left the group early in the morning while Snoop Kat was thought to be giving birth as she did not emerge from the sleeping burrow that morning. They returned to the group later in the afternoon. On the 15th, Perceval was not with the group, but returned to the sleeping burrow as the group went below. On the 19th, Perceval and Ivory were seen leaving the group in the morning, they were back with the group the same day. Pup (VECP064) was not seen in the afternoon of the 29th afternoon a first burrow move in the morning, the pup is yet to return to the group.
- Elrond's Council had 13 encounters with unknown adults this month, 10 encounters with an unknown male and one encounter with an unknown individual this month. On the 15th and the 16th, an unknown individual was seen emerging the group's sleeping burrow at a different entrance, the group war danced and chased the individual who retreated and returned multiple times. On the 18th, the group war danced and chased an unknown individual who retreated. On the morning of the 26th, four unknown adult males were seen at the groups babysitting burrow and were chased away by Perceval, Tower and Ivory. The individuals retreated and as the group left to forage, they were seen emerging from the babysitting burrow and running away. On the 31st, an unknown adult was seen chased away by the group, the individual retreated.
- The group had one inter-group interaction with an unknown group on the 21st this month. A group of 5-6 individuals and an unknown adult male were chased away by Elrond's Council, the group retreated but the unknown adult male returned and was chased away by the group again.
- The group had one daily group split on the 4th of this month.
- This month, Mojo Jojo had an open wound on her tail base that has healed by the end of the month.

Gold Diggers (FDC):

- 9 out of 12 members of the group were present at the end of September.
- Dominant female Goldeneye (VGDF007) is officially pregnant this month.
- Adult subordinate females Fernet Branca (VGDF046) and Mikasa (VGDF042) were given their Last Seen this month.
- On the 11th, yearling subordinate male Captain Patel (VGDM048) was roving at Lazuli, he was back with the group on the morning of the 12th. Yearling subordinate female Serafina Pekkala (VGDF049) left the group and returned shortly the same day. Adult subordinate female Ricky Baker (VGDF031) was evicted on the morning of the 12th, the group war danced and chased Ricky Baker who retreated. On the 17th,

adult subordinate female Maya II (VGDF039) woke up after the group and did act as part of the group. The same morning, Captain Patel was seen leaving the group and returned to the group the same evening. On the 25th, Serafina Pekkala was evicted by Goldeneye when she attacked and blocked her down a bolt hole.

- Ricky Baker, Maya II and Serafina Pekkala are yet to return to the group by the end of the month.
- Gold Diggers had 28 encounters in the month of October. On the morning of the 6th, Lazuli's adult subordinate males Girdle (VLM287) and Subigubi (VUBM050) as well as yearling subordinate male Tahini (VLM301) were chased away by the group. Yearling subordinate male Tampin (VGDM055) chased Tahini when Tahini approached and sniffed Ricky Baker. In the afternoon, Lazuli's yearling subordinate male Baba Ghanoush (VLM302) approached and sniffed yearling subordinate female Peanut (VGDF047) four times who chattered. On the 10th, the group war danced and chased Baba Ghanoush who retreated. On the 11th, the group war danced and chased away Subigubi, and Lazuli's yearling subordinate males Kush (VLM298) and Tinashe (VLM310) who retreated multiple times. On the 12th, Zulus' adult subordinate male Rain (VZUM067) was roving at the group. Captain Patel led the group's war dance and chased him away. On the 17th, Kush approached the group and was chased away. On the 21st, the group war danced and chased away Brussels Sprouts adult subordinate male Gurke (VHMM036), who retreated. On the 31st, sub-adult male Snackajack (VGDM063) and Captain Patel led a chase when Ubuntu's adult subordinate male Beans (VUBM053) approached the group. The group war danced and chased him away.
- The group had two inter-group interactions with Lazuli this month. On the 11th, the groups war danced at each other, and both retreated. On the 22nd, Gold Diggers chased Lazuli who retreated.
- There were no group splits observed this month.
- All members of the group appeared to be in good health.

Jaxx (FDC):

- 9 out of 13 individuals were present at Jaxx at the end of October.
- *Male dominance* has been confirmed this month. Dominant male Sneaky (VJXM170) has received one submission from adult male Hlumelo (VJXM176) being the only other eligible male in the group.
- On the 17th, Sneaky left the group in the morning and returned later the same day. On the 25th, yearling subordinate female Pino (VJXF188) did not wake up with the group. On the 29th, yearling subordinate female Qhawekazi (VJXF180) did not wake up with the group. Adult subordinate female Miss Tick (VJXF173) and yearling subordinate female Ntombizonke (VJXF181) left the group the same day. Miss Tick and Ntombizonke returned in the morning of the 30th. Ntombizonke left the group shortly after

returning, Miss Tick was not with the group in the afternoon. Miss Tick returned to the group who accepted her, but was evicted by dominant female Jub Jub (VJXF160) the same evening. Sneaky left the group on the 31st and returned to the group the same day.

- Qhawekazi, Miss Tick, Ntombizonke and Pino are yet to return by the end of the month.
- Jaxx had two encounters with unknown adult males this month. On the 29th, the group war danced and chased an unknown adult male who retreated and stayed at a 50m distance from the group.
- There were no inter-group interactions or group splits observed this month.
- Habituation at Jaxx is in *Advanced Progress*. Sneaky can be followed at 2m for 15 minutes (for focals). He drinks water and gets into the scale regularly, but was not seen eating egg this month.
- All individuals appeared to be in good health.

Lazuli (FDC):

- 10 out of 19 individuals were present at the end of this month.
- Dominant female Dumpling (VLF272) has been made officially pregnant this month.
- On the 18th, yearling subordinate female Nontokozo (VLF307) was bitten by a puff adder on the right side of the neck and left behind by the group. Since she was not seen since the bite, we can safely assume that she has succumbed to the bite and was given her Last Seen this month.
- Enough time has passed for yearling subordinate male Meeko (VLM300) to be emigrated out of Lazuli.
- On the 6th, adult subordinate male Subigubi (VUBM050) was roving at Gold Diggers. Adult subordinate male Girdle (VLM287) and yearling subordinate males Tahini (VLM301) and Baba Ghanoush (VLM302) left the group on the 6th and returned the same day. On the 10th, Girdle and Baba Ghanoush left the group and returned the same evening. Subigubi and yearling subordinate males Kush (VLM298) and Tinashe (VLM310) were roving at Gold Diggers on 11th. Yearling subordinate female Pita (VLF303), Baba Ghanoush, Girdle and Tahini left the group early in the morning of the 11th. Subigubi, Tahini, Tinashe, Pita and Kush returned to the group the same evening. Tahini was seen leaving the group again in the evening of the 11th. Yearling subordinate female Coffee (VLF297) and Pita woke up at a separate entrance to the sleeping burrow on the morning of the 12th and left the group that morning. On the 22nd, Kush left the group and returned the same day.
- Coffee, Pita, Tahini, and Baba Ghanoush are yet to return by the end of the month.
- On the 10th, Ubuntu's adult subordinate male Beans (VUBM053) approached the group and stayed at a 30m distance from the group. The group war danced and chased him away later in the evening. On the 11th, Gold Diggers yearling subordinate male Captain Patel (VGDM048) was roving at Lazuli. The group war danced and

chased him away, dominant male Rogelio de la Vega (VGDM015) chased him away from the group, Captain Patel retreated and returned multiple times. Lazuli had an encounter with Vetkoeks' adult subordinate male Zuma (VZUM059) on the 18th. The group war danced and chased him away, Zuma retreated and returned multiple times. The same morning, two unknown adults were chased away by the group, the unknown adults retreated.

- Lazuli had two inter group interactions this month with Gold Diggers. On the 11th, both groups war danced at each other, and both retreated. On the 22nd, Gold Diggers chased Lazuli who retreated.
- The group had a daily group split on the 5th and a group split of uncertain duration on the 16th this month.
- All members of the group appeared to be in good health by the end of the month.

Side Quest (FDC):

- 12 out of 17 members were present at the end of October.
- Pup Freddo (VSIM041) was not found with the group on the 14th this month. Enough time has passed to be given his Last Seen.
- On the 8th, sub-adult subordinate male Lollipop (VSIM037) did not wake up with the group, he returned to the group the same day and left the group on the 14th. Adult subordinate males Gino Pachino (VSIM012) and Deltron Zero (VSIM015) did not wake up with the group on the 20th. Adult subordinate female Motoko Kusanagi (VSIF013) was not with the group in the afternoon. Gino Pachino returned to the group in the evening the same day. On the 24th, Gino Pachino and yearling subordinate male Toph (VSIM024) did not wake up with the group.
- Gino Pachino, Motoko Kusanagi, Deltron Zero, Toph and Lollipop are yet to return by the end of the month.
- The group had no encounters, inter-group interactions or group splits observed this month.
- All individuals appeared in good health.

Trackie-Daks (FDC):

- 15 out of 17 individuals were present at the end of the month.
- Dominant male Coquillet (VTSM014), adult subordinate males Guardy McGuardface (VTDM012) and Krokot (VTDM022), and sub-adult subordinate male Kanto (VTDM036) returned on the 1st of October. Yearling subordinate male Gary (VTDM033) returned to the group on the 3rd of October.
- All five pups: Fishstick (VTDP044), Hope (VTDF045), Mulan (VTDF046), Jonesy (VTDP047) and Peely (VTDM048) have emerged from their burrow and joined the group on their first forage.
- On the 4th, Coquillet and Gary were not with the group on arrival – they were seen away from the group – both males returned later the same day. On the 8th, Coquillet, Guardy McGuardface, Krokot and Kanto left the group.

Coquillet was back with the group the same afternoon, Guardy McGuardface, Krokot and Kanto woke up with the group on the 9th. Guardy McGuardface and Krokot were seen leaving the group in the morning of the 12th. Coquillet and Gary were seen leaving the group on the 15th, they woke up with the group on the 16th. Both males were seen leaving the group on the 17th and returned later the same day. On the 29th, Coquillet chased Guardy McGuardface who appeared to the group, Coquillet was back with the group on the 30th.

- Guardy McGuardface and Krokot are yet to return by the end of the month.
- Trackie-Daks had no encounters or inter-group interactions observed this month.
- The group had one overnight group split on the 7th of October.
- The habituation level is currently *Advanced Progress*. Coquillet drinks water and gets into the scale but remains vigilant and jumpy when followed closer than 2m.
- All individuals appeared to be healthy by the end of the month.

Ubuntu (FDC):

- 8 out of 16 individuals were present at the end of the month.
- Dominant female Agazoth (VUBF039) has been made officially pregnant this month.
- The body of adult subordinate male Ringo (VUBM059) was found by the side of the road on the 7th this month. The cause of death was confirmed by the vet to most likely be roadkill.
- On the 5th, dominant male Greebo was hit by a motor vehicle on the side of the main road. No obvious injuries were reported, Greebo is in good health by the end of the month.
- Enough time has passed for yearling subordinate male Wobble (VUBM064) to be emigrated out of Ubuntu.
- On the 5th, adult subordinate male Libby (VUBM058) was evicted from the group following Greebo's car accident. He woke up with the group on the 6th. Ringo left the group on the 6th, and did not return. On the 10th, adult subordinate males Beans (VUBM053) was roving at Lazuli. The same morning Libby and yearling subordinate male Flibbertijbbet (VUBM066) were seen leaving the group. Beans, Libby and Flibbertijbbet woke up with the group on the morning of the 14th. Yearling subordinate female Bruindtjie (VUBF063) did not wake up with the group. Yearling subordinate male Hooligan (VUBM068), yearling subordinate female Stokkies (VUBF062), Flibbertijbbet, Beans and Libby were evicted by the group on the morning of the 14th. Beans returned to the group later the same day. On the 24th, Beans left the group early in the morning and returned later the same day. Adult subordinate female Martini (VUBF061) and yearling subordinate female Tiddlywink (VUBF069) were both evicted by Agazoth that morning. On the 31st, Beans was roving at Gold Diggers.

- Beans, Libby, Martini, Stokkies, Bruindtjie, Flibbertijbbet, Hooligan and Tiddlywink are yet to return by the end of the month.
- Ubuntu had 3 encounters this month with Lazuli's adult subordinate male Girdle (VLM287). On the 10th, the group chased Girdle who retreated and remained at a 20m distance from the group. He approached Bruindtjie and Stokkies and was chased away by Greebo but returned and remained at a 20m distance from the group.
- The group had two inter-group interactions this month with Vetkoeks. On the 5th, Ubuntu chased Vetkoeks who retreated and returned multiple times, they stayed at a 20m distance from the group. Ubuntu eventually retreated from Vetkoeks.
- Ubuntu had no group splits observed this month.
- Greebo has a lump on his lower right cheek, it has reduced in size by the end of the month but is thought to be a sign of Tuberculosis. The rest of the group appeared to be in good health at the end of the month.

Zulus (FDC):

- All 9 individuals were present at the end of October.
- Dominant female Spruddel (VZUF028) has given birth this month. The litter is confirmed to be lost as there was a sleeping burrow move and no signs of lactation or babysitting. Adult subordinate female Leona (VZUF070) gave birth later in the month. Pups Bonnie (VZUP077), Rainbow (VZUP078) and Catch-A-Mo (VZUP079) have emerged from the sleeping burrow as part of Leona's litter and have had their first sleeping burrow move.
- On the 6th, adult subordinate male Rain (VZUM067) was not with the group on arrival, he returned later the same day. On the 12th, Rain was roving at Gold Diggers, he returned to Zulus on the 15th. On the 18th, and the 24th, Rain was seen leaving the group early in the morning and returned to the group later the same day. On the 25th, Rain was seen leaving the group early in the morning and was seen with the group in the morning of the 26th.
- The group had 6 encounters this month. Alba's adult subordinate male Palestrina (VLM211) was roving at Zulus on the 5th and the 6th. The group war danced, Palestrina retreated and stayed at a 50m distance from the group. Palestrina went below the same sleeping burrow at a different entrance on the night of the 5th. The group war danced at him on the morning of the 6th. Palestrina retreated and stayed at a 30m distance from the group. On the 24th, Palestrina (VLM211) and Brussels Sprouts adult subordinate male Gurke (VHMM036) were roving at Zulus. Dominant male Baymax (VGDM028) and yearling subordinate female Sooty (VZUF071) war danced at the individuals, Palestrina and Gurke retreated, returned and stayed at a 30m distance from the group.
- Zulus had one inter group interaction on the 24th with a group of unknown individuals. Zulus war danced at the group who retreated.

- The group had no observed group splits this month.
- All individuals in Zulus appeared to be healthy.

Life History Monitoring Groups:

Dik-Diks (LHM):

- All 10 individuals were present at the end of the month.
- Dik-Diks had no encounters, inter-group interactions or group splits observed this month.
- Habituation of the group remains in *Advanced progress* at the end of the month. Both dominant female Juliet (VGDF009) and adult subordinate Shelby (VGDF022) drink water and get into the scale regularly. Both are comfortable with follows at a 2m distance.
- All members of the group appeared to be in good health at the end of the month.

Nightwatch (LHM)

- 1 out of 4 individuals were present at the end of October.
- *Male dominance* at this group remains *unknown*.
- Dominant female Yoriki (VGDF033) was made officially pregnant this month.
- Sub-adult subordinate female Graciekin (VMPF094) was given her Last Seen this month.
- Adult males Sticky (VMPM064) and Waxillium (VMPM083) were not with the group on the 21st. Adult male Shrimp (VMPM070) was not with the Yoriki on the 25th. They are yet to return by the end of the month.
- On the 31st, Yoriki had an encounter with Alba. The group war danced and chased Yoriki who retreated. Following this, Alba's adult subordinate male Palestrina (VLM211) and yearling subordinate males Apollo (VALM010) and Patrick (VALM011) left the group and approached Yoriki resulting in sex between Yoriki and Palestrina and later between Yoriki and Apollo.
- The group had no observed inter-group interactions or group splits this month.
- Habituation of the group is in *Advanced Progress* as of the end of the month. Adult male Waxillium (VMPM083) drinks water and gets into the scale. He is comfortable with 2m distance follows.
- Before Sticky left the group on the 21st, he was reported as lethargic and losing weight - a potential sign of tuberculosis. Yoriki was reported as skinny with uncoordinated movement and poor balance.

Vetkoeks (LHM):

- All 4 individuals were present at the end of the month.
- Adult subordinate male Zuma (VZUM059) left the group on the 8th and returned later the same day. On the 11th, Zuma was roving at Lazuli, he was back with the group on the 24th.
- The group had two inter-group interactions with Lazuli this month. On the 5th, Ubuntu chased Vetkoeks who retreated and returned multiple times, they stayed at a 20m distance from the

group. Ubuntu eventually retreated from Vetkoeks.

- Vetkoeks had no observed encounters or group splits this month.
- All individuals appeared healthy at the end of the month.

Habituation Groups:

Cape Crusaders (HAB):

- The group was not searched for this month as previous searches were unsuccessful. We are hoping to resume searching for the group in the coming months and to fit a current member of the group with a new radio collar in order to resume habituation of the group.

Hogwarts (HAB):

- 4 out of 5 individuals were present at the end of the month.
- *Male dominance* at the group is confirmed. Dominant male Caraxes (VHWM004) was finally habituated enough to be made an official meerkat in the database, and automatically becomes dominant due to being the only adult. *Female dominance* in the group was also confirmed on the 5th when adult subordinate female Salazar (VZUF051) submitted to dominant female Helga (VZUF052). On the 8th, Helga did not wake up with the group, and as the only eligible female, Salazar is now the dominant female at Hogwarts.
- Pup Deatheater (VHWP003) was carried out of the sleeping burrow and marked on the 5th. It was carried out again and marked on the 8th. The pup was not seen past the 8th, with no lactating females and no babysitting observed, the litter is considered lost.
- Deatheater was given its Last Seen this month.
- Helga did not wake up with the group on the 8th, she is yet to return by the end of the month.
- The group had no observed encounters, inter-group interactions or group splits this month.
- Hogwarts were visited 12 times this month. The group's habituation is classed as *In Progress*. Salazar and sub-adult subordinate male Nkosana (VHWM001) are comfortable with hands, observers sitting and moving next to them, are interested in both egg and water and are easy to weigh. Sub-adult subordinate male Buckbeak (VHWM002) drinks water and was seen sniffing egg, he got into the scale multiple times this month. He is easy to mark and is comfortable with hand grooming as well as movement at less than a metre distance. He has been fitted with a transponder this month. The habituation of Caraxes is better this month. He drinks water and was seen approaching the scale but is not interested in egg. He is comfortable with observers sitting at a 1.5m distance and is good with new observers at the sleeping burrow. We have started approaching and departing the group as they forage. Caraxes remains vigilant and runs back to the sleeping burrow, the rest of the group remains to forage.

- All members of the group appeared in good health at the end of the month.

Mandalore (HAB):

- The group was visited six times this month. Observers carried out beep checks in order to assess the territory of the group. The group was found on Heights three times this month. We will continue visiting the group in the coming months to determine if Mandalore could be a habituation group in our current population.
- Habituation is classed as *In Progress*. Habituation work was not carried out this month.
- Health was not assessed this month.

Phoenix (HAB):

- The group was visited three times this month but not found. Opportunistic footage from a camera trap revealed the group emerging and returning to their most recently used sleeping burrow. There was one opportunistic sighting of the group on the 29th, 3-4 individuals emerged and sunned at a 15m distance from the observer.
- Habituation is *In Progress*. Habituation work was not carried out this month.
- We will continue visiting the group in the coming months and continue working on habituation.

Whiskers (HAB) :

- 8 out of 9 individuals were present at the end of the October.
- *Female* and *male dominance* remains *unconfirmed* at Whiskers.
- Yearling female Sheila (VWF267) was made officially pregnant this month.
- Adult female Archangel (VWF259) and yearling female Kylie (VWF265) have given birth this month. With multiple sleeping burrow moves and no signs of lactation, the litters are considered lost. Yearling female Bruce (VWF266) has aborted this month.
- On the 10th, adult male Gojo Satoru (VWM274) did not wake up with the group, he was back with the group the following morning. On the 14th, Gojo Satoru, Bruce, and Sheila did not wake up with the group. Gojo Satoru was back with the group on the morning of the 17th. Bruce and Sheila were seen around the group but not acting as part of the group on the 16th, 17th and 19th. They emerged from a sleeping burrow 100m away from the group or emerged from the group's sleeping burrow after the group had left to forage. They were back with the group on the 23rd. On the 27th, yearling male Pintabeau (VWM269) did not wake up with the group, he is yet to return by the end of the month.
- The group had three encounters this month. On the 7th, former Trackie-Daks adult subordinate male Moon Moon (VTSM022) appeared at Whiskers sleeping burrow. The group ignored him and he remained foraging at a 10m distance from the group. On the 18th, an unknown adult male appeared at the group's sleeping burrow. The whole group chased him away as soon as they came up. On the 19th, former Trackie-Daks adult subordinate male Raclette (VTDM017) appeared at a distance of 100m from the group's

sleeping burrow along with Bruce and Sheila, the group watched closely but did not react to the individuals.

- Whiskers had no inter-group interactions or group splits observed this month.
- The group's habituation is classed as *In Progress*. Habituation of adult male Guido (VWM275) and Gojo Satoru is going well. Both drink water, can be groomed occasionally and are comfortable with 1m distance sitting distance and 2m standing distance. This month, Gojo Satoru has been weighed for the first time on the 23rd and a second time on the 28th. It was possible to consistently mark the third adult wild male who is now entered in the database as adult male AgentK (VWM276). He was seen drinking water and has put his front paws on the scale but is not yet interested in egg. He is comfortable with a 3m standing distance with slow movement. We will continue visiting the group and increasing their comfort distance as well as potentially getting their weights.
- This month, Sheila had an open wound on her tail base, Archangel had a gash on the right side of the neck and Kylie had a gash on the left side of the neck.

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