



The Meerkatter

The Friends of the Kalahari Meerkat Project Report – www.kalahari-meerkats.com – January 2025

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Fool me once

The month of January means the meerkat breeding season is in full swing. With females experiencing successive pregnancies and males engaging in roving bouts, our observers rarely return empty handed from their sessions. Collecting and bringing back faecal samples for processing is one thing, but returning from a session with a body of a pup is something else entirely.

On the 15th of January, an observer following the group Zulus radioed in disturbing news of dominant female Spruddel (VZUF028) killing one of the pups of her evicted daughter - adult subordinate female Leona (VZUF070). The 15th marked 29 days since Leona was last seen integrated in her natal group. She was pregnant at the time of the eviction and made appearances throughout the month as she was seen attempting to rejoin Zulus as well as using a sleeping burrow often used by Zulus, 50 meters from the group's sleeping burrow.



Spruddel, Leona, Baymax and Sweep at their burrow. Photo credit: Sofya Melnikova, Life History Supervisor.

As the Zulus group had left to forage that morning, Leona appeared at a distance from the group looking slimmer and showing signs of lactation. The assumption was that she had delivered her litter in the burrow she was currently using, not far away from the group. The group chased Leona to her sleeping burrow and Spruddel descended below, where she spent half an hour in the burrow before emerging covered in fresh blood. The distressing sight was made worse when she went back below and came out carrying a body of a dead pup. The group did not react to this but were seen approaching the pup

before it was picked up by one of our observers and brought back to the farm house for examination.

Infanticide by a group's resident females is common in suricates, as in many other mammals. In meerkats, dominant, pregnant females kill pups of subordinate females to increase the chances of survival of their own litters. Subordinate, pregnant females do the same for their own litters, if they have not yet been expelled from the group, and another female has given birth before them, even if it is the dominant female's pups¹. Despite this known fact, it is not for the faint hearted, and the 15th of January was no celebration for our team. For observers, the struggle to remain impartial is undeniable, as we often see events unfold that are far more acceptable in the animal kingdom than in our own daily lives.

On the bright side, Leona's previous litter - consisting of Bonnie (VZUF077), Rainbow (VZUM078) and Catch-a-mo (VZUM079) – had a more favourable outcome. They were successfully raised by Zulus to a juvenile age, with Spruddel even lactating and pup feeding Leona's pups. Both Spruddel and Leona had been pregnant during the month of September. Unfortunately, Spruddel's litter did not survive as she was found no longer pregnant, with no signs of lactation and there were also no babysitters left at the sleeping burrow. Leona continued her pregnancy and delivered her litter six days later. So how did Leona sneak her litter in? And why did Spruddel accept the litter and even participate in its raising?



Spruddel at Zulus after a storm. Photo credit: Sofya Melnikova, Life History Supervisor.

The question remains as to whether Spruddel was able to recognise the litter as her daughters' litter, and not her own. We can explore this question by looking at what happens in events where a dominant mating pair lose their mate. We can recall examples

in recent years where dominant males emigrated out of the group once the dominant female, with whom he had fathered the offspring in their group had died. Most recently, in the month of November 2024, former dominant male at Trackie-Daks Coquillet (VTSM014) immigrated into Gold Diggers sub-group 'Gold Diggers 5' and was confirmed dominant the same month. It was reasonable to assume that the offspring of his former mate - dominant female Fly (VWF237) who passed away in December 2023, were his own. Some research suggests a strong aversion to inbreeding in meerkats¹, leading to think they have a capacity to recognise their own kin. It is still unclear however, if mothers have the same capacity to recognise newborn offspring as their own as they would recognise their fathers.



Leona at Zulus. Photo credit: Sofya Melnikova, Life History Supervisor.

One important difference between the two rounds of Leona's pregnancies at Zulus, resulting in entirely different outcomes, were Leona's membership at Zulus, and the place of delivery of her litter. In the latter case of the unsuccessful litter, Leona had been evicted and delivered her litter out-with the group as a non-member of Zulus. By contrast, with her successful litter, Leona was part of Zulus and delivered her litter within the group.

Another explanation as to why the first litter survived could be Spruddel's physiological state. Pregnant and recently pregnant females may be physiologically primed for maternal care by their own pregnancy, resulting in hormonal sensitivity to the continued presence of another female's pups. During pregnancy, although testosterone levels increase substantially and enhance aggressive behaviour, levels of prolactin, which promotes maternal care and lactation, increase also by up to 20 times in mammalian females.² Could it be that having recently lost the litter of her own, Spruddel's hormonal changes, including a decrease of testosterone and therefore aggressive behaviour and the increase in prolactin were strong enough to prevent her killing other pups and rather care for her daughters' litter? In both breeding attempts though, Spruddel came out with nothing to show for as she lost both of her litters. Her last successful litter delivered back in September 2023, consisted of three pups, two of which are still part of the group: yearling subordinate female Sooty (VZUF071) and yearling subordinate male Sweep (VZUM072). On the 23rd of December, a fight broke out between the two pregnant females when Leona

attempted to rejoin Zulus. The group chased her away, but could the groups allegiances change as Leona's litter is growing bigger and stronger, and could a challenge in the near future end differently for Spruddel?

Dominant females will fight to secure and maintain their reproductive rights within a group,³ and although we have seen this happening before, seeing a subordinate female's litter being snuck into the group was not the anticipated outcome back in September, when both females were pregnant. With regard to Spruddel and Leona's current situation, we remain realistic and understand the competition for reproductive success both females are facing. It is not the first story of infanticide at Zulus as both former Zulusfemales Helga (VZUF052) and Salazar (VZUF051) were evicted in December 2023 when Spruddel's litters were found eaten. Could Leona remain evicted for good, such as Helga and Salazar and potentially form her own group in the future? Or will they find a way to live in harmony, helping raise each other's litters? We will keep our readers posted in the forthcoming future.

References:

¹ O'Riain et al, 2000. Reproductive suppression and inbreeding avoidance in wild populations of co-operatively breeding meerkats (*Suricata suricatta*).
² Macleod et al, 2013. Factors predicting the frequency, likelihood and duration of allonursing in the cooperatively breeding meerkat.
³ Clutton Brock et al, 1998. Infanticide & expulsion of females in a cooperative mammal.

Pregnancies in January 2025

Females pregnant in January	18
Females who aborted	1
Females who gave birth, litters lost	2
Females who gave birth, litter emerged	2
Females who gave birth, unknown outcome	6
Females still pregnant at the end of the month	7

January 2025 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 16 individuals were present at the end of January.
- Six pups, Orlov (VALM026), Samurai (VALM027), Sunbeam (VALM028), Disco (VALM029), Yibo (VALM030) and Florence (VALM031) joined the group on their first forage this month.
- Adult subordinate males Apollo (VALM010), Patrick (VALM011) and Palestrina (VLM211) were given their Last Seen this month.
- There were no encounters, inter-group interactions or group splits observed this month at Alba.
- Orlov has an open wound on the back of his front left leg, he is unable to use the leg. All other members of the group seemed healthy by the end of the month.

Brussels Sprouts (FDC):

- 6 out of 7 members of the group were present at the end of the month.
- Dominant female Arabella (VMPF035) gave birth this month. The pups have not yet been seen but with confirmed lactation and babysitting the litter is thought to be alive.
- Adult subordinate female Sien (VBSF008) was not seen since the 2nd this month. She did not wake up with the group on the morning of the 5th. Adult subordinate male Gurke (VHMM036) was seen leaving the group on the morning of the 5th, he returned to the group later that evening. On the morning of the 16th, Gurke left the group and was seen running in the opposite direction from the group. He was back with the group later that evening. On the 21st, Gurke left the group, and woke up with the group on the 25th. On the 27th, he was seen roving at Zulus and was found foraging with the Brussels Sprouts on the

afternoon of the 29th. On the morning of the 30th Arabella left pups Shiitake (VBSM014), Toadstool (VBSM013) and Porcini (VBSM012), Gurke, and dominant male James (VGDM011) to return to the burrow and remained in the burrow the whole session. The same afternoon, the other individuals of the group joined Arabella at the sleeping burrow.

- Sien is yet to return by the end of the month.
- Brussels Sprouts had no encounters, inter-group interactions or group splits observed this month.
- All members of the group appeared to be in good health.

Gold Diggers (FDC):

- 14 out of 15 members were present at the end of the month.
- Dominant female Goldeneye (VGDF007) was made officially pregnant this month.
- On the morning of the 2nd, adult subordinate female Peanut (VGDF047) did not wake up with the group, she returned later that evening. On the 2nd, adult subordinate female Serafina Pekkala (VGDF049) was not with the group at the start of the afternoon. On the 3rd, adult subordinate male Captain Patel (VGDM048) left the group during an inter-group interaction with Lazuli, he rejoined the group later the same day. On the 29th, sub-adult subordinate male Snackajack (VGDM063) was seen leaving the group in the morning and was found foraging with the group in the afternoon the same day.
- Serafina Pekkala is yet to return by the end of the month.
- Gold diggers had 16 encounters this month. On the 2nd, Lazuli's adult subordinate male Subigubi (VUBM050) approached the group twice in the morning, both times the group chased him away and Subigubi retreated. The same day an unknown individual approached the group in the morning, the group chased the individual who retreated. On the 3rd, Ubuntu's adult subordinate male Beans (VUBM053) approached the group, who war danced at him and chased him as he retreated. Later the same day, Lazuli's yearling subordinate male Tinashe (VLM310), Subigubi and adult subordinate male Kush (VLM298) approached the group, were alarmed at and chased, all three males retreated. Subigubi and Tinashe both returned shortly after and were once again chased by the group and retreated. On the 8th, Beans approached the group, and foraged approximately 30 meters away from the group, and the group ignored him for the rest of the session. On the 11th, Tinashe approached the group in the morning, the group saw him, war danced and chased, Tinashe retreated. On the 20th, Tinashe and Subigubi approached the group in the morning, the group saw them, ignored them but later chased them, the two males retreated. Tinashe returned alone and again the group chased him, and he retreated. On the morning of the 29th, Subigubi approached the group twice and was chased by the group the first time and chased by Captain Patel the second time, both times he retreated. On the 31st, Serafina Pekkala left the group while

chasing away Subigubi, who tried approaching the group. She was seen returning to the group with Subigubi. On the 31st, yearling subordinate female Manchego (VGDF054) left the group twice during an encounter with Subigubi. Both times, Manchego was seen returning back to the group with Subigubi. Manchego was accepted by the group, but Subigubi was not accepted by the group.

- There were two inter-group interactions with Lazuli observed this month. On the morning of the 3rd, Lazuli and Gold Diggers war danced at each other, Gold Diggers retreated five times, and Lazuli retreated four times. Captain Patel chased Lazuli, and Lazuli chased him back. On the 20th, Lazuli war danced and chased Gold Diggers who retreated.
- All members of the group appeared to be in good health by the end of the month.

Lazuli (FDC):

- All 10 individuals were present at the end of January.
- Dominant female Masiwa (VLF308) was made officially pregnant this month.
- Adult subordinate male Girdle (VLM287) and yearling subordinate male Tahini (VLM301) were given their Last Seen this month.
- Adult subordinate male Subigubi (VUBM050) returned to the group from the previous month, when waking up with the group on the morning of the 3rd.
- On the morning of the 3rd, yearling subordinate male Tinashe (VLM310), adult subordinate males Kush (VLM298) and Subigubi (VUBM050) were seen leaving the group. On the evening of the 3rd, all three males returned to the group, the group war danced at them before accepting them. On the morning of the 4th, Subigubi left the group, and was back foraging with the group in the afternoon. On the morning of the 5th, Kush was seen leaving the group, he woke up with the group on the morning of the 8th. The same day, Subigubi was not with the group in the afternoon and was back with the group on the afternoon of the 9th. On the 8th, Kush emigrated out of the group, and immigrated into Jaxx on the 9th. On the morning of the 10th, Subigubi left the group, and returned later that same day. On the 11th, Tinashe left the group and was seen roving at Gold Diggers. Dominant male Rogelio de la Vega (VGDM015) left the group on the 12th and was seen roving at Zulus. Both of them woke up with the group in the morning of the 13th. On the afternoon the same day, Subigubi was not found with the group in the afternoon but returned and was acting as part of group by the afternoon of the 15th. On the morning of the 20th, Tinashe and Subigubi left the group after an inter-group interaction. They were both back with the group by the afternoon of the 21st. On the 23rd, both Rogelio de la Vega and Tinashe left the group, and were seen roving at Dik-Diks. They both woke up with the group on the morning of the 26th. On the 29th, Subigubi was not with the group and was seen roving at Gold Diggers. He returned to the group on the morning of the 30th.

On the morning of the 31st, Subigubi left the group, and returned to the group later the same day.

- Lazuli had 6 encounters this month. On the morning of the 3rd, Ubuntu's adult subordinate male Beans (VUBM053) was seen approaching the group, the group war danced and chased him on three occasions, and Beans retreated all three times. On the same morning, Gold Digger's adult subordinate male Captain Patel (VGDM048) also approached the group three times, and all three times Rogelio de la Vega led a chase and Captain Patel retreated. That evening, Beans approached the group again, yearling subordinate male Pot Belly (VLM317) saw him, and Beans retreated. On the morning of the 5th, Captain Patel approached the group and was foraging 30 meters away from the group. The group ignored him, but eventually chased him, he retreated back to 30 meters away, and eventually left. On the 5th, Dik-Dik's adult subordinate male Jaivyn (VUBM048) was seen at Lazuli, the group saw him approach, war danced at him and chased him, he retreated to 30 meters away. On the 19th, Dik-Dik's evicted adult subordinate females Shelby (VGDF022) and Tuna Fish II (VGDF026) approached the group, the group saw them, war danced and chased them, the two females retreated.
- Lazuli had 3 observed inter-group-interactions this month. On the morning of the 3rd, Gold Diggers and Lazuli war danced at each other. Gold diggers retreated 5 times, and Lazuli retreated 4 times. Captain Patel chased lazuli, and then Lazuli chased him back. On the 5th, Lazuli war danced at Dik-Diks, who retreated back to their burrow. Lazuli then mobbed the borrow, and no Dik-Diks individuals were seen emerging. On the 20th, Lazuli war danced and chased Gold Diggers, who retreated.
- The group had no group splits observed this month.
- All members of the group appeared to be in good health by the end of the month.

Side Quest (FDC):

- All 14 members were present at the end of the month.
- Dominant female Pumba (VZUF048) gave birth this month. Three pups, Bunny (VSIP042), Billy (VSIP043) and Boo (VSIP044) all foraged with the group for the first time this month.
- Enough time has passed for adult subordinate female Motoko Kusanagi (VSIF013) and yearling subordinate female Sybil (VSIF025) to be given their Last Seen.
- On the 2nd, yearling subordinate female Otje (VSIF028) did not wake up with the group. She was found to be foraging with the group again on the afternoon of the 5th.
- The group had no observed encounters this month. On the 3rd, Otje approached Side Quest and submitted to Pumba, but the group chased her and Otje retreated.
- Side Quest had no observed inter-group interactions or group splits this month.

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

Trackie-Daks (FDC):

- All 12 individuals were present at the end of the January.
- Dominant female Boubou (VTDF028) gave birth on the 26th. Adult subordinate female Chinchilla (VTDF029) was made officially pregnant this month and has lost her litter as she returned to the group after being evicted no longer pregnant with no signs of lactation. Yearling subordinate female Unova (VTDF037) were made officially pregnant this month.
- On the 3rd, yearling subordinate male Kanto (VTDM036) did not wake up with the group, he was found foraging with the group later that morning. On the 6th, Kanto emigrated out of the group after waking up and acting as part of group at Whiskers. On the 11th, Chinchilla and Unova both got evicted, they emerged from a different sleeping burrow entrance, and the group war danced and chased them away, both females retreated. They were back with the group on the 30th, as they were seen waking up and foraging with the group.
- On the 17th, Ubuntu's adult subordinate male Beans (VUBM053) approached the group. The group saw him, war danced and chased him, led by adult dominant male Guido (VWM275), Beans then retreated to a distance, and the group still saw him and mark frenzied.
- Trackie-Daks had no inter-group interactions or group splits observed this month.
- The habituation level is currently in *Advanced Progress*. Guido drinks water and gets into the scale regularly. He is comfortable with 2m follows for 15 minutes.
- All individuals appeared to be healthy by the end of the month.

Ubuntu (FDC):

- All 12 individuals were present at the end of the January.
- Dominant female Agazoth (VUBF039) and yearling subordinate female Hotfoot (VUBF071) were both made officially pregnant this month.
- On the morning of the 2nd, adult subordinate male Beans (VUBM053) left the group, he woke up with the group on the 4th. On the 8th, Beans was no longer with the group as he was seen roving at Gold Diggers. He returned later that day, as he was found foraging with Ubuntu. On the 9th, Beans and yearling subordinate male Hightail (VTDM073) were not with the group at the start of the afternoon session. They returned later that evening. On the morning of the 17th, Beans was seen leaving the group and returned later that same morning. On the 19th, he was seen leaving the group and returned the same evening. On the 24th, he left the group in the morning and woke up with the group the next day. On the 28th, Beans left the group in the morning and returned later that same morning.
- The group had no observed encounters, inter-group interactions or group splits this month.

- All individuals at the group appeared to be in good health by the end of the month.

Zulus (FDC):

- 7 out of 8 individuals were present at the end of January.
- Yearling subordinate female Leona (VZUF070) gave birth and later lost her litter this month out of the group. Not being part of the group, the litter was classed in the group Unknown. The litter was lost from infanticide by the dominant female Spruddel (VZUF028). On the morning of the 15th, Spruddel descended into the sleeping burrow used by Leona and killed at least one pup (ZZVP211). The body of the pup was carried out and later retrieved.
- Enough time has passed for adult subordinate male Rain (VZUM067) to be given his Last Seen.
- On the 15th, Leona returned to the group this month, as she was found to be foraging with the group, marking the end of her eviction.
- That same evening, on the 15th, Spruddel attacked her and evicted her again. The next morning, on the 16th, she woke up and foraged with the group, marking the end of the eviction. On the 20th, Leona was not found with the group in the afternoon.
- Leona is yet to return by the end of the month.
- The group had 4 encounters this month. On the 3rd, an unknown adult approached the group, the group saw the individual and yearling subordinate male Sweep (VZUM072) and Spruddel initiated a chase, the unknown adult retreated. On the 12th, Lazuli's dominant male Rogelio de la Vega (VGDM015) approached the group 5 times. He got chased by the group and retreated 5 times. Later that day, Rogelio de la Vega approached the group 5 times, the group war danced, chased him and he retreated each time. On the 27th, Brussels Sprouts adult subordinate male Gurke (VHMM036) approached the group, the group then approached him, and he retreated.
- Leona appeared 18 times at the group this month. She appeared at the group on the evening of the 2nd, yearling subordinate female Sooty saw her and Leona retreated to a bolthole. On the 3rd, she appeared twice at the group, she was chased away once and ignored by the group the second time. On the 7th, she appeared in the evening, the group war danced at her, and she retreated. On the 8th, Leona appeared twice, the group glared, and mark frenzied, and Leona retreated both times. On the 9th, she appeared in the evening, the group glared at her, and she retreated. On the 10th, Leona appeared at the group twice, Spruddel and her fought, the group chased her, and she retreated. Later the same day she appeared near the sleeping burrow in the evening, she went below using another entrance. On the 11th, she appeared in the afternoon, the group alarmed, and she retreated. On the 15th, she appeared once, the group chased her down a bolthole, and Spruddel fought her down the hole, and came back up carrying a dead pup. On the 21st Leona appeared once, the group chased her, and she

retreated. On the 25th, she appeared at the sleeping burrow in the evening, and the group ignored her. On the 26th, she appeared twice at the group, both times the group chased her, and both times she retreated. On the 28th, she appeared twice, she first emerged from the same burrow using a different entrance, and later that same morning she approached the group 5 times, was chased 5 times, and retreated 5 times. On the 29th, Leona was standing 10m away from the group and the group ignored her, she was not accepted back to the group by the end of the month.

- Zulus had no observed inter-group interactions or group split in the month of January.
- All members of the group appeared to be in good health by the end of the month.

Life History Monitoring Groups:

Dik-Diks (LHM):

- 12 out of 13 individuals were present at the end of the month.
- Four pups, Sobhuza (VDDM013), Siyah (VDDM014), Sibani (VDDF015) and Sneh (VDDF016) joined the group on their first forage this month.
- Adult subordinate female Shelby (VGDF022) has been made officially pregnant this month.
- On the 5th, adult subordinate male Jaivyn (VUBM048) was not part of group as he was seen roving at Lazuli. He was found foraging with the group again on the 15th. On the 9th, Shelby was not with the group. On the morning of the 23rd, Jaivyn left the group, he returned later that day.
- Shelby is yet to return to the group by the end of the month.
- On the 22nd, former Dik-Diks adult subordinate female Tuna Fish II (VGDF026) approached the group, sub-adult subordinate male Braveheart (VDDM011) and yearling subordinate female Ciri (VDDF003) saw her, and Tuna Fish II retreated. On the 23rd, Lazuli's adult subordinate male Tinashe (VLM310) and dominant male Rogelio de la Vega (VGDM015) approached the group, the group chased them and both males retreated. On the 23rd, Tuna Fish II tried to go below the group's sleeping burrow, but a member of the group saw her, and she retreated. On the 25th, two unknown adults approached the group, the group war danced and chased them, the unknown adults retreated. Later the same day, one unknown adult approached, the group war danced and chased, the unknown adult retreated. On the evening of the 25th, Tuna Fish II approached the group, and the group war danced, chased and Tuna Fish II retreated. On the 27th, one unknown adult approached the group, the group war danced, chased and the unknown adult retreated. The same morning, two unknown adults approached, the group war danced and chased them away. On the 29th, Tuna Fish II approached the group, the group war danced, and Tuna Fish II retreated. On the 30th, Tuna fish II approached

the group, the group stared at her and Tuna Fish II retreated.

- Dik-Diks had one inter-group interaction with Lazuli observed this month. Lazuli war danced at Dik-Diks, who retreated back to their burrow. Lazuli then mobbed the borrow, and no Dik-Diks individuals were seen emerging.
- The group had no group splits observed this month.
- Habituation of the group remains in *Advanced Progress* at the end of the month. Dominant female Juliet (VGDF009) drinks water and has been weighed twice this month. She is comfortable with an observer sitting 2 meters away.
- All members of the group appeared to be in good health at the end of the month.

Vetkoeks (LHM):

- All 8 individuals were present at the end of January.
- Dominant female Mooncake (VHMF053) gave birth this month, with clear lactation and babysitting, the litter is thought to be alive.
- On the 6th, yearling subordinate male Blackjack (VVKM002) left the group, and returned later that morning.
- The group had no encounters, inter-group interactions or group splits observed this month.
- Juvenile female Brownie (VVKP020) has a swollen left side of the mouth, it was healing by the end of the month.

Renegades (LHM)

- The sub-group Gold Diggers 5 has been made an official group in our study population and is now known as 'Renegades'. They will also be considered a Life History Monitoring group moving forward.
- *Female dominance* has been *confirmed*, dominant female Ricky Baker (VGDF031) received a submission from the only other eligible female at Renegades this month.
- Adult subordinate female Maya II (VGDF039) was found foraging away from the group on the 15th, and had returned, foraging with the group on the 18th.
- Both Ricky Baker and Maya II gave birth this month, there are clear signs of lactation and babysitting, and it is thought that the litters are still alive.
- Renegades had no encounters, inter-group interactions or group splits observed this month.
- Habituation is classed as *In Progress*. The group was visited fifteen times this month. Dominant male Coquille (VTSM014) is comfortable with 2m stand and follows and drank water this month. He was not seen eating egg but has started approaching the scale.
- Maya II had a scab on her tail base this month. It was healing by the end of the month. All other members of the group appeared to be in good health.

Habituation Groups :

Elrond's Council (FDC):

- 14 out of 20 individuals were present at the end of January.
- Elrond's Council is now classified as a Habituation group, as on the 10th, 3 unknown adult males were seen acting as part of group, both foraging and babysitting, from this day they immigrated into the group.
- *Male dominance* remained *unconfirmed* at Elrond's Council with the immigration of three adult wild males into the group on the 10th this month. Dominance competitions were not observed. We will be reporting on male submissions in the coming months.
- Four pups, Rza (VECP066), Nalane (VECP067), Madarauchiha (VECP068) and Seven (VECP069) all joined the group to forage for the first time this month.
- Adult male Perceval (VECM048), and yearling males Piccolo (VECM060) and Fiufiu (VECM053) were all given their Last Seen this month.
- On the 7th, adult male Ivory (VECM051), yearling male Croqueta (VECM052) and yearling male Mozart (VECM058) did not wake up with group. On the 13th, yearling males Hoid (VECM055) and Nightblood (VECM056) did not wake up with the group. On the 25th, sub-adult male Arpeggio (VECM057) was not found with the group in the afternoon.
- Ivory, Hoid, Nightblood, Tower, Arpeggio, and Mozart are yet to return by the end of the month.
- Elrond's Council had 15 encounters this month. Three unknown males approached the group twice on the morning of the 8th, both times the group saw them, chased them and the three unknown males retreated to a 10m distance. On the 9th, three unknown males approached the group twice, the group war danced at them and chased them away both times, and the unknown males retreated to forage 10 meters away from the group.
- Elrond's Council had no encounters, inter-group interactions or group splits observed this month.
- Habituation is classed as in progress. Habituation of the unknown males is going well, one of the males is comfortable with observers standing at a 7m distance, he is also interested in eating egg. Both other males are not interested in egg and are comfortable with observers standing at a 20m distance.
- All other members of the group appeared to be in good health.

Jaxx (FDC):

- All 13 individuals were present at Jaxx at the end of January.
- *Male dominance* is currently *unsettled* with the immigration of Lazuli's adult male Kush (VLM298) on the 9th this month and a wild adult male on the 21st this month. Dominance competition has been observed between Kush and the wild male. We will be reporting on *male dominance* at Jaxx in the coming months.

- The immigration of this wild adult male has meant that Jaxx is now classified as a habituation group.
- Four pups, VJXP196, VJXP197, VJXP198 and VJXP199, joined the group on their first forage this month.
- On the 7th, sub-adult subordinate female Pulpi (VJXF189) left the group with an unknown adult male after the two were seen waking up from a different sleeping burrow entrance from the rest of the group. They returned later that morning and were accepted into the group. On the morning of the 9th, former dominant male Sneaky (VJXM170) was seen leaving the group, running in the opposite direction from the sleeping burrow. He woke up with the group on the morning of the 12th. On the 9th, Kush immigrated into Jaxx. On the 19th, Sneaky and Kush did not wake up with the group. They were found foraging with the group on the afternoon of the 21st. In the afternoon of the 21st, one unknown adult male was seen to have joined the group, as he was seen foraging within the centre of the group and woke up with the group the next day. On the morning of the 24th, Sneaky and sub-adult subordinate male Gobi (VJXM194) both left the group and woke up with the group on the 27th.
- Jaxx had 14 encounters with unknown adult males this month. On the morning of the 2nd, an unknown adult was seen and remained at 25m distance from the burrow. The group was vigilant but did not chase him away. The unknown male approached the group again that day and the group chased him, the unknown male retreated. On the evening of the same day, the unknown male was seen foraging next to the group, the group saw and ignored him. On the morning of the 3rd, an unknown male approached the group twice in quick succession, both times he was ignored by the group, and foraged at 15m distance from the group. In the afternoon of the 3rd, an unknown male approached the group twice. They saw him and ignored him both times, he foraged up to two meters away from the group. On the morning of the 4th, an unknown male approached the group, the group saw him, Gobi frenzy marked, and the unknown male foraged 5 to 10 meters away. On the morning of the 8th, an unknown male approached the group, who saw him, they mark frenzied, but did not chase him, he started foraging 5m away from the group. He approached the group four more times that morning, three of those times the group chased, and he retreated, and the last time, the group saw him, mark frenzied, and he remained foraging at a 5m distance away from the group. On the morning of the 22nd, an unknown adult male approached the group, the group saw him, chased him, and the unknown male ran away.
- There were no inter-group interactions or group splits observed this month.
- Habituation is classed as *In Progress*. Habituation of the unknown male is going well; he is comfortable with observers sitting at 2m distance and following at 4m distance.

- The right eye of VJXP199 is swollen and crusty

Hogwarts (HAB) :

- 7 of 8 members of the group were present at the end of the month.
- Four pups, VHWP005, VHWP006, VHWP007 and VHWP008 all foraged with the group for the first time this month.
- On the 31st, pup VHWP008 did not wake up with the group.
- VHWP008 is yet to return by the end of the month.
- Habituation is classed as *In Progress*. Habituation of sub-adult subordinate male Buckbeak (VHWM002) is going well, he is drinking water, is comfortable around the scale and got weighed once this month. Dominant male Caraxes (VHWM004) drinks water but did not approach the scale this month. Habituation of the pups is going well; they are comfortable with slow movement and are interested in eating egg. Both individuals are comfortable with less than two meters sitting and movement.
- All individuals appeared healthy at the end of the month.

Cape Crusaders (HAB):

- The group was visited 5 times this month. The group was last sighted in December. Dominant female Rosetta (VCCF004) was found alone on the 31st of December and appeared to be skittish and did not eat any egg. This month, we have not been able to successfully track the group. This is partly due to the lack of knowledge on their territory. We will not continue looking for the group, but beep checks will be carried out in order to remove Rosetta's radio collar.
- Habituation is classed as *In Progress*. Habituation work was not carried out this month.
- Health was not assessed this month.

Mandalore (HAB):

- The group was searched for four times this month. Observers carried out beep checks in order to assess the territory of the group. The group was not found three times and found to be on Heights once this month. The beep checks carried previous months have shown that the group does not currently reside on our territory. We will continue carrying out beep checks in the coming months in order to remove the radio collar off adult male Floki (VWM241).
- 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 twice this month. Both times there were 8 visible individuals, and both times they would emerge and sun at a 15m distance from observers when sat down.
- Habituation is *In Progress*. Habituation work was not carried out this month. With the lack of observers and irregular visits to the group

habituation work has not been successful. We will not continue visiting the group in the coming months.

Whiskers (HAB):

- 8 out of 12 individuals were present at the end of January.
- *Male dominance* has become *unsettled*, with Trackie-Daks yearling male Kanto (VTDM036) and former Trackie-Daks adult males Princess Carolyn (VTDM013) and Raclette (VTDM017) immigrating into the group on the 6th this month. Dominance competitions have been observed between Princess Carolyn and Raclette, we will continue to report on male dominance in the coming months. Female dominance became *unsettled* as adult female Gnoll (VWF262) was observed in dominance competitions again this month. Dominant female Archangel (VWF259) eventually received enough submissions from the other females of the group to be confirmed as dominant female at Whiskers.
- Archangel gave birth this month, the pups are yet to emerge by the end of the month, but there is clear lactation and babysitting, the litter is thought to be alive. Gnoll aborted her litter, and adult subordinate female Bruce (VWF266) was made officially pregnant this month.
- Enough time has passed for yearling subordinate male Pintabean (VWM269) to be given his Last Seen.
- Adult subordinate male Gojo Satoru's (VWM274) returned from previous month on the 9th, as he was seen at the burrow with the group.
- On the 6th, Bruce left the group in the morning. On the 6th as well, Princess Carolyn, Raclette, and Kanto immigrated into the group as they were seen waking up with the group and foraging with the group. On the morning of the 9th, adult subordinate female Kylie (VWF265) left the group, and very shortly after, Gojo Satoru left the group. On the 10th, adult subordinate male Agent K (VWM276) did not wake up with the group, he woke up with the group on the morning of the 11th. On the morning of the 13th, adult subordinate female Sheila (VWF267) did not wake up with the group.
- Kylie, Bruce, Sheila and Gojo Satoru are yet to return by the end of the month.
- On the 9th, Bruce approached the group, the group war danced and chased, Bruce retreated.
- Whiskers had no encounters, inter-group interactions, or group splits observed this month.
- The group's habituation is classed as *In Progress*. Habituation of adult male Gojo Satoru has not progressed as he has been away from the group for the whole month. Adult male Agent K drank water, is eating egg and is comfortable at a 4m standing distance. We will continue visiting the group and increasing their comfort distance as well as potentially getting Agent K's weight.
- By the end of the month, many individuals sustained injuries within the group. Princess Carolyn has large lumps on both sides of his neck and a swollen left eye. Raclette has a scab on the left side of his neck. Gnoll had a lesion on

her front right paw. Agent K had a tear on his cheek, where skin had been torn off, it is now in the process of healing.

Disintegrated Groups:

Nightwatch (LHM):

• Enough time has passed for adult males Waxillium (VMPM083) and Shrimp (VMPM070) to be given their Last Seen. We will not report on Nightwatch group from now on anymore.

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