



The Meerkatter

The Friends of the Kalahari Meerkat Project Report – www.kalahari-meerkats.com – July 2026

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A Golden Opportunity

As July draws to a close here in the Kalahari and the weather slowly begins to warm, the first signs that the breeding season is around the corner are beginning to show. There has been a noticeable increase in activity within the meerkat groups of late with roving males, females in oestrus, and most excitingly, some heavily pregnant meerkats by the end of the month.

There is only a month of the non-breeding season (April-August) left and thus far it has been a very quiet one. The meerkat population experienced minimal growth during the 2026 winter, having the lowest number of pups born in the non-breeding season across the last 6 years (Table 1). The contrast is especially stark when compared to the 93 pups born during the same time in 2025.

Table 1: Comparison of the number of pups born and dyed across the last 6 years

	Jan-Mar	April-Aug	Sept-Dec	Annual Total
2020	40	49	45	134
2021	120	20	40	180
2022	130	62	60	252
2023	58	12	58	128
2024	55	13	58	126
2025	78	93	121	292
2026	24	11*	-	-

*Includes births from August 2026 (a total of 11).

However, the population number of the groups still remains very high as in the 2025/2026 breeding season, between September and December, an impressive 121 pups were born. This 2025 population boom was likely as a result of the extremely high rainfall experienced throughout the entire year, allowing all the wildlife on the reserve to thrive. It is therefore understandable that the females took a break this winter. As we enter August though, it is clear that the rest period is now over as there are already four official pregnancies across the groups, with more soon to follow. So far, dominant female Refilwe (VTDF041) from Trackie-Daks, dominant female Jub Jub (VJXF160) from Jaxx, dominant female Agazoth (VUBF039) from Ubuntu, and dominant female Salazar (VZUF051) from Hogwarts have been made officially pregnant.

These pregnancies come as no surprise as in recent weeks oestrus was reported across many of the

groups by observers, the first sign that the meerkats were entering once more into a busy reproductive cycle. Observers were, however, not the only ones to pick up on these signals, as at the same time there was a noticeable increase in the number of males leaving their groups to go roving. It has been found that males increase roving activities when females are in peak fertility so as to best maximise their chances of attaining extra-group paternity (Young *et al.* 2007). This would explain the sudden increase of roving males amongst the groups.

In general, within meerkat groups, subordinate males disperse from their home (natal) groups at about two years of age so as to pursue breeding opportunities. This is owing to the fact that they are generally closely related to the females within their natal group, and it has been shown that meerkats avoid inbreeding (Young *et al.* 2007). Before dispersal occurs, however, males undertake short periods of 'roving' activities in which they leave their natal group temporarily to seek out unrelated females in foreign groups. These expeditions come at a physiological cost though. Males have to navigate unknown terrain and carry out more frequent vigilance behaviour in the absence of the usual group-vigilance. As well as increased risk from predators, the time spent roving is also a trade-off for time that could be spent foraging (Young and Monfort 2009). It is therefore not surprising that when an opportunity presents itself for easier access to unrelated females, with reduced risk to the males, they will readily make use of it. This is something that observers became keenly aware of this month.

The 12th was a very busy day, for both the meerkats and the observers following them. During the morning session there was not one but two Inter-group interactions taking place across the study population.

In the morning Gold Diggers and Lazuli woke up just 150m from each other. Before Lazuli even had a chance to leave, Gold Diggers were on the offensive, war dancing and chasing Lazuli from the burrow they had woken up at. Lazuli, only 11 members compared to Gold Diggers 26, saw them approaching and as a group turned tail and fled, or so it seemed...

Once the groups had separated from each other and things had calmed down, it became apparent that a few members of Lazuli had decided to stick around and try their luck with some of the Gold Digger females. Subordinate males Tinashe (VLM310), Tumtum (VLM315), Pot Belly (VLM317), and Petit Bidon (VLM318) from Lazuli proceeded to spend most of the morning at the edge of the group. Gold Diggers largely ignored them, with the exception of

subordinate male Bokkie (VGDM067) who repeatedly chased the individuals away. Dominant female Goldeneye (VGDF007) was another notable exception, as in the beginning of the encounter she was seen away from the group with Pot Belly mounting her. After this brief interaction with Pot Belly however, she also ignored the roving males and dominant male Shrew (VUBM018) spent the whole session mate guarding her so as to prevent the rovers having easy breeding access (a little too late though!).

Over at Lazuli, subordinate male Captain Patel (VGDM048) from Gold Diggers had also decided to spend the day with the other group.



Figure 1: Subordinate male Captain Patel (VGDM048) focused whilst roving at Lazuli (Photo: Marianna Macorig).

He was seen approaching Lazuli but was quickly chased away. In the confusion, Dominant female Bumble (VLM320) was separated from the group. She was found by the observer more than 100m away with Captain Patel, who was making repeated attempts to mount her, but she was not seen to reciprocate and was too busy making lost calls and looking for the group. Bumble eventually found Lazuli again (with Captain Patel still in tow) and the dominant male Rogelio De La Vega (VGDM015) chased the roving male away. Bumble and the group did not stay reunited for long though as after an hour she was again found to have disappeared (and so had Captain Patel). She is currently not the individual wearing the radio collar so was unable to be tracked after leaving.

When observers returned for their afternoon session, the rovers at each group were still about. At Gold Diggers, only Tinashe and Pot Belly were still present, and the group were seen to repeatedly war dance and chase them away. At Lazuli, Bumble was found back with the group, as well as Captain Patel

who was seen foraging at the edge of the group, being ignored.

By return time the respective rovers had left but, with the exception of Tumtum and Petit Bidon, were not seen back with their groups.

The next day Captain Patel woke up with Gold Diggers. Pot Belly from Lazuli was seen approaching the group not long after up-time but was chased away before Gold Diggers left and was not seen there for the rest of the morning. During the session Golden eye separated from the group and was found by observers back at the sleeping burrow. By the evening of the 13th though, all individuals were back with their respective groups.

A similar story was seen playing out on the morning of the 12th between Ubuntu and Vetkoeks when the groups came across each other whilst foraging. With both groups having the same number of individuals it was a bit more of an even match. Ubuntu saw Vetkoeks first and started war dancing at them. Vetkoeks war danced back but quickly retreated as Ubuntu began to give chase. After the groups separated, Vetkoeks turned around and reapproached Ubuntu. The two groups clashed before separating again with no clear winner. The encounter occurred at the end of the session and there was only an observer at Ubuntu so less is known about the immediate ramifications of the interaction. However, when an observer arrived at Ubuntu that afternoon it was clear the males at the two groups had taken similar advantage of being in such close proximity to each other.

Upon arrival, subordinate males Teenietots (VUBM079) and Pawpaw (VUBM080) were not with Ubuntu and the group had roving Vetkoeks males present at the edge. For most of the session, Vetkoek subordinate males Seabiscuit (VVKM022), Theodore (VVKM028) and Louis Cyr (VVKM035) were with Ubuntu, mostly being ignored by the group.

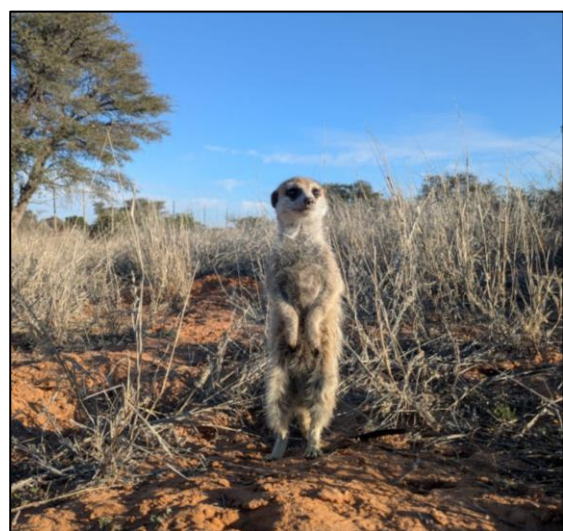


Figure 2: Subordinate Vetkoek male Theodore (VVKM028) roving at Ubuntu (Photo: Emma De Klerk).

As with Gold Diggers, the Ubuntu dominant male Greebo (VHMM048) was observed foraging closely to the dominant female Agazoth (VUBF039) the entire time the roving males were around.

Subordinate female Hotfoot (VUBF071) was seen at the edge of the group with Vetkoeks male Theodore, grooming each other and chattering. Ubuntu subordinate male Fifi (VUBM082) sat very close by during the whole interaction. As return time approached the roving Vetkoek males left and the missing Ubuntu males returned, marking the end of a very busy day on the reserve.

These types of encounters not only allow us an insight into the life history strategies of roving males, but also into those of the males still in their natal groups. During encounters with foreign males, it has been found that dominant and older subordinate males put the most energy into dispelling the intruder from the group as they have the most to lose from these rovers presence. This was observed during the group interactions described above. This is because not only does the roving male threaten the short-term breeding success of these individuals, but also future breeding opportunities if the rover immigrates into the group. In the event of a successful takeover of a group by an immigrating individual, the dominant male and the eldest subordinate males have a high likelihood of being evicted from the group. The dominant male would lose his monopoly on a breeding group, and the subordinates a safe base from which to conduct their roving from. Conversely females, who have more to gain than lose from having non-related males around, put less effort into expelling these rovers and, as was seen, even take the opportunity to interact with them (Mares *et al.* 2012).

With all this activity happening before the start of the official breeding season (September-March), it promises to be an exciting summer here in the reserve full of many more interesting interactions within the groups.

References

- Mares, R., Young, A.J., and Clutton-Brock, T. (2012) 'Individual contributions to territory defence in a cooperative breeder: weighing up the benefits and costs', *Proceedings of the Royal Society*.
- Young, A.J., Spong, G. and Clutton-Brock, T. (2007) 'Subordinate male meerkats prospect for extra-group paternity: alternative reproductive tactics in a cooperative mammal', *Proceedings of the Royal Society*, 274, 1603-1609.
- Young, A.J. and Monfort, S.L. (2009) 'Stress and the costs of extra-territorial movement in a social carnivore', *Biology Letters*, 5, 439-441.

Pregnancies in July 2026

Females pregnant in July	4
Females who aborted	0
Females who gave birth, litters lost	0
Females who gave birth, litter emerged	0
Females who gave birth, unknown outcome	0
Females still pregnant at the end of the month	4

July 2026 Life History Details

Due to the large number of groups we are covering, four different levels of data collection are currently in use, briefly outlined below.

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 25 members of Alba were present at the end of the month.
- Dominant female Cleopatra (VALF008) was reported as being in oestrus this month.
- On the 14th, subordinate male Yibo (VALM030) left the group in the morning, but on the 17th, he woke up with the group.
- There were 9 group splits at Alba this month. On the 19th there was a daily split involving dominant male Pucky (VECM023), as well as subordinates Tress (VALF020), Samurai

(VALM027), Sunbeam (VALM028), Yibo, Florence (VALF031), Fleetfoot (VALF032), Little-Creek (VALF033), Albert-Le-Blanc (VALM034), Pembroke (VALM036), Lola (VALF039), Richard Attenborough (VALM044), Speedy Gonzales (VALM045), Skee-Lo (VALM046), and Big Al (VALM047). There was a multi-day group split that began on the 19th with individuals returning on different days. Subordinates Samurai, Disco (VALM029), Little-Creek, Pembroke, and Speedy Gonzales left the group on the 19th and woke up with the group on the 25th. Pucky, as well as subordinates Chia (VALF023), Xue (VALM024), David Attenborough (VALM042), and Lil-Mookie (VALM048) also left during the split on the 19th and woke up with the group on the 27th. Whilst this split was ongoing there was another split on the 25th when subordinates Tress, Yibo, Fleetfoot, Albert-Le-Blanc, Lola, Juanita (VALF040), Lorraine (VALF041), Richard Attenborough, and Skee-Lo did not wake up with the group. This split ended when the whole group was found to wake up together on the 27th. There was a daily split on the 27th involving Chia, Fleetfoot, Little-Creek, Pembroke, Lola, Lorraine, Richard Attenborough, Speedy Gonzales, Skee-Lo, and Lil-Mookie. On the 28th there was a daily group split involving Tress, Chia, Disco, Florence, Little-Creek, Albert-Le-Blanc, Pembroke, Juanita, and Speedy Gonzales. There were two daily splits in the afternoon of the 29th. The first split involved Pucky, Tress, Samurai, Sunbeam, Disco, Florence, subordinate female Stella (VALF043), Skee-Lo, and Lil-Mookie. The group briefly reunited before splitting again, this time in the split party was Pucky, Xue, Fleetfoot, Albert-Le-Blanc, Pembroke, Richard Attenborough, Speedy Gonzales, and Skee-Lo. On the 31st there was a split when Tress, Chia, subordinate female Bachue (VALF025), Disco, Florence, Fleetfoot, and Pembroke did not wake up with the rest of the group. The split ended the same day when the group reunited just before return time.

- There was one individual encounter at Alba in July when an unknown individual approached the group, who they chased away.
- There were no inter-group interactions observed at Alba throughout July.
- The general health of Alba continues to decline. Cleopatra, Pucky, Tress, Chia, Xue, Bachue, Samurai, Sunbeam, Little-Creek, Lorraine, and Speedy Gonzales have worsened in condition since June, with their lumps bursting and they continue to lose weight. There are now also signs of TB showing in Florence, Pembroke, Juanita, and Lil-Mookie. All other group members appear to be in good health this month.

Brussels Sprouts (FDC):

- Brussels Sprouts decreased by 1 individual, from 18 to 17 members present at the end of July.

- Dominant Female Arabella (VMPF035) was reporting as being in Oestrus this month.
- On the 31st subordinate males Toadstool (VBSM013) and Shiitake (VBSM014) were not found with the group in the afternoon but were seen going below in the same burrow entrance as the group that evening.
- On the 6th subordinate male Gurke (VHMM036) did not wake up with the group and was chased away when he tried to rejoin that same day. He returned on the morning of the 8th. Gurke again did not wake up with the group on the 31st and is still absent at the end of the month.
- There were no group splits, individual encounters or inter-group interactions at the group in July.
- Subordinate male Porcini (VBSM012) continues to deteriorate in health as a result of TB. Along with the development of new lumps, his submandibular lump has also burst, and he is experiencing a continued weight loss. Subordinate male Gizmo (VBSM018) is also showing signs of TB with a lump on his cheek being observed. The rest of the individuals in the group appeared to be in good health throughout July.

Gold Diggers (FDC):

- All 26 members of Gold Diggers were present at the end of July.
- Dominant Female Goldeneye (VGDF008) was reported as being in oestrus this month. On the 12th Goldeneye was seen having sex with subordinate male Potbelly (VLM317) from Lazuli during an encounter.
- On the 2nd subordinate male Snackajack (VGDM063) was seen away from the group at Zulus but woke up with the group on 3rd. On the 24th he again left the group, returning on the 25th. Subordinate male Captain Patel (VGDM048) left the group on the 12th during an inter-group interaction with Lazuli and spent the day roving with the other group. He was found to wake up with the group on the 13th. He left again on the 22nd and 27th, returning on the 23rd and 27th respectively.
- On the 13th there was a group split when dominant female Goldeneye (VGDF007) left the group during a morning session. The split ended when she was found foraging with the group that afternoon.
- On the 12th the group had an encounter with subordinate males Tinashe (VLM310), Tumtum (VLM315), Pot Belly, and Petit Bidon (VLM318) after an inter-group interaction with Lazuli. The group chased all 4 males away but they returned and foraged on the edge of the group. On the 13th Pot Belly approached the group again and was chased away.
- Gold Diggers had an inter-group interaction on the 12th with Lazuli. Gold Diggers war danced, chased and attacked Lazuli, who fled.
- All individuals appeared to be in good health throughout the month.

Jaxx (FDC):

- All 22 members were present at the end of the month at Jaxx.
- Dominant female Jub Jub (VJXF160) was made officially pregnant this month.
- On the 17th subordinate male Gobi (VJXM194) left the group, returning on the 20th.
- Enough time has passed for juvenile Mikey (VJXF220) to be given her last seen.
- There were 2 daily group splits this month at Jaxx. On the 9th there was one involving dominant male Mr Worldwide (VJXM200), as well as subordinates Gobi, Orsybear (VJXF203), Milo (VJXF205), Minnie (VJXM206), Mtho (VJXM207), Fennel (VJXF208), Sprout (VJXM210), Fifi (VJXF211), Tainn (VJXF215), Elms (VJXF216), Liam (VJXM217), Tailbase (VJXM221), and Gylly (VJXM223). The other split on the 31st involved subordinates Ictetruck (VJXM196), Skinner (VJXM199), TunafishV (VJXM202), Orsybear, Milo, Mtho, Sprout, Tainn, and Liam.
- There were no individual encounters or inter-group interactions at Jaxx this month.
- Habituation of dominant male Mr Worldwide (VJXM200) continues and is classed as in *Advanced Progress*. He has allowed follows of 5-10 metres this month but remains very cautious of observers and shows no interest in egg or water.
- All individuals appeared to be in good health throughout the month.

Lazuli (FDC):

- All 11 members of Lazuli were present at the end of July.
- On the 11th, subordinate male Pot Belly (VLM317) left in the afternoon but returned that session. In the morning of the 12th, subordinate males Tinashe (VLM310), Tumtum (VLM315) and Pot Belly left the group during an inter-group interaction with Gold Diggers. Later that same morning subordinate male Petit Bidon (VLM318) left the group as well. Tumtum and Petit Bidon returned to Lazuli that same afternoon. Tinashe and Pot Belly returned to the group in the afternoon of the 13th. On the 15th Tumtum was not with the group on arrival in the afternoon but returned later that session.
- There were 2 daily group splits on the 12th when dominant female Bumble (VLF320) left the group with roving subordinate male Captain Patel (VGDM048) at separate times during the day.
- There were 3 encounters at Lazuli in July, all on the 12th with Captain Patel. After the Inter-group encounter with Gold Diggers, he spent the day roving at the group. The group war danced and chased him in the morning but ignored him in the afternoon.
- Lazuli had two inter-group interactions in July, on the 5th with Vetkoeks and on the 12th with Gold Diggers. In both interactions Lazuli retreated as they were chased by the other group.

- All individuals are in good health by the end month. Tinashe received multiple wounds when attacked by Vetkoeks during the inter-group interaction, but these were healed by the month's end.

Side Quest (FDC):

- Side Quest decreased by 1 individual, from 24 to 23 members present at the end of July.
- There has been an increasing amount of dominance competitions between subordinate females Portman (VSIF045), Cece (VSIF046), Mrs HS Balls (VSIF047), and Jungo (VSIF048) reported in July as dominant female Pumba (VZUF048) continues to decline in health.
- On the 23rd Cece left and returned to the group in the same session.
- Dominant male Legolas (VECM009) was not found with the group on arrival on the afternoon of the 22nd and has not been seen since.
- There were 2 group splits this month. On the 05th the group was found in a split involving subordinates Brioche (VSM032), Rolo (VSIM039), Cece, Mrs HS Balls, Jungo, Snoopy (VSIM049), Bucket (VSIF052), Tadpole (VSIF054), Buffy (VSIF057), Beck (VSIM058), Moose (VSIM060), Doodlebob (VSIM062), Hammy (VSIM063), and Ajax (VSIM065). All members reunited that day. On the 28th there was a daily split involving Brioche, Bucket, (VSIM055), Buffy, Doodlebob, Blanket (VSIF064), and Ajax.
- In July the group had multiple encounters with subordinate yearling male Buckbeak (VHWM002) from Hogwarts. He was seen on the 10th, 14th, 15th, and 16th approaching the group for the whole session. The group war danced and chased him continuously throughout the encounters.
- There were no inter-group interactions this month at Side Quest.
- Before leaving the group, Legolas was in poor health condition, weighing just 578g. Dominant female Pumba (VZUF048) and subordinate adult male Tex (VSIM035) are also showing signs of deteriorating health, with both appearing noticeably skinnier. Subordinate yearling female Jungo (VSIF048) still has a lump on her forepaw, but otherwise seems in good health. All other members of the group appear in outwardly good health this month.

Trackie-Daks (FDC):

- Trackie-Daks decreased by 1 individual, from 20 to 19 members present at the end of July.
- Dominant female Refilwe (VTDF041) was made officially pregnant this month.
- Subordinate yearling female Timone (VTDF051) was not accepted back into the group and has not been seen since making an appearance on the 2nd. Subordinate female Unathi M (VTDF063) was not with the group on arrival on the 4th and has not been seen since.
- There were no group splits, individual encounters or inter-group interactions at Trackie-Daks in July.

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

Ubuntu (FDC):

- Ubuntu decreased by 2 individuals this month, from 19 to 17 members present.
- Dominant female Agazoth (VUBF039) was made officially pregnant this month. She was also reported as in Oestrus.
- On the 4th subordinate male Bee (VUBM089) left and returned the same day. On the 12th subordinates Kiki (VUBM088) and Hingle McCringleberry (VUBF092) left during an Inter-group interaction with Vetkoeks but were found foraging with the group later that day. Soon after the inter-group interaction, subordinates Teenietots (VUBM079), Pawpaw (VUBM080), and Fifi (VUBM082) left as well. Fifi was found foraging with the group on arrival that day and Teenietots and Pawpaw were seen returning later that evening. On the 13th Kiki left and was seen roving at Vetkoeks. He woke up with the group on the 15th.
- On the 11th subordinate male Koka (VUBM085) was hit by a car and killed.
- On the 1st subordinate female Stella (VUBF083) did not wake up with the group and has not been seen since.
- Enough time has passed for juvenile Julieta (VUBF098) to be given her last seen.
- There were no group splits at Ubuntu in July.
- There were 4 encounters this month at the group, all on the 12th. After the Vetkoek encounter, subordinate males Nini (VVKM033) and Louis Cyr (VVKM035) from Vetkoeks approached Ubuntu but were chased away. That afternoon Vetkoeks subordinate males Seabiscuit (VVKM022), and Theodore (VVKM028) were found at the edge of the group on arrival. Subordinate female Hotfoot (VUBF071) approached Theodore, and they were seen grooming each other. Later that afternoon Louis Cyr approached the group. Ubuntu largely ignored all the Vetkoek males and they left before return time.
- Ubuntu had one inter-group interaction in July. On the 12th they saw, war danced, chased, and attacked Vetkoeks who war danced then retreated before attacking.
- All members appeared to be in good health throughout the month.

Vetkoeks (FDC):

- Vetkoeks decreased by 1 individual, from 17 to 16 members present at the end of July.
- *Male Dominance* remains unconfirmed at Vetkoeks.
- Dominant female Mooncake (VHMF053) was reported as being in oestrus this month.
- On the 12th subordinate males Nini (VVKM033) and Louis Cyr (VVKM035) left the group after an intergroup encounter with Ubuntu. Later that afternoon subordinate males Seabiscuit (VVKM022), Theodore (VVKM028), and Louis Cyr were seen roving at Ubuntu. All 4 males were found back with Vetkoeks in the afternoon

of the 13th. On the 14th Seabiscuit left but returned on the 15th. On the 27th Seabiscuit and subordinate female Thotho (VVKF027) were seen returning to the group in the morning from a different direction.

- On the 30th Thotho did not wake up with the group and has not been seen since.
- There were no group splits at Vetkoeks this month.
- There were 6 individual encounters at Vetkoeks in July. On the 12th Ubuntu subordinates Kiki (VUBM088) and Hingle McCringleberry (VUBF092) approached the group after an inter-group interaction with Ubuntu but were chased away. On the 13th Kiki approached the group but kept his distance after being chased away by Seabiscuit. On the 14th Whiskers subordinate male Dante (VWM283) approached the group but Vetkoeks ignored him. On the 18th an unknown adult approached the group but was only seen by subordinate female Flicka (VVKF023) before running away. On the 20th subordinate male Agent K (VWM276) approached the group and was chased away. On the 25th an unknown adult approached the group again. Vetkoeks chased them away, but the individual returned and foraged at the edge of the group.
- There were two inter-group interactions at Vetkoeks this month. On the 5th they saw and attacked Lazuli, who retreated. On the 12th Ubuntu saw, war danced, chased and attacked Vetkoeks who war danced then retreated.
- All individuals appeared to be in good health throughout the month.

Zulus (FDC):

- Zulus decreased by 2 individuals this month, from 26 to 24 members present.
- Dominant female Leona (VZUF070) was reported as being in oestrus this month.
- On the 7th subordinate male Rainbow (VZUM078) left and returned to the group. On the 8th subordinate male Vesemir (VZUM080) left in the morning and on the 8th woke up with the group. On the 30th subordinate male Sweep (VZUM072) was not with the group on arrival but returned later that evening.
- On the 24th subordinates Mandu (VZUM086) and Sooty (VZUF071) did not wake up with the group. Sooty was seen returning later that day, but Mandu has not been seen since. On the 29th Subordinate female Dee (VZUF095) was not found with the group and has not been seen since.
- There were 3 group splits observed at Zulus in July. On the 20th there was a daily split involving subordinates Sooty, Sweep, Rainbow, Vesemir, Io (VZUF083), Marc (VZUM085), Mandu, Bao (VZUM087), Soa (VZUF089), Phil (VZUM091), Moratua (VZUF096), and Phuti (VZUM098). There was another daily split on the 23rd involving subordinates Bonnie (VZUF077), Rainbow, Lulin (VZUM084), and Marc. On the 27th subordinates Catch-a-mo (VZUM079), Vesemir, Io, and Marc split from the group in the

morning but were found with the group in the afternoon.

- Zulus had one individual encounter in July. On the 23rd Gold Diggers subordinate male Captain Patel (VGDM048) approached the group and was war danced at and chased away multiple times.
- There were no inter-group interactions observed at the group this month.
- All individuals appeared to be in good health throughout July.

Life History Monitoring Groups:

Dik-Diks (LHM):

- All 21 members were present at Dik-Diks throughout the month.
- There were no individual movements, encounters, inter-group interactions or group splits observed at Dik-Diks this month.
- Habituation is classed as *Advanced Progress*. Dominant female Juliet (VGDF009) continued to make positive progress this month. She was weighed 10 times and approaches observers for water and allows for them to touch her whilst grooming in the evening. Subordinate female Shelby (VGDF022) also continues to show positive progress, being weighed 12 times during the month, and also shows interest in water and is also growing more comfortable with hands. Both females allow close follows at 1-2 metres while foraging.
- All individuals at Dik-Diks appeared to be in good health throughout July.

Elrond's Council (LHM):

- Elrond's Council decreased by 1 individual, from 9 to 8 members present at the end of July.
- Both *Female and Male Dominance* remains unconfirmed at Elrond's Council this month.
- On the 31st subordinate males Rza (VECM066) and Noah (VECM076) were not found with the group on arrival but were seen returning later in the session.
- On the 7th subordinate male Scholesy (VECM078) was not found with the group on arrival and has not been seen since.
- There were no group splits, individual encounters or inter-group interactions observed at Elrond's Council in July.
- Subordinate males Rza, Iron Mike (VECM073) and Noah continue to worsen in condition. Rza and Noah have lost a considerable amount of weight and were reported to be struggling to keep up with the group. Dominant female Cadenza (VECF059) and subordinates Amaya (VECF077), Gazza (VECM080) and Slabhead (VECM081) have also begun to show symptoms of TB. Subordinate male No-Teeth Keith (VECM074) is the only member that appears to be in outwardly good health.

Habituation Groups:

Khoisan (HAB):

- Khoisan appears to have decreased by 5 individuals, from 14 to 9 members observed at the group.
- *Female and Male Dominance* is currently unknown at the group.
- The radio collared male Princess Carolyn (VTDM013) has not been seen all month and the beep from the collar has not moved from the sleeping burrow since the 6th. The group has only been seen twice this month as they have to be tracked without the collar. Princess Carolyn was not seen with them either time.
- Habituation is classed as *In Progress*. As the group was only seen twice, the habituation has not improved in July. The group were comfortable with an observer lying 15 meters away.
- The group continue to suffer from advanced TB symptoms with all individuals showing large, or burst, inguinal or submandibular lumps.

Hogwarts (HAB):

- Hogwarts increased by 1 individual, from 19 to 20 members present at the end of July.
- On the 5th, subordinate adult male Buckbeak (VHWM002) returned to the group. He was seen approaching Side Quest on the 10th, 14th, 15th and 16th, spending most of the day at the group. The majority of Side Quest were reported as ignoring his presence, with the exception of the older males which chased him away throughout the encounter. Buckbeak woke up with Hogwarts on the 20th and stayed with the group for the rest of July.
- There were no individual encounters, group splits or inter-group interactions at Hogwarts this month.
- Habituation is classed as *In Progress*. Habituation of dominant male Caraxes (VHWM004) continues to improve. He was weighed twice this month and showed interest in water. He still reacts strongly to any movement and is very cautious of observer presence.
- All individuals appeared in good health throughout the month.

Whiskers (HAB):

- Whiskers increased by 2 individuals, from 17 to 19 individuals present at the end of July.
- On the 2nd subordinate adult male Agent K (VWM276) and subordinate female Luna (VWF279) woke up with the group after being absent at the end of last month.
- On the 7th subordinate male Dante (VWM283) was seen away from the group but woke up with them on the 8th. On the 14th he had an encounter at Vetkoeks but returned to Whiskers the same day. Agent K has spent a lot of the month away from the group. On the 9th he didn't wake up with the group, returning on the 12th. He was not seen acting as part of the group from the 14th and on the 25th he woke up 30m from the group but did not leave with them. On the 31st he was

observed waking up with the group but kept his distance with the observer present.

- There was a daily group split on the 28th when the dominant female Sheila (VWF265) got separated from the rest of the group during an alarm.
- There were 2 encounters at the group in July. On the 14th subordinate male Seabiscuit (VVKM022) from Vetkoeks approached the group but was chased away. On the 28th an unknown individual approached the group but quickly left as they were skittish around the observer.
- There were no inter-group interactions observed at Whiskers in July.
- The group's habituation is classed as *In Progress*. As Agent K spent so much time away from the group this month, there was not much progress made with his habituation. The rest of the group is showing great improvement with their habituation since the introduction of the 1.5 hour follows. All individuals were comfortable with 2m or less follows by the end of the month. All members now either eat egg or drink water and every individual, with the exception of Agent K, is weighable now.
- All individuals appeared to be in overall good health throughout the month.

The following authors contributed to this report:

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