The Meerkatter

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

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A Shining Light

As field assistants we spend a lot of time with the meerkats and, naturally, a bond begins to form. We get to know the personalities of all the individuals in the groups and we are present for many of the highs and lows throughout their lives. We celebrate in their successes and keenly feel their losses, whether it be the birth of new pups or the disappearance of an older member we have come to cherish. This month has been a particularly sad one on the reserve, losing two iconic males from the population, as well as seeing the disintegration of the Khoisan group and witnessing the toll that Tuberculosis (TB) is having on the Alba group. However, all is not as dark as it may seem, as we discovered at the end of the month…

One of the males given his last seen in August was subordinate adult Gurke (VHMM036) from Brussels Sprouts. Gurke has made a name for himself at the project as a bit of a wandering ladies' man, making frequent visits to neighbouring groups throughout the breeding seasons. Even at a time when he was suffering from many injuries, he still managed to limp over to nearby groups and try his luck. This love of roving became more humorous the older and more bedraggled looking he got, especially when roving at groups at the same time as the very fit and healthy-looking males from Lazuli. At his home group, his social dynamics were no less entertaining.



Figure 1: Gurke waiting patiently for some egg (Image credits: Aiden Fischel).

Born in Hakuna Matata in July of 2019, Gurke eventually joined the newly formed Brussels Sprouts in December of 2021. He had a brief stint as dominant male for 10 months only to lose the position to the current dominant male James (VGDM011) in October of 2023. Despite losing his dominance, he was allowed to stay in Brussels Sprouts and was seen occasionally trying to get close to dominant female Arabella (VMPF035). James kept him in his place though, frequently asserting his dominance by attacking Gurke. In spite of this, Gurke still stayed with the group, but often foraged at the far edges (much to the chagrin of observers trying to do group compositions!). In the evening, he could be seen sitting by himself at the burrow, staring into the setting sun whilst the others all played and groomed. His loss is a hard one amongst observers and the breeding season will be sad without him slinking around.

The other much-loved male that has been given his last seen this month is dominant male Legolas (VECM009) from Side Quest.



Figure 2: Legolas sleeping in the shade with pup in tow (Image Credits: Charlotte Patterson).

Legolas has been suffering badly from TB the last few months and before disappearing he was very skinny and struggling to keep up with the group. Originally born in Elrond's Council in 2019, he was seen in a new group (Side Quest) in May of 2021, where he has been the dominant male ever since. His amiable nature, and dedication as both a father and dominant male of the group has made him loved amongst all observers. When dominant female Pumba (VZUF048) had pups, he was frequently seen doting over them, snuggling with the pups in the shade on hot days and ensuring they were looked out for and fed whilst foraging with the group. As such a gentle but protective dominant male, he will be sorely missed.

Another sad goodbye we have had to say this month is to the newly formed group, Khoisan. This group was formed in February of 2026 when former Trackie-Daks subordinate adult male Princess Carolyn (VTDM013) was spotted sunning with 17 wild individuals. Since then, their habituation had been an ongoing work in progress, with the group steadily improving as the months passed. By the end of June, all individuals of the group would get up and sun with an observer sitting 5-10 meters from the



Figure 1: Khoisan spotted sunning by an observer through binoculars (Image Credits: Emma De Klerk).

burrow. However, at the same time that their habituation was improving there was a noticeable decrease in the overall health of the group being observed. As the months went by more and more members were outwardly showing signs of TB. By the end of June every member of the group had at least one submandibular or inguinal lump. The radio collared male, Princess Carolyn, was one of the first individuals to display symptoms of TB, with an unburst submandibular lump that continued to grow in size while he grew skinner and skinner. As his health decreased, he became less skittish of observers and started being more interested in egg. As a result, he was able to be weighed multiple times in June, coming in at a tiny 519g. He was last seen on the 29th of June looking very lethargic and after that date observers got a beep from the radio collar below in a sleeping burrow. Tracking the group without the radio collar proved to be very difficult due to the large distance between the sleeping burrows used by this group, and thus they were not sighted frequently. The group numbers had been steadily decreasing since Khoisan started being monitored, likely as a result of individuals dying from TB, and by the beginning of July only 7 of the original 18 individuals left acting as part of the group when they were last seen. As a result of the difficultly in tracking the group and their declining health, a decision was made to no longer follow Khoisan.

Another group currently suffering badly from TB is Alba. As of the end of August, 19 of the 25 members in the group are showing signs of severe declining health, including dominant female Cleopatra (VALF008). As the health in the group began to decline, observers were noting an increase in the amount of group splits occurring. This was as a result of individuals foraging far apart and getting separated from the dominant female. Between the 19th of July and 6th of August there were 14 group splits over just these 19 days. The issue with these splits is that Cleopatra is not the radio collared individual in the group due to her poor health. Instead, the collar is on subordinate male Disco (VALM029), meaning if he is in a group split, the group with the dominant female cannot be found. An issue that caused quite a lot of problems this month.

At the same time that these splits were occurring, Alba began to have frequent encounters with an unknown wild adult male. The wild male was observed foraging near the edge of the group but was often chased away by group members. On the 7th of August the group was found split once more, with dominant male Pucky (VECM023) and 12 other subordinates found away from the dominant female. The wild male was also found with the split party and was seen having a dominance competition with Pucky, with both individuals aggressively fighting the other. The outcome of this fight was unclear as the wild male was not chased off afterwards and instead began foraging within the group. That night, however, the split group chased him away when they returned to the burrow. The next morning the wild male was seen sunning with the remaining Alba members, at a different burrow from where the split party were. Dominant female Cleopatra did not show any signs of aggression towards him and let him forage with the group. After the split parties did not rejoin for more than five days it was decided to create a new sub-group, Alba 2, for the group with Pucky in it. As Disco was in Alba 2, observers were unable to find Alba for two weeks, despite frequent and widespread burrow sweeps. Over the course of these two weeks, a further 3 members of the Alba joined Alba 2. On the 14th of August, the wild male woke up and foraged with Alba 2. He was seen behaving as a dominant, frequently marking objects and received direct submissions from two individuals in the sub-group.

On the 21st of August, much to the relief of everybody, both Alba and Alba 2 woke up in the same burrow with all members present, thus ending the brief existence of Alba 2. The wild male was still acting as part of the group and was still displaying dominant behaviour. As soon as the group split into Alba 2 Pucky automatically lost his dominance, so currently the position of dominant male of Alba is considered unsettled and observers will be keeping a close eye on the situation. As of the end of August, Alba is once more in a prolonged group split, with Disco again being in the split party. This time however, Pucky is not with the split group, but the wild male is. With all these group movements still occurring, September promises to be another busy and complicated month for Alba.

Amongst all this darkness and chaos, a surprising discovery at the end of the month (as well as the prospect of seeing the first pups of the season emerging soon) has helped to significantly improve the sadness experienced over the last few weeks.

In the morning of the 14th of August, Lazuli had an inter-group interaction with a group of unknown meerkats at a sleeping burrow. During this interaction, the observer noted that a few of the wild meerkats were letting them get very close and were even responding when they made Yum-Yum calls.

That afternoon, an observer went back to the burrow and found the wild group still present. Two of the meerkats were not overly bothered by the observer's presence and stayed up whilst the rest of the group went below. The two individuals were eventually able to be checked with a transponder reader and were found to be old Lazuli females. One of the females was subordinate adult Chicken (VLF389) who was born in Lazuli in February of 2022 and given her last seen on the 30th of December 2023 after not waking up with the group. The other female was subordinate adult Audumbla (VLF296).
Audumbla has a very interesting origin story in that



Figure 2: Radio collared female 'Chicken' in the new group Nova (Image Credits: Emma De Klerk).

she was not born in Lazuli. Rather, upon arrival at Lazuli one afternoon in October 2022, she and one other pup were found with the group despite not being present in the morning and no female in the group being pregnant. She was last seen at Lazuli on the 31st of December 2023.

Chicken was collared on the day of the new group's discovery and efforts have begun to habituate the group. Thus far, from what we can tell, there are eight members in total. A majority appear to be adults with at least one sub-adult and yearling. As of the end of the month Chicken is heavily pregnant and the team are eagerly awaiting the hopeful birth of her pups.

It was decided that this new group would be called Nova, after the celestial phenomenon, *Stella Nova*, meaning new star. This event historically got its name from a flash of bright light witnessed in the night sky, just as this group has been a shining light for the observers of our studied meerkat population, when things were being to feel quite dark. Hopefully the future of this new group will be just as bright as their new name!

Pregnancies in August 2026

Females pregnant in August	**10**
Females who aborted	2
Females who gave birth, litters lost	0
Females who gave birth, litter emerged	0
Females who gave birth, unknown outcome	4
Females still pregnant at the end of the month	4

August 2026 Life History Details

Due to the large number of groups visited, we are currently covering four different levels of data collection that are 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-->LHM):

- Due to the severe health condition caused by TB, the group is no longer followed as full data collection group, but just being monitored for life history developments. From this month on, find this group within the section of Life History Monitoring Groups.

Brussels Sprouts (FDC):

- All 17 members of Brussels Sprouts remained present throughout August.

- Dominant female Arabella (VMPF035) was made officially pregnant this month.
- There were no group movements or splits this month.
- Enough time has passed for adult subordinate male Gurke (VHMM036) to be given his last seen.
- On the 17th the group had an encounter with adult subordinate males Snackajack (VGDM063) and Captain Patel (VGDM048) from Gold Diggers. Both were seen approaching the group multiple times and were repeatedly chased away. On the morning of the 18th Captain Patel had another encounter with the group. He was joined by Snackajack and yearling subordinate male Ashdown (VGDM078) later that morning, after Gold Diggers and Brussels Sprouts had an inter-group interaction. All three were seen guarding the sleeping burrow which Brussels Sprouts were below in.
- On the 18th there was an inter-group interaction between the group and Gold Diggers. Both groups saw and war-danced each other, but Brussels Sprouts retreated below in their sleeping burrow after Gold Diggers began to chase them.
- Yearling subordinate males Porcini (VBSM012) and Gizmo (VBSM018) who are currently suffering from TB have made no improvement in health this month and continue to lose weight. Yearling subordinate male Shiitake (VBSM014) is also showing signs of TB with a lump under his armpit being observed. The rest of the individuals in the group appeared to be in good health throughout August.

Dik-Diks (FDC):

- Dik-Diks decreased by 5 individuals, from 21 to 16 members present at the end of August.
- Dominant female Juliet (VGDF009) was made officially pregnant this month but aborted her litter before the months end. She was reported as being in oestrus at the end of August.
- Adult subordinate female Shelby (VGDF022) was not found with the group on arrival on the 16th but woke up with the group the next morning. On the 30th she was seen being evicted from the group at the sleeping burrow in the morning but had returned by the months end. On the 30th yearling subordinate male Dash (VDDM031) did not wake up with the group but returned by the month's end. On the same day yearling subordinate male Ezio (VDDF017) was seen leaving the group to follow a split party that departed from the group while he was below. He has still not returned at the end of the August.
- There was one group split at Dik-Diks this month that was of uncertain duration. On the 30th adult subordinate Ciri (VDDF003), yearling subordinates Sobhuza (VDDM013), Sneh (VDDF016), Mushu (VDDM018), Mugen (VDDM020), Lexa (VDDF024), Migi (VDDF025), Kovacs (VDDM027), Stripe (VDDF028), Heidi (VDDM032), and sub-adult subordinates Jules (VDDF035) and Rose (VDDF036), left the sleeping burrow to forage without the dominant female. At the end of the month only Sneh, Mushu, Migi, Kovacs, Stripe, Heidi, Jules, and Rose had returned.
- There were no individual encounters or inter-group interactions at Dik-Diks this month.
- Habituation is classed as *Advanced Progress* for Dominant female Juliet and adult subordinate female Shelby. Both are making continuous positive progress, allowing for observers to sit <0.5m from them at the burrow and follow them at 2-4m whilst foraging. Both still show interest in water, with Juliet and Shelby being weighed 20 times this month. Due to the encouraging progress being made by both habituation females, it was decided this month to make Dik-Diks a full data collection group.
- All individuals at Dik-Diks appeared to be in good health throughout August.

Gold Diggers (FDC):

- All 26 members of Gold Diggers remained present at the end of August.
- Dominant female Goldeneye (VGDF007) was made officially pregnant this month.
- Adult subordinate males Captain Patel (VGDM048) and Snackajack (VGDM063) had many movements this month. On the 17th they both left to go roving at Brussels Sprouts, returning that same evening. On the 18th Captain Patel left the group again in the morning to go roving at Brussels Sprouts, briefly returning to the group when they had an inter-group reaction with them, but he, Snackajack, and yearling subordinate male Ashdown (VGDM078) stayed behind to rove after Gold Diggers left. All three were found returned to Gold Diggers upon arrival that same afternoon. On the 25th Snackajack briefly left the group but came back before return time after the group war-danced and chased him. On the 26th Snackajack was not seen with the group on arrival but woke up with them the next day. On the 28th Captain Patel and Snackajack were foraging on the edge of the group and chased away by the other members. They returned to the group that same day. On the 31st Captain Patel was seen away from the group in the morning, and Snackajack was not found with the group in the afternoon. Both individuals were seen returning to the sleeping burrow that same evening.
- There was one daily group split in August on the 25th, involving adult subordinate Serafina Pekkala (VGDF049), yearling subordinate Dottie (VGDF071), and sub-adult subordinates Emeraude (VGDM080), Pistache (VGDF083), and Doc (VGDM087).
- There was only one individual encounter at the group this month with Lazuli adult subordinate male Pot Belly (VLM317) on the 30th. The group chased him away, but he returned to forage at the edge of the group.
- Gold Diggers had an inter-group interaction on the 18th with Brussels Sprouts. Gold Diggers war danced and chased Brussels Sprouts who war-danced back but retreated below into their burrow.

- All individuals appeared to be in good health throughout the month.

Jaxx (FDC):

- All 22 members remained present at the end of the month at Jaxx.
- Dominant female Jub Jub (VJXF160) gave birth in August.
- On the 20th adult subordinate male Gobi (VJXM194) left the group, returning that same day. On the 22nd he did not wake up with the group and was absent until the 24th when he woke up with them again.
- There were 2 daily group splits this month at Jaxx. On the 19th adult subordinate Pulpi (VJXF189), yearling subordinates Mtho (VJXM207) and Fifi (VJXF211), and sub-adults Elms (VJXF216), Chunky (VJXM222), and Gylly (VJXM223) were found separated from the group making lost calls but were reunited soon after. On the 31st Gobi, and yearling subordinates Icetruck (VJXM196), Doomsday (VJXM198), TunafishV (VJXM202), Orsybear (VJXF203), Milo (VJXF205), Minnie (VJXM206), Mtho, and Sprout (VJXM210), and sub-adults Elms, Liam (VJXM217), Callywag (VJXM219), Tailbase (VJXM221), Chunky, and Gylly split from the group and were found at the sleeping burrow at return time.
- There were no individual encounters or inter-group interactions at Jaxx in August.
- Habituation of dominant male Mr Worldwide (VJXM200) is classed as in *Advanced Progress*. This month he has made positive progress, allowing observers to follow at 5m meters and stand at 2-4m with movements. He, however, still remains cautious, barking if observers get too close and shows no interest in water or egg.
- All individuals appeared to be in good health throughout August.

Lazuli (FDC):

- All 11 members of Lazuli were present at the end of August.
- On the 10th, adult subordinate male Tinashe (VLM310) was seen waking up at a sleeping burrow away from the group but returned that same morning. On the 26th yearling subordinate male Thrutch (VLM324) was not found with the group on arrival but on the 27th woke up with them. On the 29th adult subordinate male Pot Belly (VLM317) left during the morning session. He was seen having an encounter with Gold Diggers on the 30th and returned to the group on the 31st.
- There were no group splits in August.
- On the 14th Lazuli had an encounter with an unknown individual who the group saw and chased, causing the unknown to retreat. On the 31st the group had two encounters with adult subordinate male Captain Patel (VGDM048) from Gold Diggers. In the first encounter they chased him, and Captain Patel retreated. In the second they ignored him, and he eventually left.
- During August Lazuli had 3 inter-group interactions with the new group to the project, Nova. These took place on the 14th, 18th, and 31st, with Lazuli war dancing and chasing Nova in all interactions. Nova fled during every interaction, hiding below at the sleeping burrow the interactions took place at.
- All individuals of Lazuli remained in good health throughout the month.

Side Quest (FDC):

- Side Quest decreased by 1 individual, from 23 to 22 members present at the end of August.
- With the disappearance of previous dominant male Legolas (VECM009), *male dominance* is currently unknown at the group. Dominant female Pumba (VZUF048) is still receiving submissions from the females in the group but the adult subordinate females from litter VSI2502 continue to partake in frequent dominance competitions between themselves.
- On the 27th adult subordinate male Rolo (VSIM039) left and returned to the group on the same day.
- On the 17th adult subordinate male Tex (VSIM035) did not wake up with the group and is still missing at the end of the month.
- Enough time has passed for dominant male Legolas to be given his last seen.
- There were no group splits this month at Side Quest.
- Over the course of August, the group had multiple encounters with adult subordinate male Buckbeak (VHWM002) from Hogwarts. On the 9th he woke up at the same sleeping burrow as the group but was chased away and remained 20m from the group the whole session. On the 21st he was seen attempting to mount Pumba, and yearling subordinate females Cece (VSIF046), Bucket (VSIF052), and Tadpole (VSIF054). All four chattered when he mounted but moved away as he was chased away from the group. Cece and Tadpole were observed following him after he retreated, and Cece was seen being mounted again. During the encounter he was observed fighting with males in the group and frequently marking. On the 24th he approached the group but was chased away. He retreated and foraged at the edge of the group, once more being observed carrying out a lot of marking behaviour.
- There were no inter-group interactions this month at Side Quest.
- Dominant female Pumba and adult subordinate male Tex remain the only individuals showing signs of TB in August. Pumba is not showing any new outward symptoms of TB but is still very skinny. Before he was last seen Tex was severely deteriorating in health, weighing only 444g in the morning he was last seen. All other members of the group appear in outwardly good health this month.

Trackie-Daks (FDC):

- All 19 members of Trackie-Daks were present at the end of the month.
- Dominant female Refilwe (VTDF041) gave birth in August and was reported as being in oestrus.

- On the 04th, yearling subordinate male Lion (VTDM056) and sub-adult male Thoriso (VTDM065) were not with the group on arrival. Lion was seen approaching Ubuntu, but both were back with the group by return time. Yearling subordinate female Kibo (VTDF049) was not found with the group on arrival in the days leading up to Refilwe giving birth. She made an appearance on the 6th, foraging at the edge of the group. She was only seen acting as part of the group again when she woke up with them on the 21st, in the days following the end of Refilwe's pregnancy. On the 16th, sub-adult female Scary Spice (VTDF060) was seen leaving and returning to the group during the same session.
- Enough time has passed for sub-adult female Unathi M (VTDF063) to be given her last seen.
- Subordinate yearling female Timone (VTDF051) has not acted as part of the group the entire month. She was seen by an observer on the 6th foraging a distance from the group but is still absent at the end of August.
- Trackie-Daks had 12 individual encounters with an unknown adult male across August. He was seen approaching the group on the 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th, 28th, 29th, 30th, and 31st. The unknown male was repeatedly seen present at the sleeping burrow before the group woke up, moving away when the group woke up and attempting to follow them whilst foraging. The group chased the male away and he retreated. He was also often sighted at the sleeping burrow whilst the group was away foraging.
- There were no group splits or inter-group interactions at Trackie-Daks in August.
- All members of the group appeared to be in good health throughout the month.

Ubuntu (FDC):

- All 17 members of Ubuntu were present at the of August.
- Dominant female Agazoth (VUBF039) gave birth this month.
- On the 4th yearling subordinate male Teenietots (VUBM079) was seen away from the group at the start of the session but was seen waking up with the group on the 7th. Also on the 4th, yearling subordinate males Pawpaw (VUBM080) and Fifi (VUBM082) were not found with the group on arrival. Fifi returned that same evening and on the 7th Pawpaw woke up with the group. On the 19th yearling subordinate male Kiki (VUBM088) left the group. He was seen being war danced by the group when he attempted to rejoin but returned later that same evening with the group showing no aggression towards him.
- Enough time has passed for yearling subordinate females Moppie (VUBF081) and Stella (VUBF083) to be given their last seen.
- There were no group splits at Ubuntu in August.
- There were 3 encounters this month at the group. On the 4th yearling subordinate male Lion (VTDM056) from Trackie-Daks approached the group. He was ignored by the group and foraged on the edge until eventually leaving. On the 20th the group had an encounter with an unknown adult who they chased away, causing the unknown individual to retreat. On the 20th they also had an encounter with yearling subordinate male Seabiscuit (VVKM022) from Vetkoeks. The group war danced and chased Seabiscuit who retreated but returned and foraged on the edge for most of the morning.
- Ubuntu had one inter-group interaction in August. On the 19th they saw, war danced, chased and attacked Vetkoeks who war danced, attacked but then retreated.
- All members appeared to be in good health throughout the month.

Vetkoeks (FDC):

- All 16 members of Vetkoeks were present at the end of the month.
- Eldest subordinate Zuma (VZUM059) has been confirmed as the dominant male at Vetkoeks after receiving the required amount of direct submissions from the mature males in the group.
- Dominant female Mooncake (VHMF053) was reported as being in oestrus this month.
- On the 2nd yearling subordinate male Seabiscuit (VVKM022) left the group after chasing away an unknown roving male. He returned after the group had gone below that evening. Seabiscuit and yearling subordinate male Tshembo (VVKM024) left after an inter-group interaction with Ubuntu on the 19th, returning on the 21st with a group of individuals that split from Vetkoeks.
- Enough time has passed for yearling subordinate female Thotho (VVKF027) to be given her last seen.
- There was 1 overnight split in August at Vetkoeks. After the interaction with Ubuntu on the 19th, the group split into two parties right before return time. In the split party were yearling subordinates Luciano (VVKF029), Lele (VVKM031), Nini (VVKM033), Louis Cyr (VVKM035), and sub-adults Olly (VVKM036), Yossarian (VVKM037), Frankie (VVKM039), Josephine (VVKF040), and Tumbleweed (VVKM041). The split lasted two nights, with the parties reuniting on the 21st in the afternoon. Over the two days the split groups came across each other multiple times but did not recognise the other. The group without the dominant female war danced and chased the others until they fled.
- There was one inter-group interaction at Vetkoeks in August. On the 19th Ubuntu saw, war danced, chased and attacked Vetkoeks who war danced, attacked but then retreated.
- All members of Vetkoeks were in good health throughout August.

Whiskers (FDC):

- Whiskers decreased by 1 individual, from 19 to 18 members present at the end of August.
- Dominant female Shelia (VWF267) was made officially pregnant this month.
- On the 20th yearling subordinate male Dante (VWM283) was not with the group on arrival in the afternoon but returned later in the evening.

He left again on the 26th when he was seen at Vetkoeks, returning on the 31st when he was found foraging with the group.

- Adult subordinate male Agent K (VWM276) has again spent most of the month absent from the group. He left on the 2nd in the morning, being war danced by the group when he later returned. He was observed rejoining the group later that same morning but did not wake up with Whiskers the following day. On the 12th he woke up with the group but was away again on the morning of the 14th. On the 17th he was found foraging with the group and going below with them but on the 20th he did not wake up with them and has not been seen since.
- There were no group splits at Whiskers in August.
- There was 1 encounter this month on the 20th with an unknown individual. The unknown meerkat approached the group at the burrow after return time. The group alarmed when they saw him and dominant male Raclette (VTDM017) carried out a marking frenzy once the unknown individual has fled.
- The habituation of Agent K is classed as *In Progress.* As Agent K again spent so much time away from the group this month, there was not much progress made with his habituation. He moved to 30m from observers whenever they were present at the burrow. Owing to the continued absence of Agent K and the positive progress the group made during the follows, it was decided this month to make Whiskers a full data collection group. This is still on a scaled back manner, with the group only being seen a few times a week and no adlib being collected if Agent K is present.
- Throughout the month all individuals were in good health.

Zulus (FDC):

- All 24 members of Zulus were present at the end of the month.
- Dominant female Leona (VZUF070) was made officially pregnant this month; however, she was observed aborting and eating the pups. Leona was reported as being in oestrus later this month.
- On the 17th adult subordinate male Sweep (VZUM072) left after being observed foraging far from the rest of the group. However, on the 18th he woke up with Zulus. On the 19th yearling subordinate male Rainbow (VZUM078) left after the group alarmed, returning on the 21st when he was found foraging with the group.
- Enough time has passed for sub-adult subordinate male Mandu (VZUM086) and sub-adult subordinate female Dee (VZUF095) to be given their last seen.
- There 3 daily splits at Zulus in August. On the 15th adult subordinate Sweep (VZUM072), yearlings subordinate Bonnie (VZUF077), Rainbow (VZUM078), Catch-a-mo (VZUM079), Vesemir (VZUM080), Io (VZUF083), Lulin (VZUM084), Marc (VZUM085), Bao (VZUM087), and Lexi (VZUF088), and sub-adults Sky Blue (VZUF093), Shimmy (VZUF094), and Phuti (VZUM098) were split on arrival but rejoined that same afternoon. On the 17th adult subordinate Sooty (VZUF071), yearling subordinates Bonnie, Rainbow, Catch-a-mo, Vesemir, Bopp (VZUM081), Lulin, Marc, and Bao, and sub-adults Phil (VZUM091), Sky Blue, Moratua (VZUF096) and Makgabo (VZUF097) split but came back together during the morning session. On the 18th adults subordinate Sooty and Sweep, yearling subordinates Rainbow, Vesemir, McNaught (VZUM082), Marc, and Soa (VZUM089), and sub-adults Ntombi (VZUF090), Phil, Sky Blue, and Moratua split after an alarm, but on the 19th everyone woke up together. On the 23rd there was an overnight split when Sooty, Sweep, Catch-a-mo, and Bopp woke up at a different sleeping burrow to the rest of the group. The group split ended on the 24th when they were found foraging with the group.
- There was 1 individual encounter in August at Zulus. On the 4th yearling subordinate male Tolkien (VHWM007) was seen approaching the group in the morning. The group saw, war danced and chased him. Tolkien retreated and watched the group from 50 meters away.
- There were no inter-group interactions observed at the group this month.
- Soa was reported as having a wound on her chest, that is still healing at the end of the month. All other individuals appeared to be in good health throughout August.

Life History Monitoring Groups:

Alba (LHM; changed from FDC from this month on):

- Alba decreased by 20 individuals, with only 5 members present at the end of August.
- *Male Dominance* is currently unsettled at the group as a result of previous dominant male Pucky (VECM023) leaving the group and forming a sub-group. There is a wild adult male that is acting as part of the group and showing signs of dominance.
- On the 6th yearling subordinate female Juanita (VALF040) left the group but returned in the evening with a split party.
- After a prolonged group spilt that started in the afternoon of the 7th at Alba, it was decided to make a new sub-group, Alba 2. All individuals in this sub-group were emigrated out of Alba on the 7th into Alba 2. These individuals were dominant male Pucky, yearling subordinates Xue (VALM024), Bachue (VALF025), Sunbeam (VALM028), Disco (VALM029), Fleetfoot (VALF032), Albert-le-Blanc (VALM034), Pembroke (VALM036), and Lola (VALF039), and sub-adults Lorraine (VALF041), Stella (VALF043), Speedy Gonzales (VALM045), and Skee-lo (VALM046). On the 9th yearling subordinate females Chia (VALF023) and Little-creek (VALF033) were emigrated out of Alba when they were found foraging with Alba 2. On the 13th sub-adult subordinate male David Attenborough (VALM042) was emigrated out of

Alba when he woke up with Alba 2. As subordinate male Disco is the individual with the radio collar, Alba was only seen in the morning of the 8th and 10th and then were not seen again until the morning of the 20th when both Alba and Alba 2 woke up together. At this point every member of Alba 2 was immigrated back into Alba.

- On the 25th Pucky, subordinate yearling Yibo (VALM030), and sub-adult male Richard Attenborough (VALM044) did not wake up with the group and are still absent at the end of the month.
- There were 8 group splits in Alba during August. On the 1st there was a daily split involving dominant male Pucky and yearling subordinate Xue, Bachue, Samurai (VALM027), Yibo, Florence (VALF031), Fleetfoot, Albert-le-Blanc, Lorraine, and David Attenborough, and sub-adult male Lil-Mookie (VALM048). On the 3rd there were two daily splits involving Pucky, Samurai, Disco, Florence, Little-creek, Pembroke, David Attenborough, Stella, sub-adult male Big Al (VALM047), and Lil-Mookie. The other split involved Pucky Chia, Fleetfoot, Albert-le-Blanc, yearling subordinate female Juanita (VALF040), Stella, Speedy Gonzales, Skee-lo, and Lil-Mookie. On the 4th there was a daily split involving adult subordinate female Tress (VALF020), Chia, Xue, Fleetfoot, Albert-le-Blanc, Pembroke, Lola, Juanita, Skee-lo, and Lil-Mookie. On the 6th there was a daily group split involving subordinates, Tress, Chia, Xue, Bachue, Sunbeam, Disco, Yibo, Florence, Fleetfoot, Albert-le-Blanc, Pembroke, Lola, Lorraine, David Attenborough, Stella, Speedy Gonzales, Skee-Lo, Big Al, and Lil-Mookie. On the 25th there was a split of uncertain duration involving subordinates Tress, Chia, Bachue, Samurai, Disco, Florence, Little-creek, Albert-le-Blanc, Pembroke, Lola, Juanita, Lorraine, David Attenborough, Stella, Skee-lo, Big Al, and Lil-Mookie. Tress, Chia, Bachue, Disco, Albert-le-Blanc, Pembroke, Lorraine, Stella, and Skee-lo returned to the group that same day. Sunbeam has not been seen since and has not returned to the group since this group split. The rest of the split individuals woke up with the group on the 28th. There was a split of uncertain duration when subordinates Chia, Lorraine, Stella, and Speedy Gonzales did not wake up with the group on the 28th. There was another split of uncertain duration when subordinates Tress, Xue, Bachue, Samurai, Disco, Florence, Fleetfoot, Albert-le-Blanc, Lola, Juanita, Big Al, and Lil-Mookie foraged in a different direct from the rest of Alba. As of the end of the month, this split is still not ended.
- The group had multiple encounters with an unknown adult male on the 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th of the month. The unknown male was war danced and chased by the group, retreating but returning to forage at the edge of the group. On the 7th he was found with Alba 2 and was seen engaging in a dominance competition with Pucky. On the 8th however, the male was seen sunning and foraging with the Alba. No members of the group showed any aggression towards him except Lil-Mookie who attempted to chase him away. The male retreated but returned to forage 2m from the group. On the 10th the male was again seen sunning with the group in the morning. He was less than 1m from dominant female Cleopatra (VALF008), who showed no aggression towards him. From that day he was considered part of Alba and observers are currently attempting to give him a dye mark. On the 14th the wild male was seen waking up with Alba 2. On the 21st he woke up with Alba when Alba 2 was immigrated back into the group. Observers noted the unknown male displaying dominance behaviour. On the 28th the wild male was part of the group that split away from the dominant female and remains absent at the end of the month.
- The general health of Alba is showing a severe decline, with a majority of the group displaying signs of TB. These individuals are Cleopatra, Pucky, Tress, Chia, Xue, Bachue, Samurai, Sunbeam, Disco, Yibo, Florence, Fleetfoot, Little-Creek, Pembroke, Juanita, Lorraine, Stella, and Lil-Mookie. All other group members are not showing outward symptoms of TB as of the end of the month.

Elrond's Council (LHM):

- Elrond's Council decreased by 1 individual, from 8 to 7 members present at the end of August.
- Both *Female and Male Dominance* remains unconfirmed at Elrond's Council this month.
- On the 22nd yearling subordinate male (VECM076) was not with the group on arrival but was at the sleeping burrow when the group returned.
- On the 10th yearling subordinate male Rza (VECM066) did not wake up with the group and is still absent at the end of the month.
- Enough time has passed for sub-adult subordinate male Scholesy (VECM078) to be given his last seen.
- There were no group splits, individual encounters or inter-group interactions observed at Elrond's Council in August.
- Habituation at the group is still considered to be *Advanced Progress* as yearling subordinates No-Teeth Keith (VECM074) and Amaya (VECF077) has been noted by observers as being extremely skittish.
- The overall health of the group has taken a severe decline this month. No-Teeth Keith is the only member that appears to be in outwardly good health. The group were reported as being very skinny and having laboured breath by observers. The inguinal lump on eldest subordinate female Cadenza (VECF059) has burst and she has lost a lot of weight. When she was weighed on the morning of the 8th she was 613g but on the morning of the 29th she was 504g.

Habituation Groups:

Hogwarts (HAB):

- Hogwarts decreased, from 20 to 19 members present at the end of August.
- Dominant female Salazar (VZUF051) gave birth this month.
- On the 3rd, adult subordinate male Buckbeak (VHWM002) was seen leaving the group. On the 9th he was seen approaching Side Quest but was back at the Hogwarts sleeping burrow on the evening of the 11th at return time. On the 21st he woke up with the group but was not seen at leave time. Later that morning he approached Side Quest and was seen attempting to mount several females. On the 25th he was found back with Hogwarts on arrival at the group.
- On the 4th yearling subordinate male Tolkien (VHWM007) was seen roving at Zulus but returned to Hogwarts on the 9th.
- On the 29th yearling subordinate male Severus Snape (VHWM010) did not wake up with the group in the morning and has not been seen since.
- 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) is a continued work in progress. He was not weighed this month and still remains cautious of observer presence. At present he is comfortable with observers sitting at 5-10m meters but barks if there is sudden movements.
- All individuals appeared in good health throughout the month.

Khoisan (HAB) :

- Khoisan was not found this month when observers attempted to manually track them in the absence of a radio collar.
- The radio collared individual Princess Carolyn (VTDM013) was given his last seen at the start of the month.
- It was decided that due to the poor health status of the group and the fact that tracking them without a radio collar was proving to be very difficult, Khoisan will no longer be followed and is not considered a current group anymore.

Nova (HAB):

- In August 8 individuals were noted as acting as part of Nova. Two of these were old individuals from the project that had already been given their last seen at the beginning of 2023. Both individuals, adult females Chicken (VLF289) and Audumbla (VLF296), were originally from Lazuli. The other 6 individuals appear to be a mixture of adults, yearlings and sub-adults.
- *Female* and *male dominance* is currently unknown at the group.
- As of the of the month, Chicken has been made officially pregnant.
- Nova has had 3 inter-group interactions with Lazuli in August. All three interactions happened near a sleeping burrow Nova has been frequently using. Lazuli war danced and chased Nova below and spent an extended time digging and marking at the burrow in all the interactions.
- Habituation at Nova is considered *In Progress*. Chicken and Audumbla are comfortable with observers approaching them and Chicken eats egg. The habituation level of the rest of the group is still being determined as they have not been seen very frequently since first being found on the 14th. As of the end of the month, the group were not comfortable getting up with an observer lying 20 meters away.

Sub-Groups:

Alba 2 (SUB):

- After a prolonged group spilt that started in the afternoon of the 7th at Alba, it was decided to make a new sub-group, Alba 2.
- All individuals in this sub-group were emigrated out of Alba and immigrated into Alba 2. These individuals were dominant male Pucky, yearling subordinates Xue (VALM024), Bachue (VALF025), Sunbeam (VALM028), Disco (VALM029), Fleetfoot (VALF032), Albert-le-Blanc (VALM034), Pembroke (VALM036), and Lola (VALF039), and sub-adults Lorraine (VALF041), Stella (VALF043), Speedy Gonzales (VALM045), and Skee-lo (VALM046). On the 9th yearling subordinate females Chia (VALF023) and Little-creek (VALF033) were immigrated into Alba 2 when they were found foraging with the group. On the 13th sub-adult male David Attenborough (VALM042) was immigrated into the group when he woke up with Alba 2.
- On the 11th Pucky was found alone away from the group looking in poor health. He was not seen again until the 20th when Alba 2 woke up with Alba.
- The group had an overnight group split when Tress, Xue, Sunbeam, Disco, Little-Creek, Albert-le-Blanc, Lola, Lorraine, Stella, and Speedy Gonzales woke up separately from the rest of the group on the 10th. The split ended on the 10th when the individuals returned and went below at the same sleeping burrow the rest of the group was already below at.
- The group had an encounter with an unknown adult male on the 07th. The male was seen having a dominance competition with Pucky, with both individuals attacking each other and no clear winner emerging from the altercation. The unknown male was not seen again until the 14th when he woke up with the group. As he was sunning and foraging with the group with no aggression from the other individuals, he was no longer considered part of Alba, instead becoming a member of Alba 2. He remained with the group until it rejoined Alba on the 20th.
- When both Alba and Alba 2 woke up from the same sleeping burrow on the 20th the sub-group was disintegrated.

The following authors contributed to this report:

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