

## Kalahari Meerkat Project – Current meerkat groups June 2016

**This document lists the meerkat groups observed in the KMP population as of June 2016. The most important life history information on each group is included.**

**See [www.kalahari-meerkats.com/fkmp](http://www.kalahari-meerkats.com/fkmp) for updates, and for information on lost groups.**

<b>Group name</b>	<b>Dom. female</b>	<b>Dominant male</b>	<b>No.</b>
Axotwotls (AW)	Bee	-	1
Baobab (BB)	Amarula (BB)	Willy (VH)	20
Ewoks (EK)	Edzna (EK)	Kazeh (JX)	12
Jaxx (JX)	Teahupo’o (JX)	Guinnes (wild)	9
Lazuli (L)	Jub Jub Bird (L)	LLCoolJ (wild)	10
Nematoads (NM)*	Indiana (NM)	Rum Tum Tugger (QL)	6
Pandora (PA)*	Shoshonna (PA)	Mr. Holmes (wild)	15
Quintessentials (QL)	Bernice (QL)	Pi (ZU)	7
Rascals (RR)	Edna May (RR)	Drachentöter (L)	11
Stumpy’s Angels (SA)	Lekshmi (BB)	-	2
Überkatz (UK)	Frosting (UK)	Pitio (W)	9
Van Helsing (VH)	Egg (VH)	Küçük (ZU)	20
Whiskers (W)	Swift (W)	Brea (L)	4
Zulus (ZU)	Poma (ZU)	Palestrina (L)	4

\* indicates that the group is currently being (re)habituated, and no full data collection is done.

### **Axotwotls (AW)**

The group was formed early in 2016. The remaining two females of the dwindling Axolotls group, Bearbatter and Bee, were, after a brief stay in an Ewoks splinter, joined by wild males. Bearbatter left to join the Whiskers, and the group currently consists of Bee and one wild individual.

### **Baobab (BB)**

The Baobab are a group formed in December 2007 by four evicted Whiskers females, and three wild males. Dominance changed for a while: on female side between littermates Hawkeye and Cruise, on male side between Al Capone and Al Pacino. The Baobab grew to a 40-strong group, with a total of over 80 BB-born individuals in only four years – they certainly dethroned Commandos as the fastest-growing foundation group. This is due to the fact that both founding females seemed able to bring their litters through. After Hawkeye's death in a car accident in 2010, Cruise held the dominant position unchallenged, with partner Al Capone. The group kept going from high to high, usually exceeding 30 members, until 16 males emigrated in one month, in July 2013, 12 of which formed Friksarmy with Kung Fu females while the other four joined Mayans. September brought a tragic end to Cruise's long reign; she was probably predated. Amarula followed in her tracks. Al Capone soon turned to roving, and joined wild meerkats in March 2014, forming the HiggleDiggle group. Amarula's older brother Mr. Lahey took male dominance, followed by Butch in early 2015. He and four other males emigrated to join Drie Doring. Meanwhile, Amarula, but also one or another subordinate female, managed to bring litter after litter through, so the group remains one of the largest in the monitored population. In October 2015 another group of four adult males dispersed, leaving Bubba in the dominant position. Only recently, Van Helsing male Willy joined the Baobab group, now acting dominant, while six adult males are missing.

The Baobab hold a territory around Big Dune and eastwards in the Kuruman riverbed.

The Baobab are available as a Friends group.

### **Ewoks (EK)**

The Ewoks were founded by evicted Kung Fu females and former Rascals and Colombians males. Dominant female McDreamy evicted the subordinate females during her first pregnancy and they dispersed; she remained the only adult female for a long time. Her first litter was killed in a burrow raid by Kung Fu, but after that the group has been growing steadily. McDreamy managed to raise four successful litters in one breeding season. Tigi's place as dominant male remained unchallenged, yet Lorax, one of the oldest Ewoks males, won dominance at Rascals. Ewoks were the probably the most successful group during the 2014/2015 drought, since they were the only group whose dominant couple remained in place. An era ended though when McDreamy was found dead in January 2016; she had fallen victim to the more severe 2015/2016 drought. The oldest daughter Edzna took over dominance. In February, a group of five Jaxx males displaced the Ewoks adult males including Tigi, with Kazeh winning dominance.

Ewoks' mark are the bent or short tails some of the pups sport – probably inherited from kinky-tailed Tigi.

The Ewoks lived South of the main road next to Kung Fu and Rascals, on the rolling red dunes, but recently moved into a bleaker territory closer to the Heights farm, where they now border Whiskers.

### **Jaxx (JX)**

A group first seen in May 2008, formed by two Lazuli females who dispersed in December 2007, and a Hoax male who dispersed in October 2007. With them were two juveniles. The Hoax male was then displaced by two wild males. The group was led by Diana, and grew steadily, until Vince the dominant male and several other members disappeared one by one, probably due to predation. Kori, a natal male, eventually established dominance in 2010. The group's numbers increased, mostly due to Diana being so prolific – only two litters in 5 years were not her's. July 2013 saw a major change with the natal males, including Kori being displaced by four wild immigrants. Only one of them, Guinness, remains with the group today, as the dominant male. Diana also started to slow down with pregnancies, probably due to her age, and allowed her daughters to have litters. Tragedy struck in August 2014 when Diana was predated, 9.5 years old and in the late stages of pregnancy. Her three oldest daughters were at the verge of forming an evictee splinter, but returned and Teahupo'o took dominance, despite the fact that CheesyPuff was her senior by two years. The three females kept fighting, until Cheesy Puff was predated in July 2015. In early 2016, five males emigrated to join Ewoks.

The group lives on Heights farm, South of the main road. Their territory overlaps with an ostrich farm, so they often can't be visited – due to the risk of an ostrich attack on a volunteer.

### **Lazuli (L)**

'Lazuli' was the second of the famous Avatar sisters (the others being Ziziphus, Igraine and Morgause), who founded the Lazuli group together with Belgarion, a wild male of unknown origin, in 1995. However, soon after the group formed Ziziphus took the role of the Lazuli dominant female. Her daughter Grumpy was dominant in Moomins, her granddaughter Aretha headed Lazuli, and her grandson Osprey led Drie Doring until his death.

Lazuli was without a non-natal dominant male for more than two years, after Basil and later Cazanna died of TB. Lazuli were for almost three years led by brother and sister, J. Alfred Prufrock and Aretha, but the Lazuli females were well frequented by roving visitors... Aretha died after a predator attack, and Young, the oldest and strongest female, took over dominance. The Lazuli males were replaced by a group of Whiskers males. Wollow seized male dominance. After a snake bite, Wollow was deposed by Rufus as dominant male but Wollow initially remained in the group. After dominance squabbles in 2011 Rufus settled as the dominant male. The group grew steadily due to Young's prolific births but also due to the fact that subordinate females occasionally managed to bring a litter through; furthermore the group remained free of TB for several years. The drought of 2013 brought a major change: it took Young, and all pups. Christiana followed her as the Lazuli dominant female. Soon after Rufus was lost, probably predated by a martial eagle. Six males then emigrated to Zulus, making room for Baobab male Bumpy, who was soon ousted by three wild males. Their habituation level improved at high speed, so that the group was soon back to full habituation. Jazzy Jeff initially won male dominance, yet he was dethroned by LL Cool J in 2015. In early 2014, three females emigrated to form the Nematoads group. Sadly, Christiana died soon after, heavily pregnant, so JubJub Bird is now the dominant female. It was not only her though who intended to lead this small group back to their former glory, as she hasn't been overly prolific; several successful litters are from subordinate female Alan Johnsons Beamer.

The Lazuli live in the center of the reserve, North of the Kuruman riverbed in the Elveera flats.

They are available as a Friends group.

### **Nematoads (NM)**

Nematoads were added to the groups list thanks to the dispersal project that follows evictees past their eviction: Lazuli females Bernie, Fran-the-Wu-Man and Sutica formed a new group with Baobab male Crusty and a wild male, in January 2014. They started raising litters, and with the wild male gone, were soon back to being a habituated group. The two subordinate founder females left the group in 2015 to form the short-lived Xhodes group. Unfortunately, Crusty was predated in August 2015. The other adult males emigrated, and a wild male joined the group. Both the male and dominant female Bernie disappeared in early 2016, during the drought. The remaining three females were joined by three Quintessential and two wild males. Two wild males now remain; Indiana is the dominant female right now.

They are located West of Lazuli and Baobab territory, in a beautiful remote area that didn't use to form part of the monitored area.

### **Pandora (PA)**

Pandora was a rather coincidental addition to the list of monitored groups. One day in June 2011 the four Aztecs females were Aztecs, and the next day they had formed a new group with four Van Helsing rovers. Luckily they used a burrow just next to Aztecs (and the Gannavlake farm house) and thus remained in the population... Female dominance took some time to settle between the two littermates Snowflake and Toblerone, with the latter having the upper hand. The males initially roved a lot, but finally the group got more cohesive. Pepper eventually took dominance, with Cecil remaining a prime rover. All males eventually disappeared, however – due to TB or unknown causes, so that the position of dominant male was free for a group of long-lost Van Helsing male Mr. Jacky and three wild males to take. Toblerone was predated at the same time, with Snowflake inheriting her position. Not for long though, as she was bitten by a snake, and Molly, the last of the founder females, followed as dominant female. In their first year of existence – that was dominated by a severe drought – Snowflake and Toblerone could only raise two pups to adulthood, but Molly and Shosonna produced three successful litters in 2014. Male dominance kept changing, and it was down to the two wild ones when one of them disappeared, leaving Bibbidi dominant. In August 2014, Molly was predated, and Shosonna has since risen to dominance. Three Baobab males led by Mr. Lahey immigrated later that year. They were displaced by wild males in January 2016, of which Mr. Holmes became dominant.

The Pandora territory is on Leeupan farm, East of our Gannavlake farmhouse, in the riverbed on both sides of the main road.

### **Quintessentials (QL)**

The Quintessentials are a group formed in January 2014 by Ewoks evictees Truffula and Barb-a-loot, with two very wild males. One of the males disappeared, so European Bob was dominant by default. They had several litters, Truffula eventually became dominant and the male's habituation was improving considerably. He succumbed to the 2015/2016 drought, however. In early 2016, the group exchanged three males with the Zulus group, with Pi becoming

dominant at Quintessentials. Soon after, Truffula was predated and the oldest remaining female Bernice became dominant. An IGI with Zulus shook the group structure though, and the group currently consists of Bernice and a subordinate female.

The Quintessentials have their home North of Big Dune, towards Ooh Dam, and their closest neighbours are Zulus.

### **Rascals (RR)**

In 1998 Vivian females and wild males combined to start a new group that rapidly grew. The original dominant female Splash and dominant male Kine were killed by predators, but the group has very successfully reestablished after being reduced to 7 meerkats all under 18 months with the then 11 months old dominant female Yeca. She and the dominant male Spofl were also predated, and the group was then headed by Blondie. All Rascals males dispersed after the immigration of Frisky males, and a succession of wild males, of which Grus and companions eventually stayed. The group barely grew over a long time, but a litter of six pups boosted their numbers. Female dominance switched twice, to a young female, Sancerre. She and Grus brought the group back to its former strength, growing it steadily over the years. The break came with the drought of 2013 that changed many of our groups: Grus died, probably of old age, and several adult males joined Kung Fu, leaving Rascals without a dominant male for several months until Gooch established dominance. Later that year, Sancerre disappeared, at the end of a pregnancy, without a trace. Edna May became her successor as dominant female, and she was joined by Kung Fu male Hankson as new dominant male, while Gooch was away roving. One month later he was replaced by Ewoks male Lorax. He and Edna May cemented the group's stability until Lorax succumbed to a snake bite in 2015 – leaving the dominant position again to Hankson. He soon was displaced by Bruce, who however succumbed to TB and was followed by rover Drachentöter as a dominant male.

The Rascals dominant females have a reputation of winning all weights records when pregnant – both Sancerre and now Edna May regularly exceed 1000 g before giving birth.

The Rascals live South of the main road on farmland.

### **Stumpy's Angels (SA)**

This group was formed by Baobab evictees Lekhsmi, Bernard and Elsa with two Baobab males; the males left again, and ex-Axolotls male Drachentöter (a.k.a. Stumpy) joined the females. They did not manage to raise any pups, and Drachentöter left them in early 2016 to join Rascals. In May 2016 however they were joined by Van Helsing male Willy – who soon left them for something bigger: Baobab. They are currently down to two females, Lekhsmi and Bernard.

### **Überkatz (UK)**

The Überkatz split off Sequoia at the end of May 2012 and became an independent group after a few fights with their source group. The males soon deserted the group to return to Sequoia, but three Whiskers rovers led by Gump immigrated, and stayed for good. The Überkatz were headed by Tina since their start, with littermate Ricou playing second fiddle. The group grew steadily, all Tina's offspring – so Ricou and Talkeetna, the other founding female, left them to create the Chalibonkas group with Lazuli males. Tina disappeared in early 2014, injured, after giving birth to a litter of six, so the only remaining adult female

Frosting took over the position of dominant female and nurse. She brought five of the pups through, and started to raise her own litters. The males keep battling for dominance, until Pitio re-acquired dominance while Gump disappeared. In October 2014, all subordinate adult females emigrated to form the Axolotls group, and several adult males emigrated in June 2015. The group made it through the 2015/2016 drought with Frosting and Pitio at its head, yet TB has recently reared its face, and the group seems unstable.

They lived in the dunes South of the river bend, but gradually moved closer to our Rus en Vrede farmhouse.

### **Van Helsing (VH)**

The Van Helsing group was formed in February 2008 by three evicted Whiskers females, and two wild males. One or more of the females had given birth while being evicted; the four pups were most probably Bananas'. Flo and Titan seemed to have settled in the dominant positions, and the group was growing steadily. However, in 2009 Flo was overthrown by Billy, and disappeared. Billy kept a tight grip on her group, and made them grow successfully, for four years – yet no Van Helsing individuals escaped her reach to form their own groups. Billy was found predated in May 2013; Frusicante took over dominance. Only two months later, eight of their males left, to join Nequoia and Sequoia, respectively. The vacant position was then filled by two wild immigrant males; "Chemical Kev's Moped" was the one who remained and remained dominant. Female dominance became shifting, with no female lasting longer than a few months before she was displaced by a sister. Egg seems to have firmly established dominance around mid 2014, while her older sister and former dominant Bes1 was evicted for most of the time. Bes1 finally emigrated to form the HighVoltage group in January 2015. Dominant male Kev disappeared during the 2015/2016 drought, and natal male Angel Shuffle won dominance. He and the other adult males were recently displaced however, by a group of Zulus males. Küçük is now dominant.

The Van Helsing live along the Botswana road, north of the Gannavlake farmhouse.

### **Whiskers (W)**

Whiskers came into existence in 1998, with four Young Ones females and two Lazuli rovers – reinforced with a wild meerkat who had been brought to us (instead of the potjie) from Van Zylsrus. Change came with a rover party of Vivian origin in 2001 who immigrated into Whiskers, with the brothers Yossarian and Zaphod taking turns in male dominance. In early 2002, Flower took over female dominance and ruled Whiskers since then. She succumbed to a snake bite in January 2007, and her daughter Rocket Dog rose to power. After her death Ella established dominance; she was soon joined by Thundercat, a single Lazuli rover. The group slowly recovered from low numbers, growing to 30 members, all of which were Ella's offspring. In 2011 Whiskers saw dominance squabbles, and Enili rose as the dominant female; Ella and four other evictees dispersed but were later found again far to the East, named the Queens, with two wild males. Dominant male Thundercat disappeared in 2012, leading to a series of natal males of which Marxxs had the longest tenure. None of the females was able to raise a litter in the 2013 drought season, and several subordinates dispersed, decreasing the numbers further down to 8. May 2013 saw the immigration of four unrelated males, formerly of the Cave Men group, but three of them of Lazuli origin. Snowy assumed male dominance; he was later replaced by Rufio. In September 2013, Enili was run over; she had only raised one pup to adulthood, during her tenure. The remaining two females, Swift and Pe'ahi, were barely six

months old when they inherited the six-strong group; they job-shared dominance for several months until Pe'ahi finally took the prime seat. Swift and Pe'ahi gave birth to one litter each, but the group only succeeded in bringing one male pup K-Quob through. In October 2014, male dominance shifted to Brea, and Snowy left for good – a change that actually calmed the group down, and maybe helped raise Pe'ahi's litter of which two females survived. The group had finally started to get a grip again when Pe'ahi was predated in September 2015, just after giving birth. The males resumed roving, and Pet was even briefly dominant at a very short-lived Ewoks subgroup. Newly dominant Swift gave birth – to the only pup that emerged during months of a severe drought in the entire population! – yet it did not survive. In February 2016, the group seemed to win a new member, with immigrating ex-Axolotls female Bearbatter, yet she soon left again, taking the young female Jedila with her. The group currently consists of four individuals, who are in good shape, but not actively breeding.

In the past years Whiskers usually stayed around the Rus en Vrede farm house, but have recently moved South, to the former Toyota and Frisky territories. Their main neighbours now are Jaxx and Ewoks.

Whiskers are our world-famous movie stars, with "their" Meerkat Manor series in four seasons between 2005 and 2008, and a full-length movie "Meerkat Manor: The Story Begins" that is available on DVD. In May 2012 they also featured in Planet Earth Live, on BBC1 – when snake-bitten but recovering Ernesto almost stole Swift the focus pup's show...

The Whiskers are available as a Friends group.

## **Zulus (ZU)**

Zulus are a wild group encountered in 2009 at the far side of the Western riverbed, towards Pharside dam – wild except for the dominant male, Shaka Zulu. He was a former Lazuli and Hoppla male who had left the monitored population in September 2008. Habituation started in 2010, yet most animals remained too wild to mark and thus distinguish them. Only one, the dominant female, could be recognised from the start due to the fact that she has eight instead of six nipples. Her name was thus Ocho Niple. Habituation seemed to suffer a severe setback when Shaka Zulu succumbed to a snake bite in May 2013 – however, in September, six Lazuli males displaced seven Zulus males, boosting habituation levels immediately. Male dominance eventually settled on Cagliostro. The remaining females were by now quite well habituated, apart from dominant Ocho Niple who remained wary of humans. December 2015 saw just another split of the large group; Ocho's splinter went missing, so Cagliostros part was followed. However, they disintegrated in early 2016, and remaining members spread across the population. Ocho Niple was never seen again, and she is assumed dead. Four Zulus females, of both splinters, managed to attract males of Lazuli and Quintessentials origin and they are now considered the Zulus group, yet the males were soon supplanted by wild males. Poma has emerged as the dominant female of the renewed group.

In the past year the Zulus have come closer to the other groups, so encounters with Quintessentials, Baobab or Nematoads are now occasionally observed.