

Kalahari Meerkat Project – Lost meerkat groups June 2016

This document lists the meerkat groups observed in the KMP population that were lost before June 2016. The most important life history information on each group is included.

See www.kalahari-meerkats.com/fkmp for later updates.

Abba (2003-2010+)

Abba was the name given in 2003 to a wild group that had been encountered occasionally between the territories of Young Ones, Frisky and Rascals, but was never habituated. Several rovers of the Young Ones are believed to have immigrated into Abba over time, and the founding males of Toyota may have been of Abba origin. However, Abba was never a monitored or “composition group”. As a wild group, they didn’t let researchers approach closer than 100-300 meters; however, given the fact that a group was consistently observed in that region, it was assumed that it was the same group.

In 2010, it was decided to start habituation of the group, which was progressing very slowly. Not having "Abba" in the life history files, it was decided to name this group "Godzilla" instead (see below).

Acacia (AC) 2013

Acacia were a shortlived group that appeared on the KMP stage in May 2013 when four former Baobab evictees led by Herpasaurus appeared as a group with wild males, in an IGI with Van Helsing. However, they were lost the month after, most probably due to a malfunctioning collar.

Alcatraz (AT) 2014

Alcatraz were a mostly wild group that made its appearance in January 2014 in the former Sequoia territory South of the riverbed, with two habituated members: Harrison (VVHM026) and Captain Danger Awesome (VAZM044), with at least 6 wild adults and 4 pups. Captain Danger Awesome soon succumbed to TB, and with Harrison being a frequent rover, it has proven hard to track the group: The last time he was with them when tracked was in June 2014, and they then consisted of five wild adults, three juveniles and three pups.

Asphodel (AA) 2002

Asphodel were formed by a splinter group of Whiskers females who combined with two wild males. Their first litter was killed by Whiskers – but after the raid Asphodel, Whiskers and a Gattaca and Vivian rover slept in the same burrow. The Asphodel group disappeared soon after.

Avatar (A) 1994-1995

The Avatar group made only a brief appearance – but Avatar's blood still runs in many of today's groups. They were first seen and habituated in early 1994. The group splintered in 1995 after both the dominant male and dominant female disappeared. The males were no longer followed, but the four remaining females soon combined with rovers, to form the Young Ones and Lazuli groups.

The Avatar are available as a Friends group, together with Young Ones.

Axolotls (AX) 2014-2016

The Axolotls formed in November 2014 when Überkatz evictees lured all adult Chalibonkas males to join them. Female Pug and male Bandersnatch (of Lazuli origin) were dominant almost from the start. They grew quite steadily until the adults started developing TB symptoms, taking them one by one. In January 2016, after dominant female Pug's death, only two young females remained. They joined an Ewoks splinter group, so the Axolotls technically ceased to exist. However, the ex-Axolotls females were soon again on their own, and then joined by 5-7 wild individuals – now named the Axotwotls group.

Aztecs (AZ) 2007-2013

The Aztecs group was formed in March 2007 as a 15-strong splinter of the Whiskers family, but all adult males returned to the Whiskers within a month. Until September 2007, the Aztecs consisted of three adult females, led by the oldest, Monkulus, and four pups. Only the youngest Aztec was a male. In September 2007, first a Young Ones rover, Homestar Runner, immigrated, but he was ousted by a Whiskers rover coalition led by Monkulus' uncle Zaphod. The group then experienced changes due to evictions and roving males; three evicted females formed the Van Helsing group, several rovers emigrated to wild groups. Monkulus and Zaphod retained their dominance positions though.

On 4 March 2011 Zaphod died of natural causes due to old age and the dominant male position remained open for a while, with Molière acting as a natal dominant male beside Monkulus. In 2011 evicted Aztecs females joined Van Helsing males to form Pandora. In October 2012, a suite of events led to the immigration of Sequoia males, and to subordinate female Kathleen overthrowing Monkulus. However, all Aztecs meerkats including the Sequoia males changed sides, to Monkulus - thus forming a new group named the Mayans. Kathleen, the last remainder and member of the Aztecs, eventually managed to join the Mayans - bringing the

Aztecs history to an end in February 2013.

The Aztecs were frequently observed near the Rus en Vrede farmhouse and the riverbed, but then moved to the Gannavlake farmhouse. Their territory bordered Nequoia, Sequoia, Van Helsing and Pandora.

The Aztecs are available as a Friends group, together with Starsky and Hoax who were also Whiskers splinters.

Balrog (B) 2001-2007

Balrog had been encountered as a wild group in the vicinity of Gannavlake farm house from 1994 until they were habituated by researchers during 2001. Dominant male was Balrog, then 4-6 yrs old. After the death of the dominant female, Vivian females immigrated of which Velvet became dominant.

After that had several dominance changes - at one point Babbelas, Velvet's daughter, becoming dominant at the age of 9 months! Balrog had a remarkably large number of unsuccessful breeding attempts. The immigration of a new wild dominant male in 2006 required further habituation work at the group. After his death, the Vivian rover Boba established dominance. However, TB struck the Balrog hard; in their last months, most Balrog members disappeared or died, and even the immigration of two unrelated females couldn't stop the decline. The Balrog group thus ended in June 2007.

More information on the Balrog is available as the Sample Friends Package.

Chalibonkas (CK) 2013-2015

This group was formed in November 2013 by two Überkatz evictees Ricou and Talkeetna, and three Lazuli males led by Bumpy (of BB origin), in a territory just south of the main road. Two months later, after the birth of the first Chalibonkas litter, Talkeetna died, probably hit by a car. Ricou gave birth to a litter of seven pups three months later – but was hit by a car herself in the same month, together with two of her pups. However, the Chalibonkas males and juveniles did everything to care for them. Being the only female from the first Chalibonkas litter, Kinkaju ascended to the throne, almost reluctantly it seemed. The adult males however spent a lot of their time away roving, and ran over to join a group Überkatz evictees in November 2014, leaving Kinkaju alone with two young females. Bumpy returned the next month, yet the females went missing after an IGI with Ewoks, and could no longer be tracked.

Chalibonkas' territory was along of the main road on the Heights farm; their closest neighbours were Ewoks and Überkatz.

Cave Men (CV) 2011-2013

Cave Men were formed in November 2011 when three Lazuli rovers combined with three Jaxx evictees - but two of the females returned to Jaxx, so Dikkop remained the only female. The group grew again when an

unknown juvenile meerkat - probably a pet from a neighbour's farm - returned with the roving males the next month. Dominant male Franz succumbed to injuries of unknown cause (maybe obtained during roving), and Rufio took over. Not for long though, as fellow Lazuli males immigrated, with Snowy - a few months older than Rufio - becoming dominant. The group eventually started to grow when Dikkop brought her first litter through - but then she disappeared in February 2013, leaving the group without adult female. One after the other pup disappeared, and soon after, the remaining males immigrated into Whiskers, bringing Cave Men's history to an end.

The Cave Men's territory was around the Rus en Vrede farmhouse. Their neighbours were Jaxx, Lazuli, Whiskers and Toyota.

Centaur - 2001

Centaur was a "composition group", i.e. a wild group that was never fully habituated to let researchers walk with them while foraging, but they tolerated being observed at the burrow (unlike wild groups). They were no longer observed after 2001.

Colombians (CL) 2010

A group formed by Rascals male Tigi with another, unknown habituated male and a wild female with their offspring. The second male disappeared before he could be identified. The dominant female disappeared soon after, and Tigi with a subordinate male soon emigrated to start the Ewoks group with Kung Fu females.

Commandos (CD) 2004-2009

Commandos started in 2004 from a large Young Ones rover coalition and a party of young Gattaca females evicted by Risca. However, successful they were, growing their family to 25 members within two years - so young didn't mean inexperienced!

The Young Ones male Aragorn immediately established dominance, but a succession of females have taken dominance although Zorilla then settled as the definite long term dominant female of the group. After the death of Aragorn, five Whiskers males immigrated in October 2007, ousting most adult males. Zarathustra Whiskers established male dominance, but he was predated soon after, and Miles settled as his successor. Evicted females founded the Kung Fu (Kleintjie) and Geckos groups.

Zorilla led the Commandos to a territory East of the Gannavlake farmhouse, along the riverbed and main road - the land where once Vivian, Gattaca and Balrog lived. With that started disease infections in the group, and over time, many animals succumbed to it. The group was considered last seen in June 2009 after the female wearing the collar died, and the remaining individuals could no longer be tracked.

Commandos used to defend their lands fiercely. The group name was thus wisely chosen: Commandos is a tactical game set in WW2. And guess

where Commandos got their nickname of "Meerkat mafia" from...

The Commandos are available as a Friends group.

Drie Doring (D)

Drie Doring was one of the first wild groups the KMP habituated at the start of the project in 1993. From July 1995 until December 2005 they had one dominant female named Mabili ('villain' in Sotho). Born in November 1993, Mabili had 22 surviving litters and 79 surviving pups in her ten year reign. She was unable to continue breeding at this prodigious rate and over the latter years group size dwindled to the small group of meerkats headed by Mabili's daughter Makonkie who took dominance from her mother in 2006. After the disappearing of the long-term dominant male Osprey, natal males acted as dominants. Makonkie was predated in Fall 2008, and her daughter Mist has been leading the Drie Doring since then. There was a succession of natal males – amongst which was Finn Mac Cool, a very eccentric male – but rovers, mostly of Frisky origin, were frequent guests. A group of Drie Doring males immigrated to Frisky, with Drie-born Falco as a dominant male. Back home, Captain Planet assumed dominance. He and the other natal males were ousted when a group of four very wild males immigrated in October 2013. Only one of them, T-Bone, remained and became dominant – requiring a long but eventually successful re-habituation of the group. In March 2015, Mist was taken by a raptor, and her daughter Parmesan took over dominance. T-Bone and the other males were ousted two months later by a group of Baobab males led by former dominant Butch. Late in 2015, a first Drie member developed TB symptoms, and dominant Parmesan was soon to follow. The following months brought a rapid decline, and the group dwindled one by one, until the last collared animal died of TB. One individual, Baobab-born Goldeneye, remained in relatively good health, but he could no longer be tracked – so this marked the sad end of the 22 years of Drie Doring history.

The Drie Doring were famous for their playfulness and their good looks – it wa the Frisky blood they say – and their high percentage of female pups, usually of ginger colour. Most famous among them were Lucifer with his pale orange fur or Patch who wore a maroon patch over her eye.

'Drie Doring' is the Afrikaans name for the 'Three Thorns' shrub (*Rhigozum trichotomum*) which covers a big part of our reserve and is often used as a sentry post by meerkats. The Drie Doring group's range was South of the Frisky territory of old, on the Heights farm. After the demise of Frisky, the Whiskers took their territory next to Drie Doring.

The Drie Doring are available as a Friends group.

Drie Doring 2 (DD2) 2014-2015

A transient group in late 2014 with Drie Doring female Stinking Bishop in its center - with a changing cast of males, including wild males and Whiskers male Snowy. She survived a run-in with a large group, yet went missing after staying alone for a while.

Elveera (E) 1993-2009

Elveera was founded by individuals of the old semi-habituated Phantoms group in 1996, but later were fortified by Drie Doring and a Vivian male. The group was initially headed by the dominant female Tenuvial and Silks, the first male born in Vivian group. For years after, the family was led by Eleusine, who had been one of the first Elveeras, until she was taken by a Cape cobra in 2005. Soon after, the dominant male (and Eleusine's nephew) Dante was lost. Her daughter Jo Jo Hello followed her as dominant female, and Habusu, a young Young Ones male took Dante's place, until he was displaced by his brother Teabag. Habusu and several subordinate females dispersed. In early 2009 the first case of TB was observed in the group, and the remaining members succumbed within half a year. Elveera used to live North of the riverbed where the Elveera plain was named after them, but they later moved South, foraging South of the main road on the Heights farm.

The Elveera/Phantoms are available as a Friends group.

Flaka Flaka (FK)

Flaka Flaka made a surprise entry on the group list in June 2015 when Tobermory, a Drie Doring evictee last seen in late 2013 appeared on the KMP stage with 10 to 15 wild meerkats. Tobermory seemed to be the dominant female, and was breeding. In late 2015 Taz, another dispersed ex-Drie male immigrated. Several adults showed signs of TB though and suffered from the severe drought, so Tobermory was alone when last seen in early 2016.

Friksarmy (FA) 2013-2015

Friksarmy were a group of 21 habituated individuals on the day they came into existence – because they were the result of a chance encounter: A coalition of 12 Baobab rovers met the Kung Fu group and just took 9 of their subordinate females with them. Dominance switched both on the female and male side; Robindrew emerged as the dominant female. The first litter with an VFA code was born in December 2013, but they also grew by “adopting” (or kidnapping?) four pups of their splinter group the Ghostbusters. Unfortunately, several of the Friksarmy meerkats were diagnosed with TB around mid 2014, including the dominant couple. Furthermore, the group moved to farmland where they could not be monitored. By February 2015, TB had taken all but five individuals. The group was lost in February 2015 when the collared individual died.

The Friksarmy's territory was in the East of the KMP field station, on the adjacent Leeupan farm and beyond, in the riverbed. Their neighbours on either side were Pandora, and Ghostbusters until they were last seen.

Frisky (F) 1999-2013

Frisky formed in 1999 when females from Young Ones met with wild

males. After initial dominance changes, Jubulani ("celebration" in Sotho) was the highly prolific dominant female of the group for many years; Frisky hold the record as largest group ever, counting 49 in March 2002. After the wild dominant male at Jubulani's side died she joined with Young Ones males. When Jubulani died her daughter Frascati established dominance for two years. Her daughter Bootle became dominant after her, a new wild male immigrated and was briefly dominant though he died of disease. After this a Drie Doring male, Gazebo, immigrated and took dominance. Several subordinate adult females dispersed with a group of Drie Doring males.

After the loss of Bootle, her daughter Quaver took over dominance, alongside Gazebo. In 2011, a group of Drie Doring males immigrated, and Falco took male dominance. The group was hit hard by tuberculosis; it got quiet until Quaver had to be euthanased in June 2012. Muscat became her successor, but her reign was not to last: in December 2012, Drie male Andy C immigrated and dethroned Falco. Then all subordinates roved away, or went missing. And at the end of the month, two Kung Fu evictees immigrated, evicted Muscat, and went on to invade the Goodfellas group - thereby bringing Frisky's glorious history to a sad end. Muscat was observed occasionally after this, but eventually was lost.

The Frisky range was South of the main road, on the Heights farm, neighbouring Drie Doring.

The Frisky are available as a Friends group.

Furry Massive (FM) 2013

Furry Massive entered the KMP life history when two former Drie Doring females with three wild males appeared near their natal group, in April 2013. The females had been last seen in 2011. Habituation started, but dominant Madlaina was found dead two months later, and Seraina with the males could no longer be tracked.

Gattaca (GG) 2001-2007

Gattaca were founded after Whiskers were invaded by Vivian males in 2001: two Whiskers females led by former dominant female Risca, and some of the newcomers, including the short-time dominant Izit, formed their own group. They teamed up with Stinker (ex dominant of Vivian) who held dominance of the group until his son Izit deposed him. Izit was lost in 2006, and a new group of Vivian rovers immigrated. However, all of these males were taken by disease, and the almost 9 years old Risca was predated. After that, the remaining two females dispersed, and the group was considered lost.

The family had struggled to establish itself. Compared to the much younger Commandos group (whose founding females were Gattacan), Gattaca grew only slowly, having 33 pups in 5 years - compared to about the same number of Commandos pups in just 1.5 years...

Gattaca last inhabited the region around the Gannavlake farmhouse, and were regular guests there. The name Gattaca comes from a biotech/SciFi

movie in the late 1990ties.

The Gattaca are available as a Friends group.

Geckos - 2007-2009

The Geckos were formed in December 2007 by three evicted Commandos females and three wild males. For roughly a year, the group was only followed for Life History purposes, but they were not being habituated. Habituation then resumed, due to the availability of researchers to habituate them. The group was led by female Suzie Two-Tone MacFloozie, the youngest of the founding females. Most other members of the Geckos were not yet named. In September 2009, the dominant female was predated, and soon after the group could no longer be tracked, until they were considered last seen in December 2009. The group lived in the Eastern part of the reserve.

GenghisKhats (GK) 2014-2015

GenghisKhats were added to the group mark sheet as of August 2014: Two Drie Doring evictees Patch and Cookiecutter joined up with four very wild males. Habituation progressed well though, and dominant Cookiecutter had her first litter, but then TB appeared in the group. By mid 2015, the group was reduced to Patch, two juveniles and one wild male, Smaugh. They were lost when collared Patch died in July 2015. Their territory was East of Drie Doring's, towards Rascals.

Ghostbusters (GB) 2013-2014

Ghostbusters were a result of research on evicted females: KungFu-born Gypsy, Luka and Tyke left Friksarmy in December 2013, and were observed to form a new group with wild males, with Luka being dominant. They had three litters, one of which was kidnapped by Friksarmy. They lived very far East of the KMP reserve in the Kuruman riverbed, mostly on land where the KMP researchers were not allowed to follow them. With most of the Ghostbusters animals showing signs of TB, the group was no longer followed in mid 2014.

Godzilla (GZ) 2010 - 2013

Godzilla were a wild group whose habituation started in 2010 - yet they've probably been around for a very long time, known as the Abba group.

Habituation progressed quite well until TB hit Godzilla hard. Unfortunately, not even the immigration of three Yardies males could keep the group from dwindling, so it was lost in 2013.

Godzilla lived around the Heights farm, bordering Jaxx, Toyota and Frisky. The Toyota founding males may have been of Godzilla origin, guessing from their looks.

Goodfellas (GF) 2012-2013

The Goodfellas were first seen in November 2012 when two long-evicted Jaxx females (led by Megan Fox) reappeared with three former Yardies males (led by Rafola). Both subordinate males succumbed to TB within weeks. In December, the Jaxx females were displaced by two former Kung Fu evictees (coming the Frisky way), and Rafola by wild immigrant males. Kung Fu female Spektor succumbed to TB, and Rhymenoceros ended up with one wild male's company; he left her, but she teamed up with Gene, the remaining Honey Badgers female. They stayed together for a while until first Gene and, in October 2013, Rhymenoceros disappeared.

Gremlins (GR) 2010

A semi-habituated group that was observed in the Gannavlake region for some time, but never fully habituated since they were affected by TB. They were believed to be the remainder of the Geckos, yet they could not be 100% identified.

Griffin (G) 1993-1994

Griffin was a composition group and one of the first to be observed at the Kuruman River Reserve study site. After several dominance changes, and the death or dispersal of group members, the remaining group was eventually no longer followed.

Hoax (HX) 2007

Individuals of a new wild group were first observed in December 2006, in the region South of Big Dune in the center of the reserve, which had been vacated after the previous territory moves of Whiskers, Commandos and Vivian. The four wild animals were joined by a Whiskers female, Tina Sparkle, and one juvenile, Suggs.

Habituation of this new group took eight months; by then all animals except for the dominant female Mau Mau were considered habituated, so that regular data collection could start. However, the Hoax males had abandoned the females by the end of the year, and Mau Mau disappeared. Tina Sparkle as the last animal in Hoax was no longer followed, but she remained in the region.

The Hoax are available as a Friends Group, together with Aztecs and Starsky.

Hells Angels 2010

A very short-lived group consisting of three Aztecs males and 1 or 2 wild individuals; they were initially collared, but abandoned when it became apparent that the group was infected with TB.

HiggleDiggle (HD) 2014

HiggleDiggle entered the KMP stage around February 2014 when former Baobab dominant male Al Capone was seen together with an unidentified habituated male (most probably a runaway of the KMP population whose transponder no longer worked) and several wild meerkats, in the center of the reserve. The unidentified male was collared, but being an avid rover, he spent his time away from home, so his group the HiggleDiggle couldn't be tracked on a regular basis after May 2014. Al Capone was no longer around when the group was found again in October 2014. At that time, they lived near the western border of the KMP reserve.

HighVoltage (HV)

The group was formed by long-time Van Helsing evictee and former dominant female Bes1 and her daughter Death, together with wild males, in January 2015. They were briefly joined by War, Death's brother, yet wildie Drogon assumed dominance. However, TB symptoms started to show in the wild males in May 2015. Drogon disappeared at the end of 2015, and Viserion took over dominance. The severe drought killed Bes 1, weakened by TB, in January 2016. The immigration of Zulus males could not halt the decline, since the group disintegrated after remaining female Death died in February 2016.

Hobgoblin (HH) 2001-2002

Hobgoblin was a splinter group of evicted Whiskers females, and Whiskers males who were displaced following the immigration of a large group of Vivian rovers into Whiskers. The females combined with Balrog and wild rovers, while the males soon dispersed. The females raised their first litters without male helpers, but the splinter group was eventually lost.

Honey Badgers (HB) 2012-2013

Honey Badgers came into existence when the two Goodfellas females were displaced by immigrant Kung Fu/Frisky females, and then teamed up with wild males to form the Honey Badgers. Dominant female Megan Fox was soon lost due to TB, and the wild males deserted the other female, Gene, to immigrate into Toyota. Gene joined the Goodfellas female Rhymenoceros, thus bringing Honey Badgers to an end.

Hooligans (HL) 2012

The Hooligans were a spin-off of Sequoia that formed in early 2012 after a splinter consisting of three Sequoia females and one male could be re-tracked again. After the dispersal of one female, they consisted of three meerkats, led by Nik Nak. She attracted several suitors, but none of them stayed for long. One male dispersed while the other, Pitio, immigrated into the Überkatz group. Nik Nak however was predated in October 2012, bringing an end to the Hooligans history.

They lived in the center of the reserve, near the Rus en Vrede farmhouse.

Hoppla (HP) 2008-2009

The Hoppla were formed in August 2008 by five Lazuli males, led by J. Alfred Prufrock, and five semi-habituated females - possibly evicted Nutters individuals who were not yet ID'ed. All females disappeared, probably due to illnesses, and two wild females then immigrated. The group raised their first litter, but eventually all members developed signs of TB, and the group was declared last seen in July 2009, before they reached fully habituated status. One of their members, Shaka Zulu, was later seen in the company of wild meerkats; the group was habituated as the Zulus.

Hoppla! means as much as Oops!, in German. They lived North of the riverbed near the Lazuli territory.

Isis -2001

Isis was, like Centaur, Phantom, or Griffin, a "composition group", i.e. a wild group who was never fully habituated. They were no longer observed after 2001.

Jabberwocky (JJ) 1999

Jabberwocky was founded by wild males and three Frisky females – one of them being the Avatar female Igraine who had founded Young Ones with Morgause, and later Frisky with Jubulani. The males eventually emigrated, and both subordinate Frisky females were predated, leaving Igraine alone with two subadults and four pups. This group was no longer followed.

Jackals (JK) 2004-2005

Evicted Zappa females joined two rovers (one wild, one a Young Ones') to form Jackals, and soon produced a first litter, but observation was stopped after a car had run over all three males on the main road.

Java (JV) 2007

Java was a wild group of 5 animals that appeared in 2007 in the region South of Big Dune, probably bordering Commandos and Hoax. Java's habituation was suspended, in order to focus habituation resources on larger wild groups, or groups containing habituated members.

KK and QQ 2000-2001

KK was formed late in 2000 of Young Ones females and Vivian males, but the Vivians soon left roving and were replaced – now named QQ - by roving Lazuli males VLM003 (Delpheus) and VLM002 (Argon), the founders of Whiskers. Both males left after the dominant female was

taken by a raptor – Argon returned to Whiskers, while Delpheus returned to this most favourite pastime: roving. He was run over in 2001, and with him ended QQ.

Kung Fu (KU) 2007-2015

Kung Fu were formed in October 2007, as a motley group consisting of two Commandos females, two Whiskers males, two wild males, and one Frisky male. Kleintjie (of Gattaca origin, recently Commandos) and Ningaloo (of Whiskers origin) established dominance, over time. All adults but the dominant couple emigrated again. The group grew consistently though, and Kleintjie even gave birth to a litter of seven. Several older subordinate females were evicted, and formed the Ewoks group, led by McDreamy. The Kung Fu remained one of the more quiet groups, life-history wise, with a regular routine of births, but not a lot of drama - apart from the fact that “Klenky” and the Kung Fu starred in the Meerkats 3D movie. The start of tougher times was marked by the disappearance of long-term dominant male Ningaloo who went missing - possibly predated - in November 2012. Neighbour’s Rascals male Crux took over as dominant male after several of the natal males went roving. The group took a severe beating in numbers in July 2013 when nine subordinate females left to form the Friksarmy group - leaving Kung Fu with five members. Only one month later, Kleintjie died - probably due to the drought and her old age - and dominant male Crux followed her a month later. The remaining female, granddaughter Cronenberg, became dominant by default, and five males with Van Helsing and Sequoia background immigrated – just two of them stayed for good, dominant George Michael and rover Priscilla. A wild female briefly joined them and assumed dominance, and she and Cronenberg had a mixed litter of eight pups, but the wild female was probably predated. Cronenberg managed to pull two pups through - keeping the meerkat count of this once-mighty group at a minimum of five – and soon gave birth to a new litter of four. However, her health quickly deteriorated in August 2014 and she disappeared. Seven months old Starbuck started showing signs of dominance, but succumbed to TB with her first 5 pups in her womb in November, same as the other remaining female. With all other members gone within a month, only three young males hung on. They did not manage to attract females, and TB finally finished them off: it took the oldest brother, and the younger siblings were too young to carry a radio collar. They were last seen in March 2015 - the same month when their dispersed group mate Priscilla was seen in a wild group.

The Kung Fu lived near the riverbed, in the center of the reserve, but gradually moved South of the road. Their closest neighbours were Rascals.

Mayans (MY) 2012-2014

Mayans came into existence in October 2012 after a palace revolution at Aztecs, when Kathleen overthrew her mother and dominant female Monkulus - but the remainder of the Aztecs then switched sides to Monkulus! Monkulus didn’t take part in the ensuing dominance competition melée, but both male and female dominance changed on a

regular basis. The group was also decimated by a group split and TB, with only 7 members remaining. They built strength - and got a new bloodline - with four Baobab males who immigrated in July 2013. Dominance - both male and female - kept changing, usually due to the death of the dominant, until eventually Monkulus became the dominant again. Only briefly though; she disappeared in December 2013, still weak from the drought season. Cinnamon took over dominance. One litter with a VMY code was born in October 2013 to subordinate female Inga, and a second VMY litter of seven pups was born early in 2014 to Cinnamon. The group however suffered severe losses due to TB, removing all Aztecs- and Sequoia-born adults. Seven month old female Attenborough stepped up to dominance. The numbers were boosted though by the immigration of three seemingly healthy wild males. Habituation progressed well, but so did TB. By the end of 2014, one male, VMYM016, was habituated enough to receive dye marks - but at the same time TB took Attenborough who was the collared individual at that time. The remaining group could no longer be tracked, and only VMYM016 remained in the population, as a rover, until his dye marks faded away and made him invisible, from Life History perspective.

Mayans are not available as a Friends group, but their predecessor Aztecs is.

Misfits (MF) 2011

The Misfits were an entirely wild group that was encountered by chance in the center of the reserve, East of Big Dune, in early 2011. They have proven to be elusive - or all over the place, since they moved their burrows frequently.

Habituation had only started, and was progressing very slowly due to the high grass when the group could no longer be tracked in early 2012.

Moomins (MM) 2001-2010

The Moomins group was started by Lazuli females and Drie Doring males in 2001, and slowly but steadily increased in numbers - mostly offspring of Grumpy (a.k.a. Pig) and Burgan. They have become an exceptionally successful, well habituated group. One of the oldest Moomins' males, Moomintroll, was later seen as the dominant of a wild group, together with his brother Snufkin. Burgan was predated in 2007. Another famous Moomin is Fluffernutter, who was born without claws. Despite this tragic birth defect, he made it over his second winter, even though he gained less weight than his littermates. However, he and most younger Moomins split from the main group, and left the monitored area. The remaining six Moomins females were joined by four wild males afterwards. Leonardo became the dominant male on Grumpy's side. The group never grew quickly, and Grumpy didn't reproduce successfully for over two years; her daughters kept the Moomins' numbers growing though. However, after her first successful birth in more than two years, Grumpy's daughter Hemulen overthrew her mother, and soon after Grumpy and the adult males succumbed to disease - with the remainder

of the group probably being carriers. The group was LSEEN when all adult individuals showed signs of TB. However, paternity tests later revealed that Young, the long-term dominant female of Lazuli, had a Moomins father, so the Moomins line is continued in Lazuli.

Moomins were named after a Finnish/Swedish children book, and most of the early family got their names from the books' characters. Only in 2005, pup naming moved to famous painters...

Moomins were a relaxed group to visit, who loved to playfight. They moved South in 2007, foraging in the region around Big Dune, but returned to their previous lands in the rolling dunes West of the Moomins Triangle.

The Moomins are available as a Friends group.

Nemesis (NN) 1999-2001

Nemesis formed in 1999 when Vivian females and Young Ones males joined together. The males were soon ousted by four wild males, and the remaining group headed towards Van Zylsrus and was no longer followed. However, a year later, two Nemesis founding females were seen in the Balrog area.

Nequoia (NE) 2009-2013

This presumably wild group was first observed by two Friends during an Earthwatch trip in April 2009, but could only be re-tracked in May/June 2009. They were found near Gattaca Dam, i.e. between the territories of Geckos, Aztecs, Sequoia and Kung Fu. For some time they were believed to be a lost splinter of Sequoia, yet their name means they are "Not Sequoia". No known individuals emigrated from other groups could be identified in Nequoia; however, habituation progressed exceptionally well. The dominant couple was lost after a few months and dominance had settled with Kaluha and Pantxo - yet several litters were of Kaluha's sister Kikka. Only then TB took a few of the Nequoia members including Pantxo, and Puggle took over male dominance. He was displaced by immigrating Aztecs males, led by Dali. However, TB ravaged further, eventually leaving Kaluha with five subordinate females and no males. Two months later they were down to four - but four Van Helsing males, led by their long-term dominant male Titan, joined. Titan disappeared without a trace within a month, and soon after seven rather wild Zulus males displaced the remaining Van Helsing males. Unfortunately the group could no longer be tracked after October 2013, so observation has been suspended.

Nomads (NO) 2005-2006

Nomads were started by two Elveera and a Zappa female who had been living in Elveera since she was a pup. This splinter had been evicted in October 2004 and was no longer followed until they were seen again in March 2005 with with two males from Drie Doring and Frisky, and nine offspring. They established well, but had frequent – and violent – group

encounters with a wild group, and in mid 2006 the whole Nomads group succumbed to a disease.

Nutters (NT) 2007-2008

The Nutters were a large wild group who were encountered in the vicinity of Aztecs and Lazuli from August 2007 onwards. Habituation started with the group in November 2007, and was progressing well. However, several of the animals seemed to suffer from disease, and five semi-habituated females emigrated, probably to join the Hoppla group, before they could be ID-chipped. The remainder of the Nutters were no longer followed thereafter. Genetical analyses later revealed that the Nutters dominant female had an Elveera evictee as her mother.

Phantom (P) 1994-1999

Phantoms were one of the first “composition groups”, who were observed for a long time, but never fully habituated. After a groups split in 1994 the dominant female got lost but survived alone and founded the Elveera group half a year later, with the Phantom dominant male who was roving. The rest of Phantom were fortified with four wild males, but over the years the group dispersed and was no longer followed.

The Phantoms are available as a Friends group, together with Elveera.

Pharside 2002 (PP)

Five Young Ones females and ten Frisky males combined to form Pharside in September 2002, yet all males but two emigrated within two months. The remaining males were found alone and beaten up, and one returned to Frisky. The females were later seen with wild males, but the splinter was no longer followed.

PK - 2008

The PK, also named "Beebop's group", were a very short-lived group headed by an evicted Elveera female, Beebop, who returned months after eviction, in the company of a wild male, the two rovers Machu Pichu and Rhogan Josh (of Whiskers origin), two sub-adults (one, a male, with very faint dye marks), and four pups. However, Beebop, the male and two pups disappeared within weeks, and in the absence of a dominant female, observation of the remainder of the group was suspended. Rhogan Josh kept appearing at other groups, as a rover.

Polaris (PS) 2007-2008

The Polaris were group of wild origin, who were joined by Carravagio, a Hoax rover. Habituation progressed slowly due to the very wild nature of the four other animals. It was decided to suspend habituation, while concentrating on other groups. However, Carravagio was found dead in April 2008, and with him being the only habituated animal

wearing the radio collar, the remaining members of the group could no longer be tracked nor identified. They were therefore considered last seen.

PQ 2006

PQ was founded when two evicted Young Ones sisters with her male pup teamed up with three Lazuli rovers. All males emigrated after two months, and the females were no longer followed. The female Tequila however reappeared from time to time over the next 7 months, trying to join other groups. She finally successfully immigrated into the dying Balrog group, but unfortunately could not stop their decline.

Pretenders (PT) 2009 - 2010

The Pretenders were encountered by chance in late 2009 in the region South of Whisker's Crossing near the riverbed. In the group were Sid Vicious, an ex-Hoax/Jaxx/Sequoia male and an unknown but habituated dominant female; she's probably an individual that dispersed as a juvenile – maybe from Sequoia? Several animals showed signs of disease, and after Sid Vicious' dispersal, the group saw a succession of males come and go, before the group was LSEEN when the dominant female was found dead.

Quantum (Q) 1994-1996

Quantum was one of the first groups to become partly habituated, since the surviving Zion members joined wild animals to form Quantum. Habituation was never completed, as this was a group living at the edge of the monitored area. Quantum were no longer followed after 1996.

Queens (QE) 2012

The Queens were a very short-lived group formed by five Whiskers evictees led by former dominant female Ella, and two wild males. The females had been missing for more than half a year when they were found again in an IGI with Pandora, at the far Eastern end of the monitored area.

Unfortunately all but one were marked by TB, so the decision was taken to no longer follow them.

Salami Factory (SF) 2013

Salami Factory were a rover coalition consisting of five ex Sequoia males, led by dominant male Bruce, who created havoc in their neighbouring groups in July 2013. All males had TB lumps when they split from Sequoia, and two months later, Bruce was the last remaining member of Salami Factory - but he was weakened by TB and was found predated.

Sequoia (SQ) 2008-2013

The Sequoia were formed by two evicted females: Benezdrine, the No. 2 in Kung Fu, and Finn, who had just been ousted from the dominant position of her Toyota group. The females teamed up with several rovers, until they seemed to settle with the two subordinate Toyota males. They however returned to their own group shortly after, and the females were considered lost; the group's observation was suspended. However, they resurfaced again in December 2008, in the company of four males: Bruce (a long-term rover of unidentified background) was the dominant male, and the other males were of different origins (Toyota, Hoax/Jaxx, wild). They grew to 15 members, while not observed. The group experienced a permanent group split in early 2009; the splinter led by Finn and Sid Vicious was considered lost, until the male was found in late 2009, in a group named the Pretenders. Meanwhile, the group consisted only of Benezdrine and Bruce, and their offspring. In June 2012 however, a group split became permanent, with Sequoia being reduced to Benezdrine and four subordinates. Their splinter, called the Überkatz, attacked them and savaged Benezdrine, so that she lost her dominance position to Ru. Benezdrine remained in the group, as subordinate. Two Aztecs rovers joined their ranks, but Bruce and the SQ born males returned, with Bruce retaining his dominant position. The drought of 2013 marked the start of Sequoia's decline, however: it first claimed Benezdrine. Soon after the natal males led by Bruce were displaced by four Van Helsing males. At that time, all Sequoia members were marked by TB, and it brought the group to an end when the remaining two females had to be euthanised in September 2013.

Sequoia lived in the center of the reserve near the riverbed.

Sirius 1999

Sirius was a very short-lived group formed by Lazuli females and Young Ones males. The group dissolved almost immediately after it was formed and named.

Skyfish (SK) 2014-2015

Skyfish were a habituation group encountered in January 2014 when Whiskers rover Snotbubble was found in a wild group. There were about six individuals plus three small pups and Snotbubble was subordinate. They lived in old Zulus territory, in the Moomins triangle – the researchers actually believed that the Skyfish were former Zulus members that had split off in September 2013. Collared Snotbubble roved a lot, so he and the group could only be tracked on a very irregular basis – not enough for proper habituation. He and the group were last tracked in September 2014; they numbered 9 animals, with 3 older pups and a pregnant female.

Starsky (ST) 2006-2007

The Starsky group was formed in August 2006 by four evicted Whiskers females and the Lazuli and Young Ones males who had previously abandoned the PQ group. Male dominance was immediately taken by the Lazuli male JD, but none of the females ever established a clear dominance. Of the four litters born into Starsky, none survived the first days. All members were subsequently lost, due to poor foraging conditions, disease and predation. With the predation of the female Mozart, the Starsky group was last seen in April 2007.

The Starsky are available as a Friends group, together with Aztecs and Hoax.

Teabags (TB) 2014-2015

The group was founded in November 2014 with Baobab evictees Matilda and Zogg and their pup, a wild male, and an almost wild male, VMYM016, who briefly stayed at Mayans. The females both had a litter, yet the males left them and first the pups, then the females went missing in early 2015.

Tottenham (TT) 2001-2002

After the influx of a group of Vivian rovers, two Lazuli females (including the dominant) and two resident Elveera males left Lazuli and formed the splinter Tottenham. However, soon after they succumbed to a disease, and the group was lost.

Toyota (TY) 2008-2014

The Toyota group was formed in January 2008 by three evicted Whiskers females and three wild males, which were named after rugby players. They were first led by Finn who was ousted by Ju Drop, and emigrated to form Sequoia. Ju Drop disappeared however, and the group was then dominated by Miss Lilly the Pink and Gregan. The dominant couple succumbed to TB, and unfortunately the disease has claimed most Toyota meerkats until the group was down to one male and two juveniles. Firefly, the juvenile female, broke all age records when she started acting dominant and chasing rovers, in this setup, at the age of 7 months. She was soon joined by Fingal, a Drie Doring male, but he disappeared too soon. Firefly gave up dominant position soon after when two Whiskers evictees, Naggapatzi and Treva, immigrated, soon followed by a Whiskers rover, Princess Madcat. Unfortunately, they were not able to raise a litter in the 2013 drought season. The group was only slightly expanded when a group of four wild males, coming from the unstable Honey Badgers group, joined but also kicked out the two resident males. Naggapatzi could not keep the group stable, however, so she spent parts of the following months on her own, with the other group members being evicted or roving. Luckily two males and Firefly returned to tend to their first successful litter in almost two years. The males remained very wild however, so that habituation levels barely increased. In May 2014, collared evicted female Firefly was found dead, and the group could no longer be tracked after this.

Tulus (TU) 2015

A shortlived group formed in August 2015 by Laurentina, the long-term eldest subordinate female at Zulus, together with Zulus males. The group did not manage to become stable before Laurentina was predated.

Umbongo (U) 1999-2001

Umbongo formed in 1999 from evicted Young Ones females with a few tag-along pups, and two Frisky rovers. The day they met, the males were seen feeding the pups. After several dominance changes due to predation, the group rapidly dwindled due to disease, and was lost.

Urukhai 2009

The Urukhai were a short-lived splinter of Baobab led by Cruise and Al Catraz, formed in December 2009. All individuals returned to Baobab within a month.

Vivian (V) 1995 - 2007

A single semi-habituated female named Vivian formed this group located at the current project farmhouse in 1995. She combined with a Drie Doring male and established a family. After the death of the first dominant male, Young Ones male Stinker immigrated and held dominance until the death of Vivian in 2000. He remained but later emigrated to take dominance of Gattaca. From 2000 onwards, the Vivian family was lead by Vivian's daughter Rhian, and a succession of males of Young Ones and later wild males. The emigration of males, to the Whiskers, Gattaca and Balrog groups, but later also disease, decimated the group. Despite the immigration of wild males after the death of long-term dominant male Jim Bob, the group slowly dwindled, and was last seen in December 2007.

Vivian's sons and daughters took the Vivian blood-line to many other groups, making Vivian the ancestor of several later group leaders, including Vivian itself, Whiskers, Gattaca, or Young Ones.

Vivian inhabited a territory in the Southern part of the reserve and across the road, not far from our farmhouse, but also spent the time of drought in a region at the Eastern end of the monitored area.

The Vivian are available as a Friends group.

X-iles (X) 1997-1999

X-iles formed in 1997 when Lazuli females and Vivian males combined, soon to be expanded by the immigration of wild males while the Vivian males were roving. After several dominance changes and a lot of roving, the Vivian males were ousted by wild males, one of which showed signs of tuberculosis. Most of the group died of the disease within a year, and the few splinters were no longer followed.

Khodes (XH)

A group formed in January 2015 by two Nematoads evictees Sutica and Fran-the-Wo-Man who were followed beyond dispersal, and teamed up with a wild male. They had travelled 10 km (6 mi) from their natal group before they settled down. They could no longer be tracked after a few months, and went missing.

Xhosa (XX) 2002-2003

Three Lazuli females combined with three Vivian males plus two wild rovers to form Xhosa in late 2002. Their second litter first survived a burrow collapse because of a Gemsbok, was then abandoned, but finally was taken away by three Xhosa adults (1 male, 2 females!) who emigrated to form a new group with wild males. Only one female and one male remained, and she was no longer followed after the male took to roving.

Yardies (YD) 2011-2012

The Yardies formed in August 2011 when six Toyota and a wild rover joined five Godzilla subordinate females. However, the group never reached stability. First, the two oldest males disappeared – probably due to TB. The remaining males roved frequently, and at the end of 2011 also the Godzilla females dispersed. Two wild females joined the remainder, but they eventually got lost. The three remaining males finally immigrated into Godzilla.

Youma (YM) 2014-2015

Youma were founded in October 2014 by Mandela and Boetie, both Pandora evictees, Baobab males and General Big Daddy, a former member of the Aztecs group who had appeared out of nowhere 2 years after being last seen. The next month, the males were replaced by Lang Meneer (of Pandora origin) and three wild meerkats (one female). Later, T-Wink (of Pandora) joined and a pup was raised – yet the group composition remained unclear due to the very wild nature of the wildies. The group eventually started to show TB symptoms and dwindled; Mandela was on her own for several months until she also was found dead.

Young Ones (Y)1995-2008

Young Ones, too, belonged to the old groups. They were founded by Morgause and her sister Igraine, the two Avatar females, who teamed up with Drie Doring males in 1995. Morgause took charge of Young Ones until she died in 2004, while Igraine moved to found Frisky. Morgause's offspring were exceptionally successful - for an explanation of why see the subordinate male Grog in Commandos who was Morgause's last son: he was enormously big! Morgause's sons and daughters were numerous, and became dominants of Young Ones, Commandos, Vivian. The name of

Young Ones comes from a British student sitcom in the 1980ies with the same name.

Young Ones' dominant female then was Morgause's daughter, Asterix, until her disappearing. She was never very prolific, but very effective in evicting her competition. The dominant male Alexander, a Vivian, recovered from a snake bite and reestablished dominance, but was found dead, after he and his sons were ousted by wild males. Two of his sons became frequent rovers at the Whiskers and Aztecs.

Young Ones lived in the region West of the farmhouse - and were in walking distance to the farmhouse. The researchers were unable to track the main group after November 2007, so they presumably left the monitored area. The group consisted of two habituated females, and four wild males, when they dispersed.

The Young Ones are available as a Friends group, together with Avatar.

Zappa (ZZ) 2001-2008

Zappa started in 2001 when Bettik, an Elveera female, and Mack, a Drie Doring male, combined to form a rapidly growing extremely attractive group. After the death of Mack, Young Ones' Glufs took his place. Both died of disease, and Lola, a young Zappa female, subsequently established dominance, only to be ousted by her sister Punk. Zappa saw a succession of natal dominant males, in the absence of any non-natal male. However, wild rovers successfully immigrated into the group. In August 2008 Punk was taken by a Martial Eagle, and her niece Milla assumed dominance, with Withnail the dominant male. Milla soon succumbed to an injury possibly inflicted by a snake, and Katesa took over dominance. However, all males left the group to join wild females, in November 2008, and the remaining Zappa females migrated even further away from the farm, making further observation unfeasible.

Zappa were the Westernmost group the KMP observed, living Southwest of Elveera on the Heights farm. They were featured in Meerkat Manor Season 3.

The Zappa are available as a Friends group.

Zion (Z) 1993

Zion was the first group to be habituated in the then new Kuruman River Reserve. But soon after the family members accepted researchers to walk with them while foraging, the group splintered. One part died of a disease, while the other combined with wild animals, requiring habituation to be re-established. This new group was named Quantum.

Other lost groups

There is a number of groups that never made it to the Life History file, for various reasons. Data on them can still be found in other KMP files. Here is a brief overview:

- Harley (1997/98): A group including Isis females, VVM002 and wild meerkats, never habituated.
- Hobo (1997): The initial name given to the group of evicted Young Ones females who then formed Frisky.
- Incas (2007): The name given to the group of Whiskers rovers led by Zaphod who then joined the Aztecs.
- Jungle (-1995): A composition group about which not much is known.
- Kakoo (1993?): A group that was lost to disease before they were fully habituated.
- Mixed Pickle (1996): A group that disappeared before they were habituated.
- Nutty (1996): A fairly large group that was lost, probably due to a faulty collar, before they were fully habituated.
- Old Phantoms (1998): Three ex Phantoms females, one Griffin male and three juveniles were seen in 1998, but not followed.
- Red (-1994): A composition group about which not much is known.
- Riffraff (1998): A Lazuli splinter.
- Shifty (-1994): A composition group about which not much is known.
- Taurus (1996): A very large group that disappeared before they were fully habituated.
- Unicorn (1996): A group that was not found again after it was named.
- UV (2006): A group of evicted Vivian females that was not followed.