

Gorongosa National Park sits at the southern end of Africa's Great Rift Valley in Mozambique. The park includes landscapes of savanna, dry forest, and grasslands, centered around Lake Urema. To the northwest, Mount Gorongosa rises 1,863 meters above sea level. Gorongosa's water cycle starts with the evaporation of water from the Indian Ocean. The moisture-laden air moves westerly on the trade winds across Mozambique, before reaching Mount Gorongosa. The elevation of the mountain forces the air to rise, thus cooling it. This then leads to condensation, which results in rainfall. In addition to supporting a lush montane rainforest, the water runs off the mountain to feed the rivers that supply Lake Urema. During the wet season from November to mid-March, there is enough moisture in the air so that clouds form and rain falls throughout the park. The lake overflows and may cover as much as 200 square kilometers, transforming a dry, grassy plain into an enormous watery haven. But much more rain falls on Mount Gorongosa, which also acts as a reservoir by soaking up some of the rain into its soil and releasing it slowly throughout the year. As the rainy season passes, and fewer clouds move over the park, the flood plain retreats. Many of the rivers start to dry up. That's when the water captured and released from Mount Gorongosa becomes critical. During the dry season, as much as half of the water flow into the park is provided by the mountain. [