



Mozambique Mounds



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Termites are insects that live in large groups called colonies. In certain termite species, each colony builds and lives in a structure known as a mound, which may be as large as 98 feet (30 meters) across. As termites move through their mounds, they change the texture of the soil, concentrate nutrients, and dig tunnels that improve water flow. Their actions create a rich environment for plant growth on top of the mounds.

As a result, termites play a crucial role in African savanna ecosystems. The plants that grow on termite mounds are important habitats for birds, lizards, and other small animals. The mounds also provide dense concentrations of food for larger animals, such as antelope and monkeys. The interactions between the savanna animals and the termite mounds create a positive feedback loop. The animals attracted to the plants on the mounds often bring more nutrients (in the form of dung and urine) or disperse seeds to the mounds. These events in turn reinforce the richness of the soil and vegetation on the mounds.

The image shows a bird's-eye view of the savanna in Mozambique, which has many termite mounds. The mounds are evenly spaced because neighboring termite colonies compete with each other for food and other resources.