



SCIENTIFIC FINDINGS FROM MOZAMBIQUE MOUNTAINS

Mt. Chiperoone

- An isolated steep-sided mountain in Milanje District, historically associated with the larger Mt Mulanje in Malawi; highest point 2054 m.
- Intact good-quality range of moist forest from around 1000 m altitude to just below the peak.
- Around 1600 to 1700 hectares of good quality moist forest is present from an altitude of 1000 to 2000 metres. It is primarily of the medium-altitude type, with a smaller area of montane forest above 1600 metres. There is a very limited area of other habitats present.
- There has been a loss of forest cover of over one-third between 1969 and 2002 owing to expanding cultivation, mostly on the S and SE slopes.
- 229 plant species were recorded from above 800 m altitude, 3 of which are new records for Mozambique. No new plant species were found.
- The forests are an important habitat for two globally-threatened bird species, the Thyolo Alethe and White-winged Apalis. Mt Chiperoone is designated as an Important Bird Area, one of only 15 in Mozambique.
- 56 species of butterfly were recorded, including 6 new records for Mozambique.
- Apart from clearance for cultivation, the major threat is from wild fires, especially along the forest margins and in gullies.
- The forest and woodland cover are very important in the provision of a year-round water supply to the villages below. Water is now a critical issue here.



Mt. Namuli

- The Namuli massif in Gurué District covers 200 square kilometres. The main plateau is at 1800–1900 m and the main peak is 2419 m high.
- Namuli is surrounded on the western and southern sides by extensive tea plantations, which are now being rehabilitated. There are around 15,000 people living in the area.
- Moist montane forest covers around 1100 hectares, most of it above 1700 m altitude. There are only 135 hectares of species-rich medium-altitude forest in small patches below 1600 m. Although there has been minimal loss of forest cover over the last 40 years, most of this is of the scarce medium-altitude type.
- There are over 300 hectares of wet upland grassland, a scarce and important habitat. These grasslands are where many of the most important species for conservation are found.
- 16 plant species are known only from the Namuli area, plus one small mammal (a squirrel) and 7 butterflies, showing its major global conservation significance.
- 530 plant species have been recorded above 1000 m altitude, with 26 of them being new Mozambique records. The project discovered 5 species thought to be new to science.
- 155 bird species have been recorded, including Mozambique's only endemic bird, the Namuli Apalis. In addition to the Apalis, Mt Namuli supports good populations of 5 other globally threatened species (Thyolo Alethe, Green Barbet race *belcheri*, Dapple-throat, Spotted Ground Thrush and White-winged Apalis). It is a recognised Important Bird Area.
- A new species of dwarf chameleon has been found on Namuli, along with 4 other lizards that until now were thought to only occur on Mt. Mulanje in Malawi. This shows the biological link between these mountains.
- 126 butterfly species were found across the Namuli massif, including 7 new to science. It is the Mozambican mountain with the highest number of endemic species, and probably the best-recorded mountain for these insects in the country.
- The most important habitats for conservation are the upland peat grasslands, which support a large diversity of wild flowers, the extensive patches of moist montane forest and the few remnant patches of medium-altitude and riverine forest. It is recommended that the area above 1500 m altitude is recognised as an important conservation area.
- There are increasing threats to biodiversity, principally logging of certain trees for timber and clearance of small areas in the forest for potato cultivation. Other threats are the destruction of vegetation by semi-wild pigs, cattle grazing of some grasslands, bushmeat hunting, and wild fires destroying the forest margins. A conservation programme is urgently required.
- The potentials for ecotourism are high. Namuli has wonderful scenery and views, spectacular waterfalls, trekking and wildlife.



Mt. Mabu

- The extensive forest covering Mt Mabu in Tacuane District, was previously virtually unknown and unexplored scientifically. This project carried out the first biological survey of the area.
- Mt Mabu comprises an elevated area of forest-covered ridges and peaks with the highest point at 1710 metres altitude. The total extent is around 140 square kilometres. There are a number of old abandoned tea estates on the southern slopes.
- The extent of moist forest is over 6900 hectares, mostly between 1000 and 1600 metres, making it possibly the largest forest at this altitude in southern Africa. All the forest is in very good condition.
- Identification of the 500 plant specimens collected has not been completed, but the list of species will be at least 250, of which 2 are new records for Mozambique.
- 126 bird species were recorded, including 5 that are globally threatened (Spotted Ground-thrush, Thyolo Alethe, Swynnerton's Robin, Dapple-throat, Green Barbet race *belcheri*). The Namuli Apalis, Mozambique's only endemic bird, was found, the first record away from Mt Namuli. Particularly important globally are the populations of Thyolo Alethe and Green Barbet.
- A new species of snake, a forest viper (*Atheris*), was found along with another 2 possibly new snakes and a chameleon. It is likely that other as-yet unknown small animal species remain to be found.
- 156 butterfly species were recorded, of which 5 are new to science. 32 of these are new records for Mozambique.
- Forest cover is very important in providing a perennial supply of water for settlements, particularly for Limbué and similar settlements on the southern slopes.
- There are few threats to the forests on Mt Mabu at present, although frequent wild fires are destroying the forest margin in places and bushmeat hunting has reduced wildlife numbers. No evidence of tree cutting was seen. However, the forest is likely to be threatened if the tea estates re-open or if any other large-scale commercial agriculture takes place around the mountain.

