Fire

Fire is a natural part of the ecology of the African savanna. Fires often occur naturally in places where there is a distinct wet season followed by an extreme dry season. During the dry season, the vegetation dries out and can catch fire naturally from lightening or from a human source, such as a campfire. Fire, along with grazing by large animals, maintains the savanna biome in a state of open grassland with or savanna, which is grassland with sparse trees.

Gorongosa’s grasslands and savannas depend on naturally occurring fires and heavy grazing by herbivores. If fire is not allowed to sweep occasionally through these open habitats, or if grazing by animals falls dramatically, grasslands are invaded shrubby and woody vegetation, depriving many of Gorongosa’s grazers of prime feeding areas. Fire is a natural part of the ecosystem in Gorongosa, and humans have used fire in this region for more than 150,000 years. Fires release nutrients and remove old, dry grasses above ground, allowing new growth to sprout from the roots when the rains arrive.  These areas of lush, green re-growth provide prime feeding grounds for many of Gorongosa’s grazers, including waterbuck, wildebeest, and African buffalo.