

Gift Of The Rains

13 X 30 MINUTES

EPISODIC BREAKDOWN

1. Hoanib - The Hidden River

In the desert wilderness of Namibia there is a river that lies hidden beneath the sand for most of the year. The abundance of water flowing over the desert is short-lived, in just a few days it all seeps into the ground and the plants and animals of the desert have to rely once more on their skills to survive in one of the harshest environments on Earth.

2. Zambezi - The Mighty River

Africa's landscape is sculpted by some formidable rivers and the Zambezi is one of the continent's mightiest. When the summer rains come to the valley, and fill the pools of the land buffalos and elephants leave the river, but some animals, like the resident birds and spotted-neck otters, will always rely on this river – one of Africa's mightiest – the Zambezi.

3. Luangwa - River of Extremes

Hidden between the mountains of Africa's Rift Valley flows a majestic river that brings an abundant surge of water to the Luangwa Valley. But after six months of no rain life for the animals becomes extremely desperate. Just as there seems to be no hope of survival, the clouds gather over the mountains and rain brings relief to the Luangwa Valley and its inhabitants.

4. Okavango - The Miracle River

One of Africa's most remarkable rivers spreads its waters over the desolate plains of the Kalahari Desert, forming the largest inland delta on earth, the Okavango. Fed by the summer rains that fall over southern Angola, the Okavango River flows into the heart of the desert in Botswana. As the water recedes, the desert reclaims its land.

5. Mara - River of Strife

The seasons bring life to the valleys forged by the African rivers, but they also play a part in nature's tragedies. For most of the year, the Mara River flows peacefully through the wide plains of southern Kenya, but during the dry months it displays the ultimate life-and-death struggle: the crossing of hundreds and thousands of wildebeests.

6. Victoria Nile - River of Beginnings

The quest to find the source of the Nile built and shattered explorers' dreams for centuries, until it was eventually discovered that the river's birthplace is Lake Victoria. Nile crocodiles have been using the banks of the river as nesting sites for centuries, showing a nurturing side unique in the reptile world.

7. Shire - River of Fertility

The Shire River is one of the few African rivers that flows steadily and peacefully throughout the year. It flows serenely through southern Malawi, fed by the abundant waters of Lake Malawi. The lake contains more fish species than any other lake in the world, including at least 600 types of cichlids, small colourful fish that protect their eggs and fry in the mother's mouth.

8. Sand - River of Riches

The Sand River is shorter and smaller than many of Africa's rivers, but it has great importance because it supports such an abundance of wildlife. Lions stay close to the river, knowing that their prey, such as buffalo, must pass regularly through their territory. To avoid competition with these powerful nocturnal predators, the cheetah hunts by day.

9. Limpopo - River of Giants

The Limpopo river in southern Africa is a giant in size, and in the wealth of animal life it supports. In the dry season, it is the only source of water for the giants such as elephants, predators such as the python and the leopard. The river is a lure for their prey, particularly in winter.

10. Rufiji - The Perennial River

The Rufiji River flows through Tanzania in East Africa, through the vast Selous Game Reserve – the largest reserve in the whole of Africa. It is home to a variety of creatures such as the unique Selous wildebeest, and is a precious haven for endangered animals such as elephants and wild dogs.

11. Olifants - River of Treasures

At the southern tip of Africa, the Olifants flows through and nourishes the unique Cape Floral Kingdom. Despite being the smallest of the world's six plant kingdoms, it is the richest and most spectacular, containing 3% of all the plant species found in the whole world.

12. Pongola - The Generous River

When in flood, the Pongola River creates a whole new wild world of quiet backwaters, hidden animals and ancient rituals. With the summer rains, the Pongola floods, filling its pans which are

home to hippos, great white egrets and goliath herons. Cane rats live in the lush vegetation along the banks, unseen by the warthogs and other creatures.

13. Ogooe - River of Rains

The Ogooue River flows throughout the year through the lush tropical rainforest of Gabon in West Africa. The country is an unspoilt wildlife haven where nature is almost untouched by humans, providing a precious refuge for endangered primates such as western lowland gorillas, chimpanzees and black colobus monkeys.