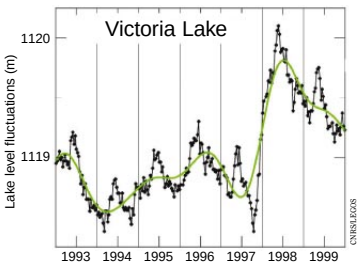
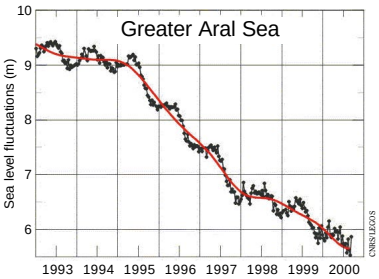
Lakes and rivers under the altimeter's watchful eye

As well as its key contribution to ocean studies, altimetry is an effective tool for measuring local water-level variations in big lakes, rivers, and flood zones. It is thus helping us to gauge the impact of human activities and climate change on continental waters.



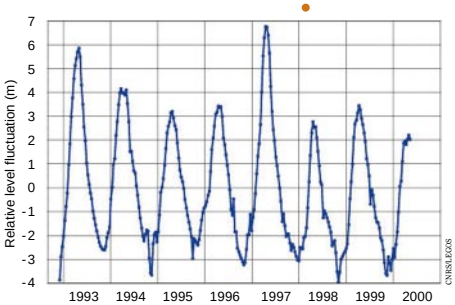
Lakes swollen by rains

The level of Lake Victoria rose by nearly one meter between 1997 and 1998 due to heavy rainfall brought on by higher temperatures in the Indian Ocean.



Irrigation bleeding the Aral Sea dry

The Aral Sea has receded dramatically since the 1960s as a result of excessive water usage from the two rivers draining into it.



Impressive Amazon floods

At the confluence of the Rio Negro and Rio Solimoes, the waters of the Amazon River rise up to eight meters every year. TOPEX/POSEIDON observes such variations, and sometimes unusual anomalies (1997).