

Observing mesospheric gravity waves with an imaging riometer.

T. Moffat-Griffin ^{a,*}, R.E. Hibbins ^a, K. Nielsen ^b, M.J. Jarvis ^a,
M.J. Taylor ^b

^a*British Antarctic Survey, High Cross, Madingley Road, Cambridge, CB3 0ET,
United Kingdom*

^b*Center for Atmospheric and Space Sciences and Physics Department, Utah State
University, Logan, UT, USA*

Abstract

Gravity waves play an important role in determining the structure and dynamics of the mesopause region. The Imaging Riometer for Ionospheric Studies (IRIS) at Halley, Antarctica (76°S, 27°W) is capable of detecting short period mesospheric gravity waves using fluctuations of the ionospheric absorption of cosmic radio noise as a tracer. An analysis technique for quantifying these signatures is presented. The extraction of the wave period, horizontal phase velocity and horizontal wavelength is demonstrated by applying wavelet analysis to synthetic imaging riometer absorption data, which contain known wave features. A mechanism to overcome the limitation on resolvable wavelengths is presented. The effect of noise on the analysis results is also discussed. The application of this technique to extract gravity wave parameters from real imaging riometer data is demonstrated by comparison with those derived from a co-located airglow imager. Extension of this technique will, in future, enable a climatology of year round mesospheric gravity wave properties over Antarctica

to be derived. It will also enable further gravity wave climatological studies to be performed using other imaging riometer datasets around the world.

Key words: Imaging riometer, gravity waves, Antarctica, wavelets

1 Introduction

Gravity waves are important for understanding the energy and momentum flow in the mesopause region of Earth, where they can release momentum having propagated upwards from their generation regions in the troposphere and stratosphere. Much of the momentum flux in the mesopause region comes from gravity waves with periods less than 30 minutes (Fritts & Vincent, 1987). The gravity wave field is not well known in this region and thus the gravity wave parameterisations input into global circulation models (GCMs) will not produce accurate results when compared to real data. The importance of including an accurate representation of the gravity wave field in GCMs is outlined in Fritts et al. (2006). One of the main ways of observing gravity wave activity in the mesopause region is using an airglow imager to infer the amplitude and direction of the short period waves (e.g. Taylor et al. 1995) seen as tracers in the airglow layer at around 87km altitude; wintertime climatologies of gravity wave momentum flux over Halley (76°S, 27°W) and Rothera (68°S, 68°W) have been generated using airglow imager data (Espy et al., 2004, 2006). However, as the technique requires dark and cloud-free conditions, such imagers are unable to observe during the Antarctic summer. Imaging riometers, on the other hand, are able to observe regardless of these sky conditions and

* Corresponding author.

Email address: `tmof@bas.ac.uk` (T. Moffat-Griffin).

20 can provide a way to measure year round gravity wave fluxes.

21 This paper describes a technique that is applied for the first time to imaging
22 riometer absorption data to extract gravity wave parameters accurately. The
23 limitations of this technique are tested using synthetic imaging riometer data.
24 The technique is also applied to several real gravity wave events, seen in a
25 co-located airglow imager, to compare derived wavelength, phase speed and
26 wave direction.

27 **2 The Imaging Riometer**

28 A riometer measures the intensity of cosmic radio noise received at the surface
29 of the Earth. If no absorption occurs then the intensity of the cosmic radio
30 noise signal received is cyclic, with the period of a sidereal day, this signal is
31 known as a quiet day curve. If absorption occurs, the intensity of the cosmic
32 radio noise received decreases and hence the absorption in the atmosphere
33 can be determined. Riometer frequencies, usually between 28 and 40 MHz,
34 result in a maximum peak in absorption around 90km altitude (Friedrich &
35 Torkar, 1983) in the D-region of the ionosphere. At Halley, most absorption
36 events are due to auroral sources (Hargreaves & Jarvis, 1986), although for this
37 study it is required that it is geomagnetically quiet. As the imaging riometer
38 is not being used for usual precipitation studies the peak absorption altitude
39 is likely to differ from 90km. Work on riometer absorption profiles, (Friedrich
40 & Torkar, 1983), has shown that as the absorption decreases from 0.5dB to
41 0dB the altitude of the peak absorption rises from around 86km to around
42 100km. The thickness layer of the absorption region has also been shown to
43 vary from 12km to 20km, (Hargreaves, 1980).

44 The imaging riometer (Detrick & Rosenberg, 1990) is an advance on the basic
45 riometer as it uses a narrow beam antenna array to spatially sample the region
46 of interest in contrast to a spatially isolated measurement from a single wide
47 beam. The imaging riometer for ionospheric studies (IRIS) at Halley has a
48 64-element crossed dipole array, phased to produce 49 separate beams, each
49 13° wide at the 3dB power level. A region of over 200km by 200km at 90km
50 altitude is sampled (Rosenberg & Detrick, 1991). The Halley IRIS operates
51 at 38.2MHz (a protected band for radio astronomy - so minimising man-made
52 interference). It records data at high (1s) time resolution (all the beams are
53 temporally coincident) but coarse (minimum 22km) spatial resolution (Rose
54 et al., 2000). Figure 1 shows the projection of the riometer beams at 90km
55 altitude as defined by the 3dB beam projections. The separation between
56 the circular beam projections near the centre is about 22km; the separation
57 between the non-central elliptical beam projections is significantly larger.

58 The multi-beam configuration of the Halley IRIS and its field of view make it
59 capable of detecting gravity waves passing horizontally overhead.

60 **3 Gravity Wave Detection**

61 Short period gravity waves have been detected in imaging riometer data, from
62 Halley, in a previous study by Jarvis et al. (2003) who demonstrated that a
63 single wave observed in a co-located airglow imager was also present in the
64 central beams of the Halley IRIS. The wave was first seen in the airglow imager
65 at 07:25UT on 7th June 2000 yet did not become apparent in the IRIS data
66 until 08:00UT. Spectral analysis identified 3 wave periods, of which one agreed
67 with the parameters given by the airglow imager.

68 Here we explore the possibility of using a more rigorous analysis method that
69 has the potential to be applied semi-automatically to the complete archive
70 (1997 to present day) of imaging riometer data. This provides the potential
71 to build up a year-round climatology of gravity fluxes at Halley, Antarctica.

72 *3.1 Wavelet Analysis*

73 Wavelet analysis is a technique that is suited to analysing bursty, frequency
74 varying events that have non-stationary phase throughout the dataset. Grav-
75 ity waves are such events and thus wavelet analysis lends itself well to their
76 identification.

77 The Morlet wavelet is used and the transform method outlined in Torrence &
78 Compo (1998) is implemented in this analysis. The variance of the time series
79 at each wavelet scale (period) is given by the wavelet power spectrum, which
80 is defined as the absolute value of the square of the wavelet transform. The
81 wavelet squared coherency, effectively measuring the cross-correlation between
82 two wavelet power spectra, is used to identify potential wave features that oc-
83 cur at the same period and time range in the two time series. The wavelet
84 coherency phase difference between these coherent features is the key param-
85 eter required for IRIS gravity wave parameter extraction and this is provided
86 by the method outlined in Torrence & Webster (1999).

87 With knowledge of the distance between the imaging riometer beams projected
88 at a given altitude, the period of the wave feature and its phase difference,
89 the horizontal phase velocity and the horizontal wavelength are calculated.
90 Equations for the horizontal phase velocity (Equation 1) and the horizontal

91 wavelength (Equation 2) are given below:

$$92 \quad V_p = \frac{2\pi\Delta x}{\Delta\phi T} \quad (1)$$

$$93 \quad \lambda = \frac{2\pi\Delta x}{\Delta\phi} \quad (2)$$

94 where Δx is the distance between the beams, $\Delta\phi$ is the phase difference be-
95 tween the beams in radians and T is the wave period in seconds.

96 The spatial resolution of IRIS puts a limitation on the resolvable horizontal
97 wavelengths of $2\Delta x$. For the central beams, this results in a lowest resolvable
98 limit of 45km for the horizontal wavelength. Any waves that pass through
99 the field of view with horizontal wavelengths shorter than this limit would be
100 difficult to accurately resolve and any parameters derived from them would
101 therefore not be reliable. A method to eliminate this problem has been de-
102 veloped and requires a wave feature to be detected in three linearly adjacent
103 beams over the same period and time range. Figure 2 illustrates the separa-
104 tion between three of the beams and using simple wave theory, Equation 3 is
105 derived.

$$106 \quad \frac{d_{ab}}{d_{bb2}} = \frac{\Delta\phi_{ab}}{\Delta\phi_{bb2}} \quad (3)$$

107 The beam separations d_{ab} and d_{bb2} are known, and the phase difference ratio,
108 on the right-hand side of Equation 3, can be adjusted using $\pm 2n\pi$ until the
109 best match to the beam separation ratio is found, where n is any integer. The
110 adjusted phase difference values then represent the actual phase difference.
111 This adjustment can then be applied to the phase differences in Equations 1
112 and 2 to calculate the true wavelength and phase velocity of the wave feature.
113 The ability to calculate this necessary adjustment relies on the fact that the

114 beam separations at any fixed altitude are neither equal nor have an integer
115 ratio.

116 Finally, the direction of the wave can be calculated by using a technique
117 outlined in Donelan et al. (1996) for application to ocean waves. Two phase
118 differences of a wave feature, measured in near orthogonal directions, are re-
119 quired. For the Halley case, the central beam phase differences between the
120 IRIS north-south and east-west beams are at exactly 90° and the wave direc-
121 tion is given by Equation 4:

$$122 \quad \theta = \text{atan}\left(\frac{\Delta\phi_{ac}}{\Delta\phi_{ab}}\right) \quad (4)$$

123 Where the subscripts ac refer to the north-south pair of beams and ab the
124 east-west pair of beams. For the case here 0° and 360° are pointing north, with
125 the angles increasing in a clockwise direction.

126 4 Synthetic Data Results

127 4.1 Attenuation of the IRIS beams

128 The beam profile of each of the central IRIS beams approximates a Gaussian,
129 where the beam width is taken to be the FWHM. This shape results in the
130 attenuation of the signal observed. The beam widths for beams a , b and $b2$ are,
131 at 90km altitude, 17.6km, 17.9km and 18.8km respectively. Figure 3 shows how
132 the amplitude of different wavelength horizontal waves would be attenuated
133 by each beam. It shows that the three beams exhibit a similar attenuation
134 pattern and that waves with a horizontal wavelength of 10km and less have

135 their amplitudes reduced by a factor of 100,000, making them undetectable.

136 There is no observed phase shift associated with this attenuation.

137 The results in the next sections are for synthetic waves, already attenuated by

138 the beams, and discuss the effect of signal noise on the detection capabilities.

139 4.2 *Extracting wave parameters*

140 Time series for the five beams in Figure 1 are produced for unit amplitude

141 waves with various wavelengths, frequencies and directions. The waves are of

142 the form of Equation 5.

$$143 \quad A(x, y, t) = \sin(k_x x + k_y y - \omega t) \quad (5)$$

144 where A is the wave amplitude, k_x and k_y are the x and y components of the

145 wavenumber, $\omega = \frac{2\pi}{T}$ and t is the time in seconds. Figure 4 shows a typical

146 example of the different beam signatures of a synthetic wave. In this instance

147 the wave has horizontal wavelength of 20km, a speed of 19ms^{-1} and a direction

148 of 70° .

149 The wavelet coherency spectrum of each of the five pairs of beams was gen-

150 erated and the phase differences from the regions of highest coherency were

151 determined. These were then adjusted, as shown in Section 3.1, and the hor-

152 izontal wavelength, horizontal phase velocity and wave direction were calcu-

153 lated. Table 1 shows the success of the technique with various wavelengths

154 and directions keeping the period constant at 1057s. This illustrates that it

155 is possible to detect short horizontal wavelengths down to 15km wavelength

156 reliably within the geometry of the 5 central beams.

157 This illustrates that the technique works for situations where the signal (wave)
158 amplitude is large compared to the noise amplitude (a signal to noise ampli-
159 tude ratio of around 10) and the wavelength is 15km or longer. As real IRIS
160 data is noisy, compared to the amplitude of the gravity wave signal, (Jarvis
161 et al., 2003), the next section tests the limits of the technique by increasing
162 the noise level (decreasing the signal to noise ratio).

163 *4.3 Noisy data*

164 The same time series as above were reproduced but with different signal to
165 noise ratios. The effect of increasing the noise in the time series is shown
166 by taking the standard deviation of the difference between the predicted and
167 actual wave parameter and comparing it to the log of the signal to noise ratio.
168 Figure 5 shows this type of plot for the standard deviations of the horizontal
169 phase velocity and direction differences.

170 As the noise amplitude increases, the standard deviation of the parameter
171 difference increases. The error of the predicted results increases. In both plots
172 in Figure 5 a sharp increase in standard deviation can be seen when the signal
173 to noise ratio is around 0.3. Beyond this point, the parameter predicted will
174 become more unreliable.

175 To determine the extent to which the real IRIS data can be analysed in this
176 manner a test is currently being developed that allows an estimate of the
177 signal to noise amplitude ratio to be obtained. However, in the meantime, a
178 simple estimation of the noise amplitude in real IRIS data can be performed
179 by filtering out any period longer than 3 minutes and taking the standard

180 deviation of the resulting time series.

181 **5 Real IRIS Data**

182 A test of the technique has been performed by comparing IRIS data to seven
183 gravity wave events observed in the OH airglow imager. These events have been
184 chosen from a climatological study that was done using the airglow imager,
185 (Nielsen , 2007). This study revealed a large number of extensive gravity waves
186 measured in the OH emission over Halley. The wave parameters spanned from
187 10-60km in horizontal wavelength, $5-100^{-1}$ in observed phase speed, and 5-30
188 minutes in observed period, with typical values of 26 km, 48 ms^{-1} , and 10
189 minutes, respectively. For this test seven waves exhibiting wavelengths larger
190 than 15km and periods greater than 10 minutes were selected for comparison.
191 These criteria are based on the observing capabilities of the IRIS. Table 2
192 shows the dates and times of the events used in this study, plus the K_p index.
193 The wavelet analysis technique outlined above is applied to each IRIS dataset
194 for the relevant date and time.

195 The events were analysed and strong wave features, coincident in period and
196 time, were observed in their wavelet coherency spectra. The wavelet coherency
197 spectra for the East-West beam pairs of event E are shown in Figures 6 and
198 7 with the wave features highlighted. Figure 8 shows the regions where all
199 four beam pairs have a wavelet coherency greater than 0.5 for event E and
200 the horizontal solid line marks the observed period seen in the airglow imager.
201 This enables a clearer identification of the wave event than Figures 6 and
202 7. Figure 9 is the same plot type as Figure 8 but for all the other events
203 studied in this paper. It shows that the wave events consistently seen in all

204 5 central beams of the IRIS data have similar periods to those observed in
205 the airglow imager data. From the coherency spectra, the phase differences
206 between the features in different beams were estimated, and their horizontal
207 wavelengths, phase velocities and directions were calculated. Figures 10, 11, 12
208 and 13 compare the horizontal phase velocity, period, horizontal wavelength
209 and direction determined by the OH airglow imager and IRIS for each gravity
210 wave event. Figures 10, 11 and 12 show that there is agreement, including
211 errors, between the velocities, period and wavelengths of waves observed by
212 both instruments. Event D is the exception to this, where the predicted wave
213 velocity by IRIS is about 60% of the value derived from the airglow imager
214 data. Table 2 shows that for this event the K_p is 3, the highest of any event
215 studied. This level of geomagnetic activity could be sufficient to increase the
216 variability in the absorption level, obscuring the gravity wave signal more
217 than a K_p level of 2 or less would. The small differences in values could in
218 part be because the instruments are looking at slightly different altitudes. For
219 the direction comparisons shown in Figure 13 it is evident that the IRIS and
220 airglow imager direction results do not agree for all the events. There have
221 not been any signal to noise estimates made for the IRIS data used in this
222 paper but some of the results imply that the noise levels may be high enough
223 to cause reliability issues with the direction measurements. A technique to
224 estimate the signal to noise level in the IRIS data is under development.

225 **6 Summary**

226 Studies with synthetic gravity wave IRIS data and real IRIS data have shown
227 that the wavelet analysis technique outlined in this paper is successful, within

228 its limits, in extracting gravity wave parameter information. The use of syn-
229 thetic data have provided a set of limits on the spectrum of gravity waves that
230 can be detected, and the accuracy of these predictions due to noise. Waves
231 with a horizontal wavelength less than 15km are difficult to obtain parameters
232 for and parameters derived from a time series where the signal to noise ratio
233 is less than 0.25 have a much larger uncertainty associated with them than
234 those with a higher signal to noise ratio.

235 The results in Section 5 are encouraging. Comparisons between the airglow
236 imager results and the IRIS results demonstrate that the IRIS is capable of
237 detecting gravity waves and that the wave period, wavelength, velocity and
238 direction can be successfully extracted using a wavelet analysis technique. The
239 noise levels in the IRIS data affect the reliability of the direction results; so
240 being able to determine accurately the signal to noise level of the IRIS data
241 would increase the confidence in any future studies where the IRIS is used in
242 a stand-alone situation to detect gravity waves in daylight.

243 With a co-located airglow imager it is easy to verify that the waves observed in
244 IRIS are in the D/E-region not the F-region; however in the summertime this
245 comparison technique cannot be used. Kressman (1976) shows that when foF2
246 is below 5MHz, the absorption due to the F-region is less than 0.1dB. Thus, a
247 F-region gravity wave perturbation could cause a variation in the absorption
248 of around 0.01dB, which would be detectable. The use of an ionosonde, co-
249 located with the IRIS, is a possible method of identifying F-region gravity
250 waves, (Kressman , 1976). Ionosonde data could be used in conjunction with
251 the stand-alone IRIS data to determine whether waves seen in the IRIS are
252 occurring in the F-region - if a wave of a certain period is seen in the IRIS data
253 but not the ionosonde then it is likely to be a wave in the mesosphere.

254 The analysis technique outlined in this paper will be applied to the entire
255 Halley IRIS dataset to build up a climatology of mesospheric gravity wave
256 characteristics over this region. However the technique can be applied to any
257 49 or more beam imaging riometer. There are many imaging riometers situated
258 across the polar regions. The potential to exploit these additional datasets
259 and generate many polar climatologies is huge and would contribute to our
260 understanding of the mesospheric gravity wave field over the polar regions
261 greatly.

262 **7 Acknowledgements**

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266 Cambridge staff who deployed the IRIS system and help to maintain the in-
267 strument and its data.

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312 Torrence, C. & Webster, P.J., Interdecadal changes in the ENSO-monsoon
313 system, *J. Climate*, 12, 2679-2690, 1999

314 Table 1: Original and predicted wavelengths(km), phase velocities(ms^{-1}) and
315 directions(θ°) for synthetic data inputs. The need for adjustment is also in-
316 dicated. At a horizontal wavelength of 10km the technique is seen to break
317 down.

318 Table 2: Dates and times of the gravity wave events seen in the OH airglow
319 imager and studied in this paper. The K_p index is included to show the level of
320 geomagnetic activity. Those times with an asterisk are where the entire wave
321 event duration could not be determined due to auroral events obscuring part
322 of the field of view.

323 Figure 1: Projection of the imaging riometer beams onto a horizontal plane
324 at 90km altitude, as defined by their 3dB contour. The five westward and
325 northward beams discussed in the text are shaded and labelled.

326 Figure 2: Diagram of beam separations and the phase differences between
327 beam pairs.

328 Figure 3: The effect on the observed wavelength of the different beam widths
329 for different wavelength waves. The solid line is for beam 'a', the dotted line
330 is for beam 'b' and the dashed line is for beam 'b2'.

331 Figure 4: A wave of wavelength 20km, velocity 19ms^{-1} , direction of 70° and a
332 period 1057 seconds with a signal to noise ratio of 10, as seen by the 5 beams
333 in figure 1.

334 Figure 5: The top plot shows the standard deviation of the direction difference
335 versus $\log(\text{signal}/\text{noise})$, the bottom plot shows the standard deviation of the
336 velocity difference versus $\log(\text{signal}/\text{noise})$.

337 Figure 6: Wavelet coherency plot between beams a and b for event E. The
338 pink line highlights the wave feature used to derive the wave parameters. The
339 thick black contour lines indicate a coherency greater than 0.5 (where the
340 maximum is 1). The additional features seen in the figure do not fulfil the
341 criteria of being seen in additional beams.

342 Figure 7: As for Figure 6 but for beams b and b2

343 Figure 8: Combined coherency plot for all four beam pairs for event E. The
344 shaded regions are where the coherency is greater then 0.5 in all four beam
345 pairs. The solid red line indicates the period of the wave seen in the airglow
346 imager.

347 Figure 9: Combined coherency plots for the remaining events studied in this
348 paper. The shaded regions are where the coherency is greater then 0.5 in all

349 four beam pairs. The solid line indicates the period of the wave seen in the
 350 airglow imager.

351 Figure 10: Comparison of derived horizontal phase velocities of each gravity
 352 wave event outlined in Table 2. The squares represent the OH imager results
 353 with associated errors; the triangles represent the IRIS results with associated
 354 results.

355 Figure 11: As for Figure 10 but for wave period.

356 Figure 12: As for Figure 10 but for horizontal wavelength

357 Figure 13: As for Figure 10 but for wave direction.

Table 1

orig λ	orig V_p	orig θ°	predicted λ	predicted V_p	predicted θ°	adjust
60.0	56.7	70.0	59.5	56.3	69.7	no
50.0	47.6	120.0	50.3	47.6	120.2	no
40.0	37.8	200.0	39.6	37.5	198.6	yes
30.0	28.3	280.0	29.3	27.8	280.2	yes
20.0	19.6	320.0	20.7	19.6	318.7	yes
15.0	14.3	330.0	15.5	14.1	328.5	yes
10.0	9.4	340.0	18.1	17.2	221.1	yes

Table 2

Event	Day of year (2000)	Time of event	K_p
A	089	01:30-03:30	0.5
B	100	01:00*	2.0
C	119	22:00-00:00	2.0
D	122	23:00*	3.0
E	125	04:30-07:00	1.0
F	154	22:30-00:00	2.0
G	187	20:45-00:00	2.0

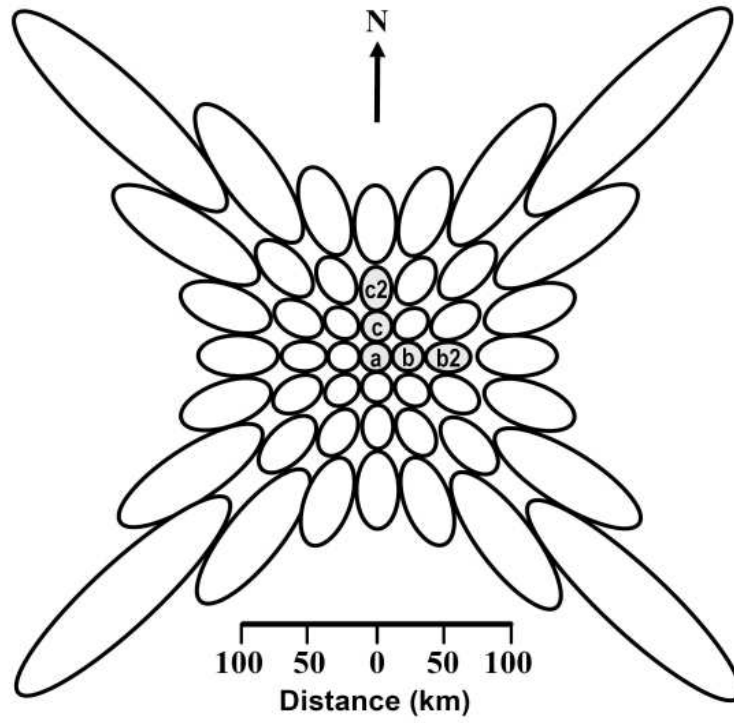


Fig. 1.

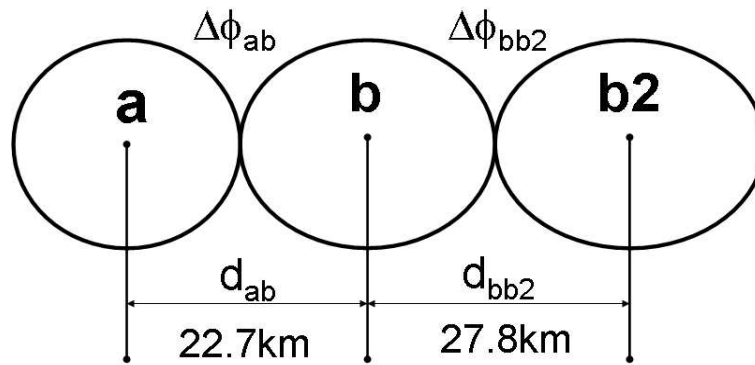


Fig. 2.

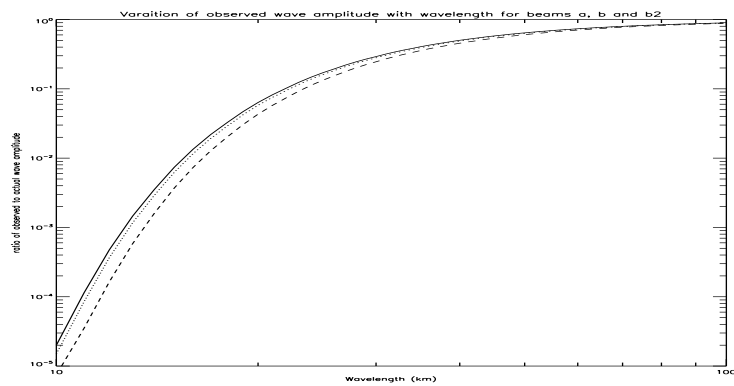


Fig. 3.

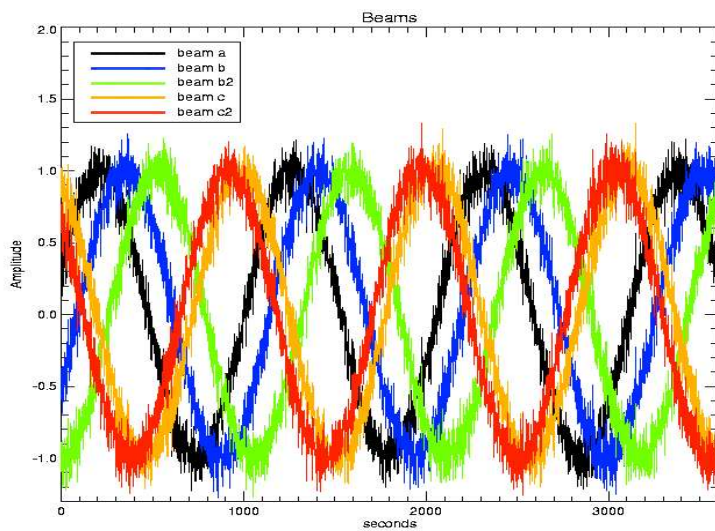


Fig. 4.

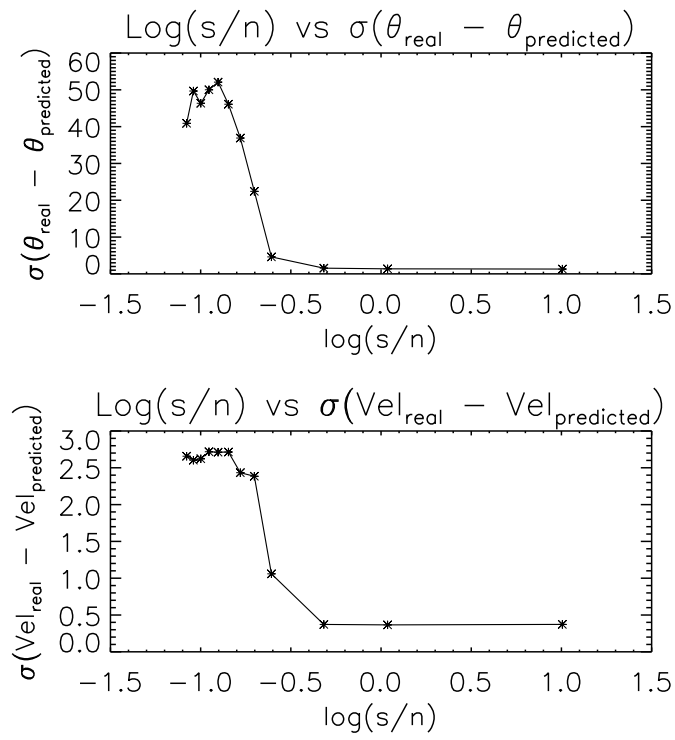


Fig. 5.

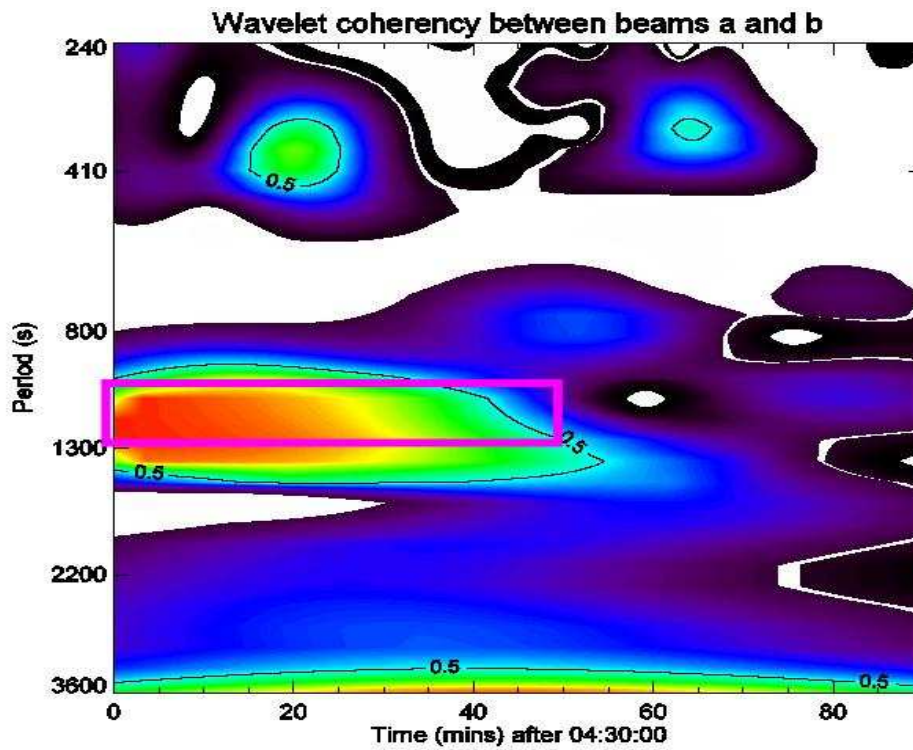


Fig. 6.

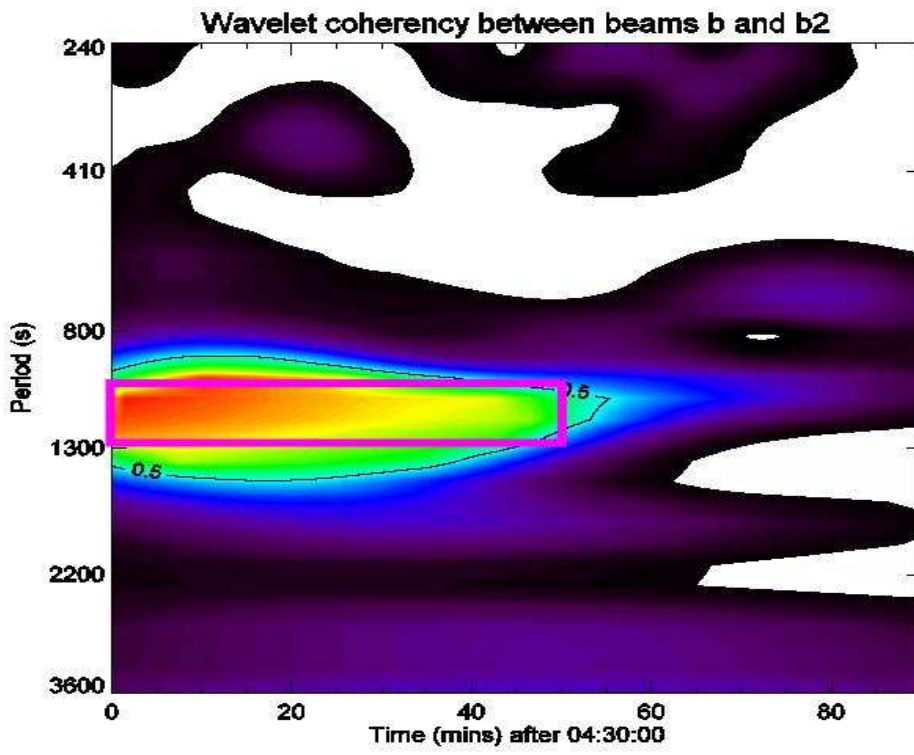


Fig. 7.

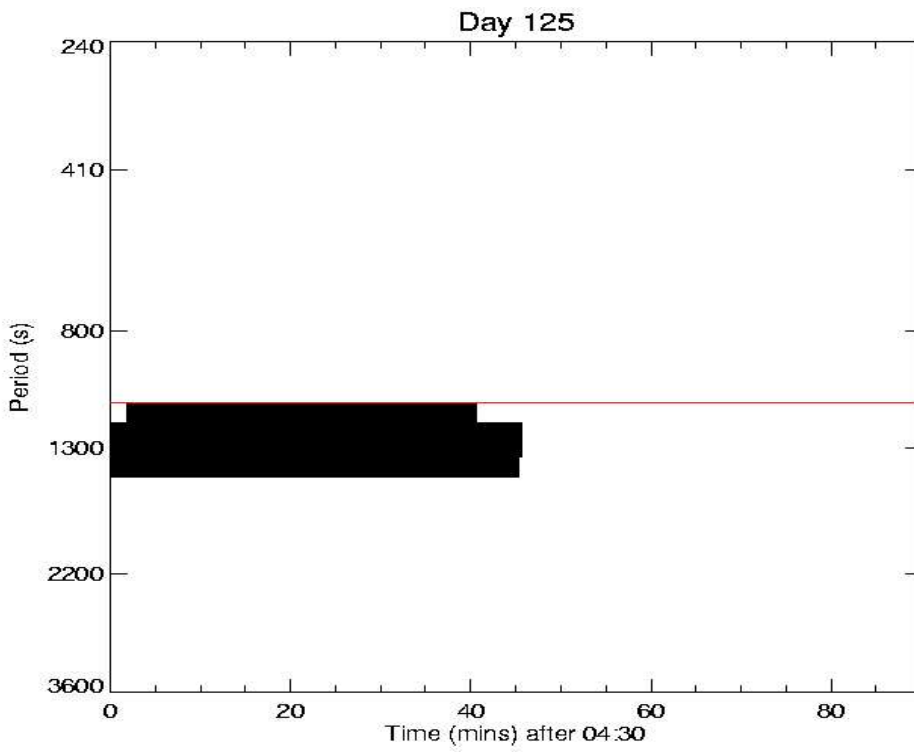


Fig. 8.

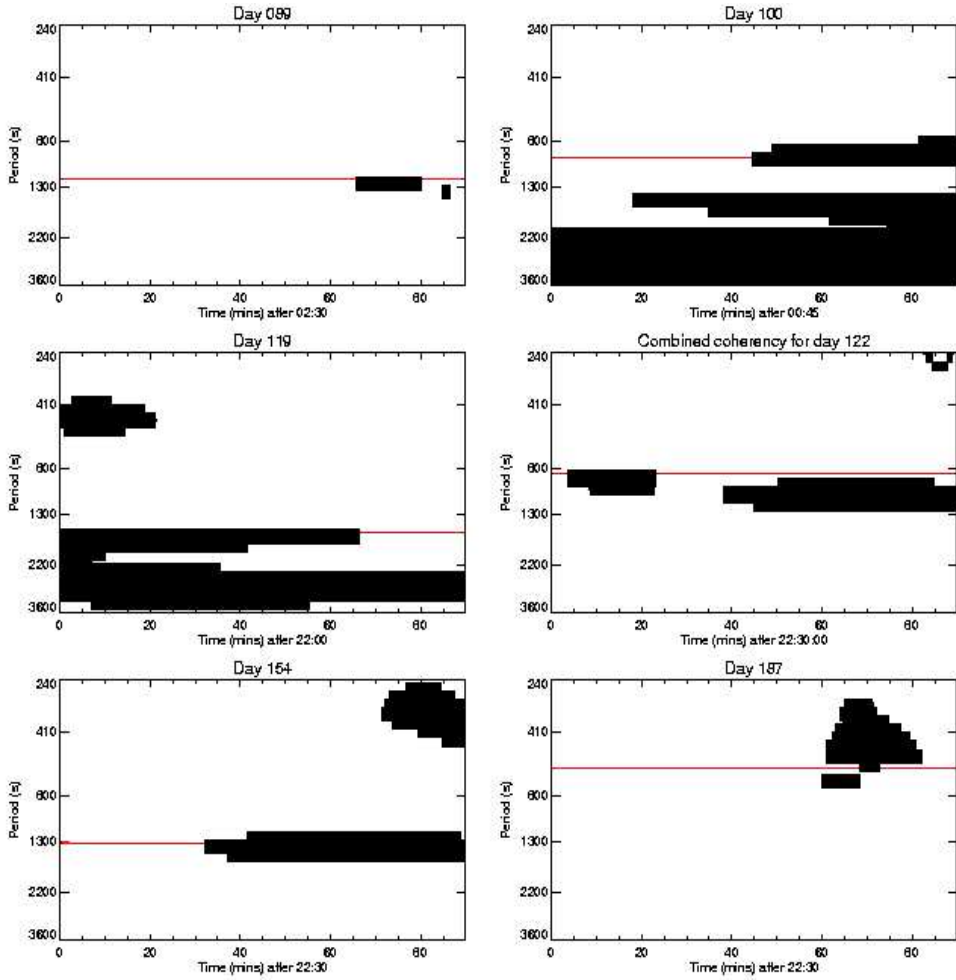


Fig. 9.

Comparison of OH imager and IRIS gravity wave horizontal phase velocities

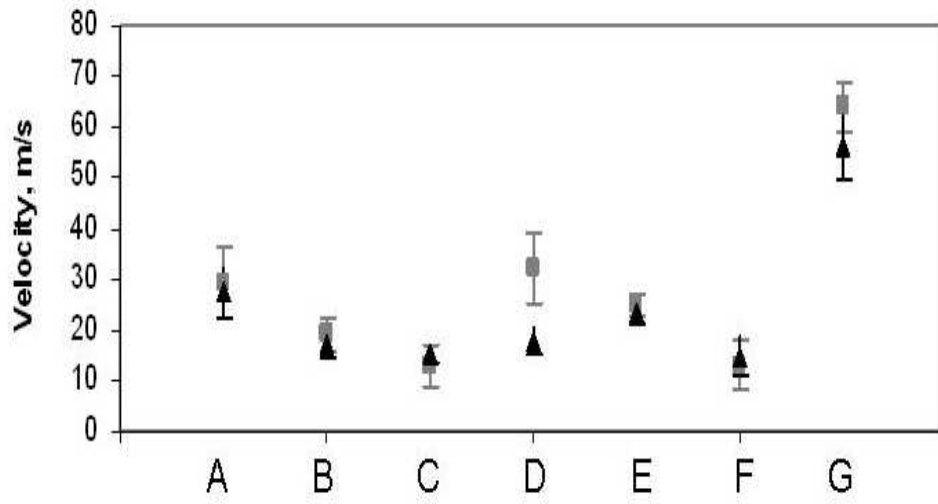


Fig. 10.

Comparison of OH imager and IRIS gravity wave periods

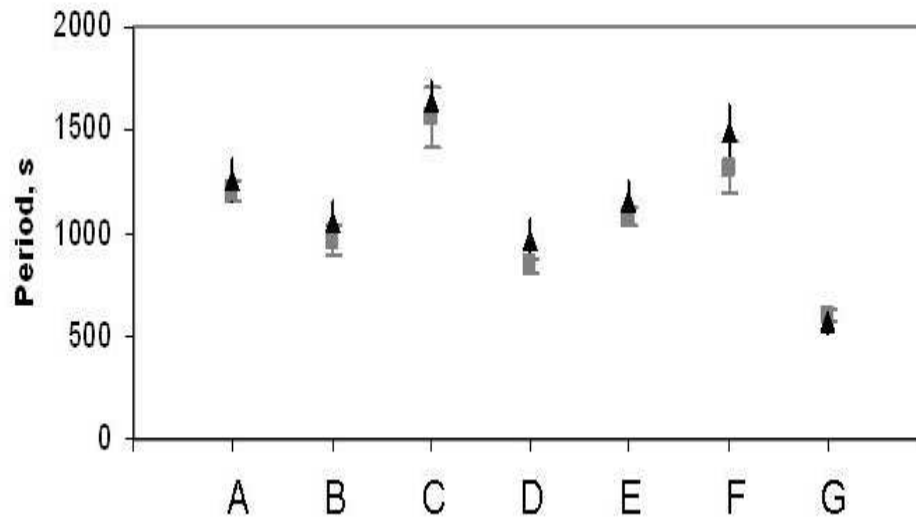


Fig. 11.

Comparison of OH imager and IRIS gravity wave horizontal wavelength

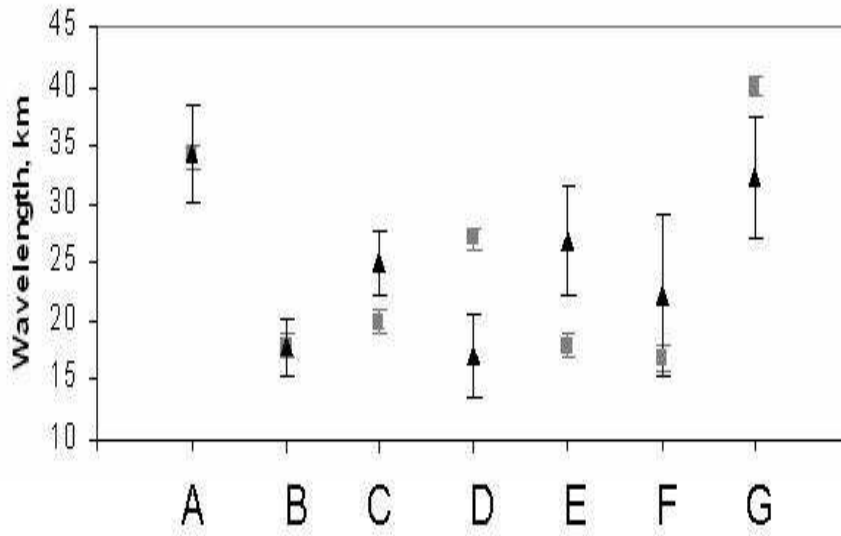


Fig. 12.

Comparison of OH imager and IRIS gravity wave direction

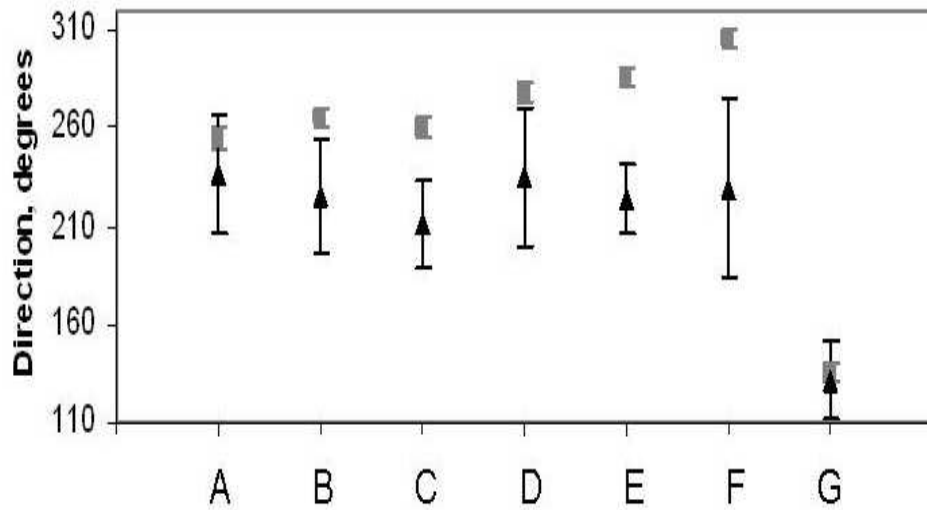


Fig. 13.