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M2HATS 2023
Radiosonde Data Quality Report

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M2HATS 2023, Radiosonde Data Quality Report

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Integrated sounding system home page:
<https://www.eol.ucar.edu/content/iss-operations-m2hats>

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2 Dataset Overview

The objective of the Multi-point Monin-Obukhov similarity horizontal array turbulence study (M2HATS) is to acquire data in the atmospheric boundary layer to test the multi-point Monin-Obukhov similarity (MMO) prediction of the surface layer similarity properties and to obtain the similarity functions. Since MMO and the original Monin-Obukhov Similarity Theory (MOST) are based on the surface layer parameters, comparisons of the MMO prediction with field measurements require predictions beyond these processes, such as the effects of the capping inversion height, the Coriolis force, and moderate baroclinicity.

The science team conducted field measurements near Tonopah, NV, between 23 July and 25 September 2023 to systematically test the predictions using field data and establish/revise the expansion coefficients and the functional forms of the MMO similarity functions.

During the campaign and the setup period, staff from NCAR/EOL, Clemson University, and the California State University at Chico successfully launched 122 radiosondes. Soundings were launched typically twice daily around 17:00 UTC and 22:00 UT (10:00 and 15:00 local time).

Only one sounding failed shortly after launch due to operator error in windy conditions. Two soundings did not provide data to the balloon ceiling due to a failure of the temperature sensor. The overall success rate of the sounding operations during this campaign was 97%. For the first time, descending data were recorded and analyzed and are available in addition to traditional ascending balloon data.

Figure 1 shows the flight tracks of all soundings until the end of telemetry reception.

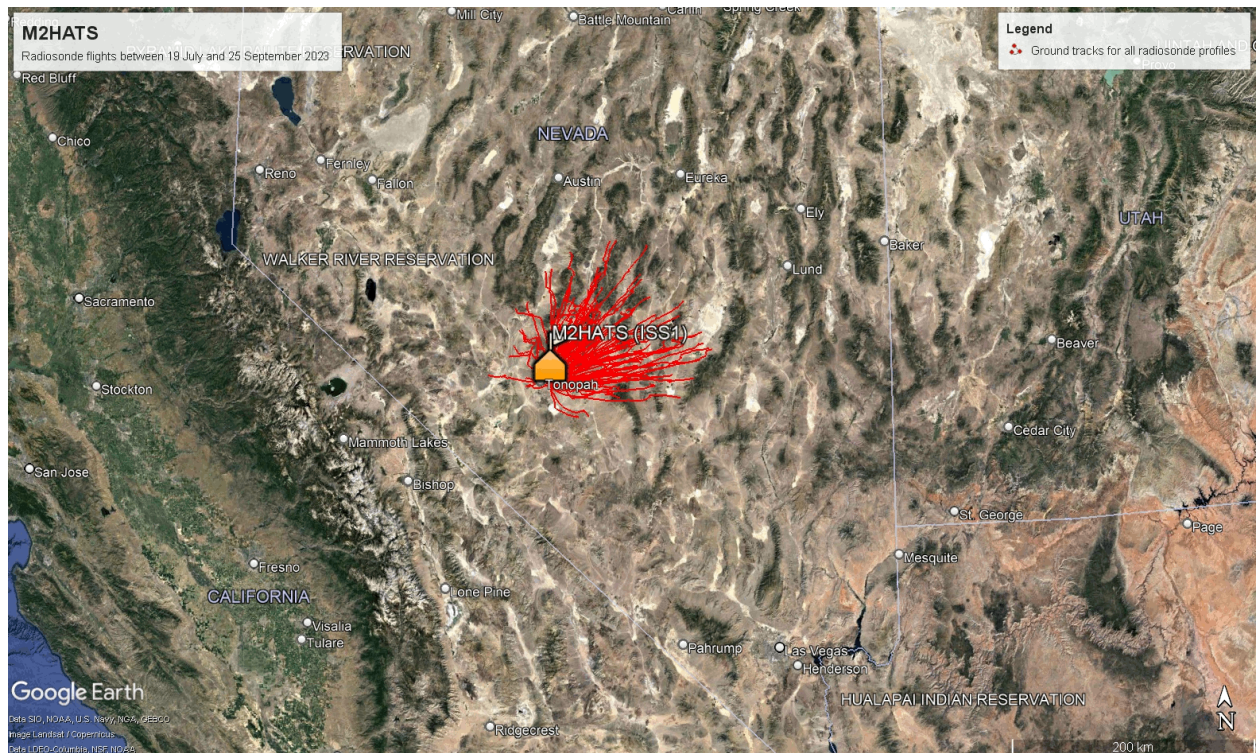


Figure 1: Location of the ISS site during M2HATS and flight tracks of all radiosonde observations. The sounding location was 12 km ESE of Tonopah, NV.

3 Radiosonde sounding-system

This campaign used Vaisala RS41-SGP radiosondes, which were received and processed by the Vaisala MW41 sounding system using software version 2.19.0. The radiosondes used by NCAR/EOL include a pressure sensor, which provides a better altitude and pressure determination in the boundary layer relative to pressure profiles derived from Global Navigational Satellite System (GNSS) signals received by the radiosondes. Direct pressure measurements are more suitable in the boundary layer and for unstable conditions in convective environments. The sounding system was configured to meet the needs of NCAR for high-resolution data and complete metadata description. All sondes were launched using 100 g balloons supplied by Scientific Sales.

The MWX raw data files from the sounding system were saved along with the ASCII output files, which contained the initially processed profiles.

The sounding system automatically ingests surface reference observations, which are provided by sets of reference sensors near each launch site. These observations are stored in the surface observations metadata fields of the sounding files and used in the quality control procedures of the sounding data.

The reference sensors used for the radiosonde system during M2HATS are listed in Table 1.

This campaign used a balloon inflation basket (see picture on front cover) to help balloon launch operations in windy conditions and to test the feasibility of this device for future use of hydrogen lifting gas.

Table 1: Surface reference observations provided by the ISS meteorological reference sensors during M2HATS.

Parameter	Location	Sensor
Pressure	The reference pressure was installed on a mast at 2 m height near the launch site.	PTB220
Temperature and humidity	The reference sensors for temperature, and humidity, were installed on a mast at 2 m height near the launch site.	Lufft WS300
Wind	The reference sensor for wind speed and wind direction was installed on a mast at 10 m height near the launch site.	2D Gill

4 Quality control procedures

4.1 Standard quality control

The Vaisala system performs a sequence of standard quality control procedures and corrections for all radiosonde data:

- Applies a ground check correction for pressure using the pressure correction measured during the sonde preparation to compensate for small biases inherent in this type of pressure sensor.
- Performs a coarse outlier check for all measurement parameters
- Automatically detects launch based on change in pressure
- Performs a radiation correction for the temperature measurement using the radiation correction lookup table for the Vaisala RS41 radiosonde
- Corrects for response time lag of the temperature sensor
- Smooths the temperature profile
- Corrects for response time lag of the humidity sensor
- Filters out the balloon pendulum effect in the calculation of winds
- Calculates geopotential altitude based on the measured pressure profile

4.2 Custom quality control

In addition to the standard Vaisala procedures, all metadata are verified, and all measured parameters including reference measurements are checked for consistency and for any previously unidentified issue. The radiosonde measurements before launch are compared against the reference measurements and the causes for early termination are investigated. In the M2HATS data set, the following issues were identified and corrected:

- a. In sounding 20230818_215733, launch was detected 20 s early. The additional surface data were removed in the quality controlled data.
- b. The original data of the first four soundings (20230719_161344, 20230721_213732, 20230723_172736, and 20230723_215950) used an incorrect surface reference wind, which affected the wind measurements in the lowest 100 m of the soundings. The adjusted surface reference wind was used in the reprocessing and the metadata were appropriately corrected.

4.2.1 Ceiling altitudes

The campaign used 100 g balloons supplied by Scientific Sales and were nominally inflated with 22 ft³ of He. On average balloons burst at 22.5 km. Five soundings (Table 2) terminated substantially below that. Soundings in which the sensor modules failed, did not generate descending data.

Table 2: Early sounding terminations

Sounding	Ceiling altitude [km]	Termination reason
20230804 215935	10.2	PTU sensor failure
20230811 220235	17.0	Balloon burst
20230823 165828	10.7	PTU sensor failure
20230916 220003	15.0	Balloon burst
20230920 170004	15.3	Balloon burst

4.2.2 Descending profiles

Four soundings (Table 3) had short sections of descending phases during the balloon ascent due to strong downdrafts. The Vaisala processing removes these downward sections. For research, they were replaced to create a continuous time series for all parameters measured by the radiosondes. The largest downward movement was observed in sounding 20230724_220030 with a temporary descent of 100 m at an altitude of 4.3 km. Downdrafts not exceeding the balloon rise rate were observed in other profiles but did not cause additional data loss in the originally processed profiles.

Table 3: Soundings showing descending sections during ascent.

Sounding	Altitude [km]	Altitude drop [m]
20230724 220030	4.3	100
20230729 215951	2.58	10
20230730 215924	2.7	5
20230903 220008	6.45	45

Data reception continued after balloon burst to capture the observations of the descending radiosonde. Real time ascending and descending radiosonde data were transmitted to the WMO Global Telecommunication System (GTS) in bufr format using the WMO template 3 09 057 for ascending and template 3 09 056 for descending data.

Files containing the descending portions of the soundings are included in the set of quality-controlled data. The latitude, longitude and time of the balloon burst are stored in the metadata section of the descending data files to provide the location of the beginning of the descending sounding. The time stamp in the file name was not updated, so that the connection to the ascending profile is maintained. Please use the time stamp as part of the metadata for proper timing.

The surface reference data stored in the descending sounding files repeat the surface conditions at launch.

4.3 File formats

The final quality-controlled data are provided in NetCDF format following the CF-1.6 metadata convention for climate and forecasting. For a detailed description of the data format, refer to Vömel et al., 2018, <https://doi.org/10.5065/D65X27SR>.

The file names contain the indicators ‘asc’ and ‘dsc’ for ascending or descending data.

5 Sounding metrics

At the M2HATS site about 12 km ESE of Tonopah, NV, 122 radiosondes were successfully launched between 19 July and 25 September 2023. With one exception, soundings were nominally launched either at 17 UT or 22 UT. Sounding 20230830_044137 was launched at night to provide a nighttime comparison with the Micro Pulse DIAL (MPD), which measured water vapor and temperature in M2HATS.

5.1 Height and distance

The distribution of ceiling heights is shown in Figure 2. Sounding termination heights below 19 km occurred on five soundings. Data were received as far as 131 km. The distributions of the radiosonde distances at the end of the descent data recording and at 1 km above ground is shown in Figure 3. The median distance at which a sounding was terminated was 61 km and the closest distance was 12 km. At 1 km above the ground, the median distance was 1.1 km from the launch site and all balloons were closer than 4.4 km at that altitude.

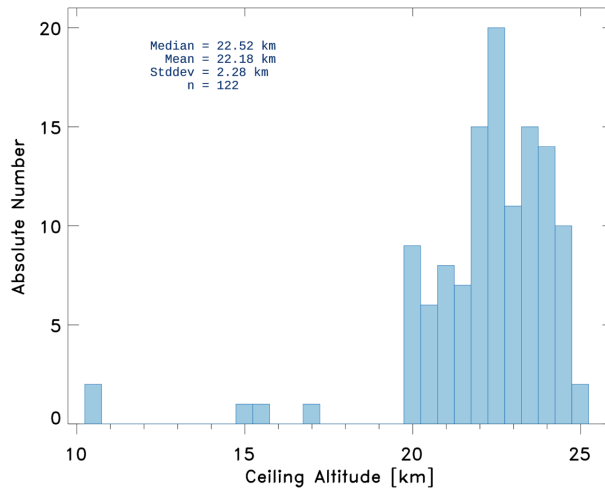


Figure 2: Distribution of ceiling heights for all radiosondes launched during M2HATS.

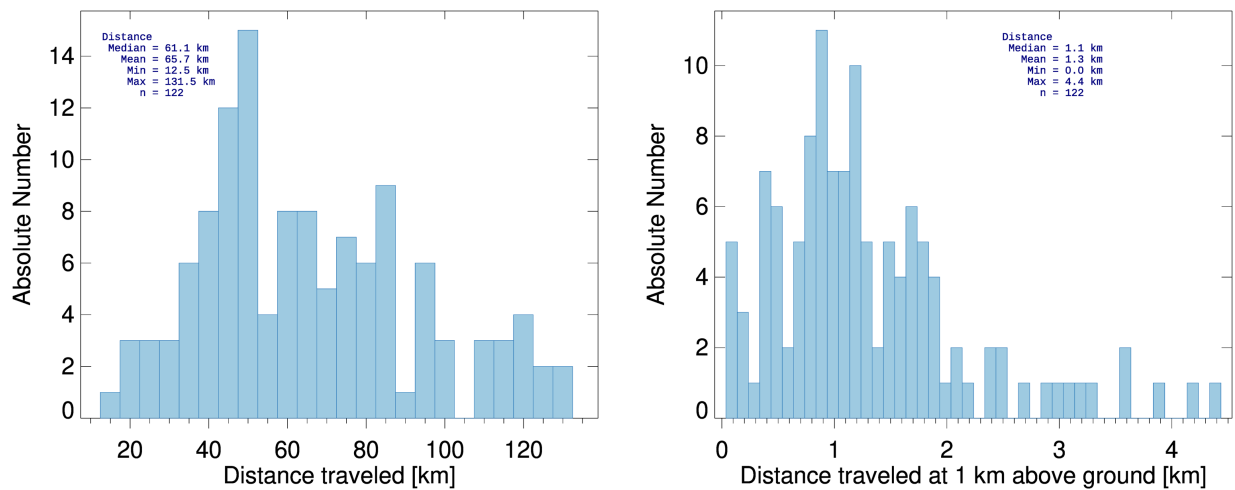


Figure 3: Distribution of balloon distance at end of data recording (left panel) and at 1 km above ground (right panel).

5.2 Balloon ascent rates

Balloons were typically filled with 22 ft³ of helium, except for a small number of balloons that were filled with up to 25 ft³ of helium. Although there is some variation, the different fill volume has no statistically detectable influence on the rise rate of the balloons.

However, the balloon performance differed strongly between those launched during the mid-morning compared to those launched in mid-afternoon (Figure 4). Balloons typically rose with between 3.5 m/s to 5.0 m/s. In the upper troposphere and stratosphere, the balloon rise rate shows no dependence on daytime. However especially below 5 km, afternoon balloons show a faster rise rate and a much larger variability compared to the morning soundings.

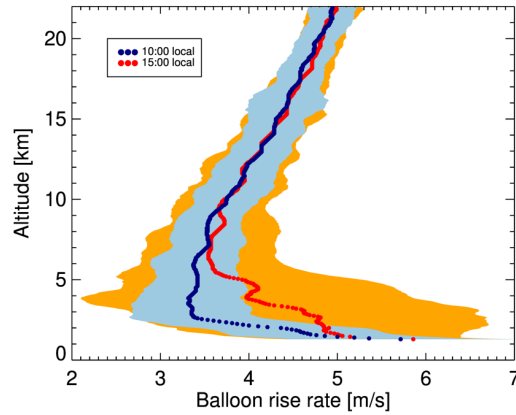


Figure 4: Average rise rates profiles for morning and afternoon soundings during M2HATS. The standard deviations of the rise rates are indicated by the shaded areas.

The sequence of all balloon rise-rates (Figure 5) frequently shows alternating fast and slow rise rates below 5 km reflecting faster rise rates in the lower troposphere in the afternoon.

Several soundings achieved rise rates of more than 10 m/s in the shallow layers between the surface and about 5 km.

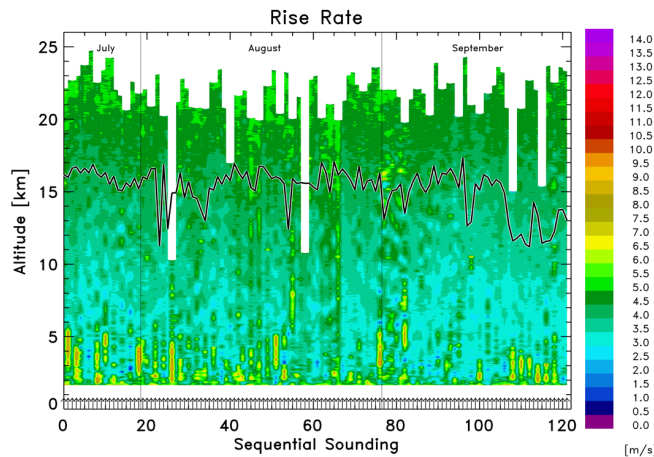


Figure 5: Sequential rise rate profiles as color contours for all radiosondes launched during M2HATS. Each launch is indicated by a small arrow at the bottom of the diagram.

5.3 Descent data

Data were recorded on descent and are part of the data set. In addition, descending data were sent to the GTS in real-time for models, which are capable to assimilate descending radiosonde data such as that of the European Center for Medium Range Weather Forecasting (ECMWF).

All but 7 soundings generated descending profiles down to the limit of telemetry reception. The lowest altitude from which data were received increases with increasing distance from the launch site (Figure 6). The median pressure of the end of descending profiles is 680 hPa.

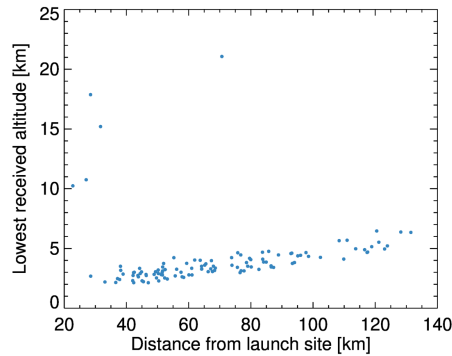


Figure 6: Lowest altitude from which data were received as function of distance from the launch site.

The quality of descending data has been investigated by Ingleby et al. (2022). Stratospheric temperature measurements on descent have a detectable warm bias relative to the ascent data. Tropospheric observations have no significant bias (Figure 7); however, due to the faster fall velocity (Figure 8), the vertical resolution is up to a factor 6 lower. Near the surface, the fall rate is approximately 13 m/s.

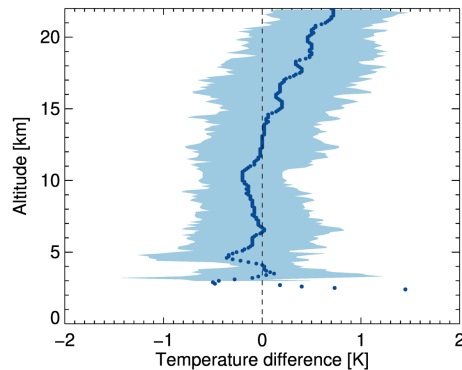


Figure 7: Difference in temperature observations between ascent and descent.

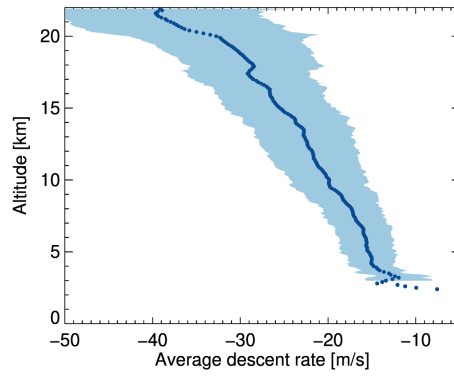


Figure 8: Average descent rate and its standard deviation for all falling radiosondes.

6 Atmospheric Measurements

Air temperature and relative humidity measurements from all radiosondes are shown in Figure 9. During the project, the surface temperatures at the time of the balloon launches was between 13°C and 36°C. The tropopause (shown as thin black line) ranged between about 12 and 17 km. It is also indicated by the rapid drop of relative humidity to values of less than 5%. As is customary, all relative humidity profiles are clipped at 100 % relative humidity over liquid. Profiles are shown in sequential order and span the period between 19 July and 25 September 2023. No soundings were launched on 20 and 21 August while remnants of hurricane Hilary passed over Southern Nevada, making sounding operations unsafe.

The oscillating temperatures in the boundary layer reflect the balloon launch schedule, i.e., mid-morning and mid-afternoon soundings.

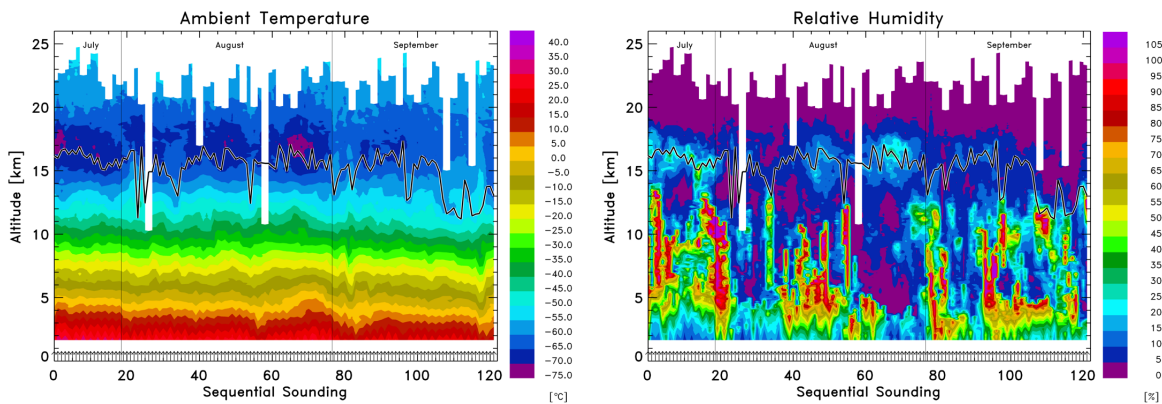


Figure 9: Sequential contours of temperature profiles (left) and relative humidity profiles (right) from all radiosondes launched during M2HATS. The tropopause is shown as thin black line typically between 12 and 17 km. Individual balloon launches are indicated by arrows at the bottom of each panel.

The zonal and meridional wind speed measurements are shown in Figure 10. The proximity of the jet stream is indicated by high wind speeds in the upper troposphere reaching up to 55 m/s. High mid tropospheric winds between soundings 52 and 56 (17 to 19 August) indicate the approaching remnants of hurricane Hilary, which passed over the site on 20 and 21 August.

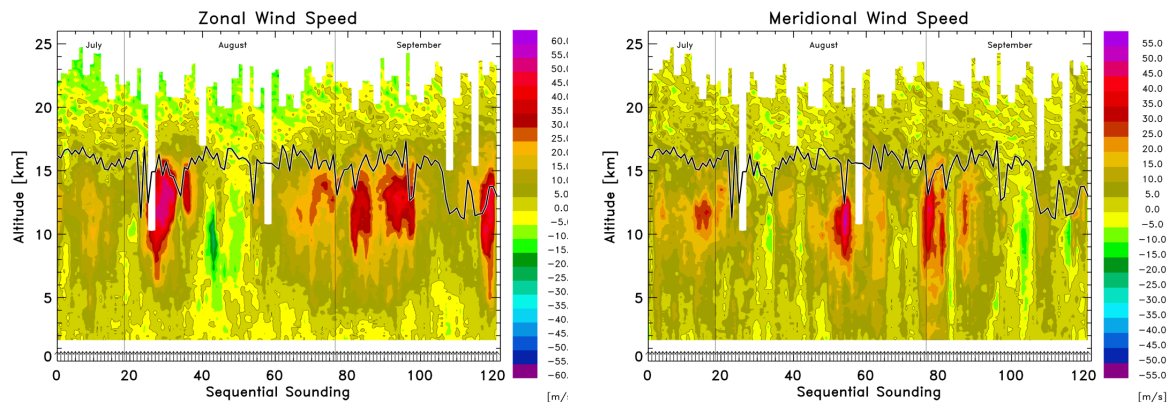


Figure 10: Time series contours of zonal and meridional wind speed profiles for all radiosondes launched during M2HATS.

The vertical wind speed is derived from the difference between the actual balloon ascent rate and the average ascent rate of all morning soundings (Figure 11). The uncertainty of this method is estimated to be about 1m/s. Strong updrafts were frequently observed in afternoon soundings, but not in morning soundings. Therefore, the average ascent rate of all morning soundings was chosen as the baseline ascent rate. w

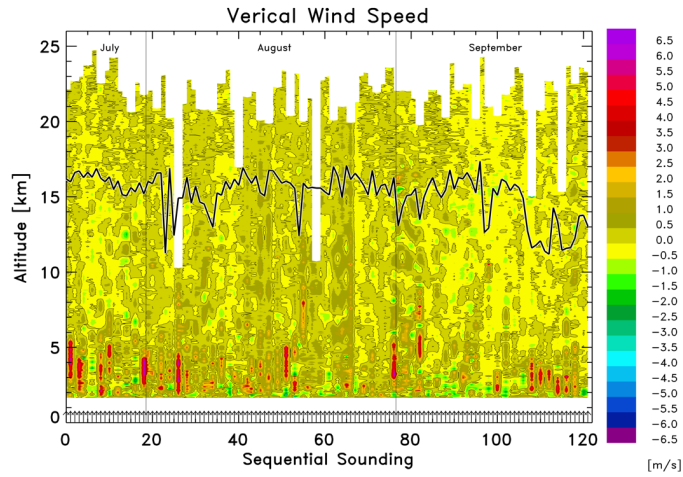


Figure 11: Sequential contours of vertical wind speed profiles.

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7 List of all soundings

#	Date [UTC]	Time [UTC]	Radiosonde serial number	Ceiling altitude [km]	Rise rate [m/s]	Duration [min]	Descent data
1	19-Jul-23	16:13:44	P0950520	22.1	4.3	89.5	yes
2	21-Jul-23	21:37:32	P0950475	23.8	4.5	95.5	yes
3	23-Jul-23	17:27:36	P0950464	22.7	4	97.8	yes
4	23-Jul-23	21:59:50	P0950466	23	4.5	97	yes
5	24-Jul-23	22:00:30	P1140646	25.2	3.9	101	
6	25-Jul-23	16:56:54	P0950476	23.7	3.9	98.3	yes
7	25-Jul-23	21:56:34	P0950492	24.7	3.8	101.1	yes
8	26-Jul-23	17:04:34	P0950463	25.1	3.9	100.9	yes
9	26-Jul-23	22:15:59	P0950465	22.5	4.3	97	yes
10	27-Jul-23	16:56:51	P1140639	23.4	4.1	98.7	yes
11	27-Jul-23	22:03:33	P0950368	24.4	4.3	98.6	yes
12	28-Jul-23	16:54:04	P0950474	24.2	4	98.1	yes
13	28-Jul-23	21:53:14	P1220021	24.5	4.2	97.9	yes
14	29-Jul-23	17:06:53	P1140644	22	3.9	98.7	yes
15	29-Jul-23	21:59:51	P1220053	21.6	3.9	97.9	
16	30-Jul-23	16:58:11	P1220020	20.6	4	94.8	yes
17	30-Jul-23	21:59:24	P1220051	23.7	3.8	98.2	
18	31-Jul-23	17:00:19	P1140642	22.5	4	98.6	yes
19	31-Jul-23	22:08:31	P0950486	21.8	4.4	92.1	yes
20	1-Aug-23	16:54:46	P1140641	22	4.4	90.4	yes
21	1-Aug-23	21:55:51	P1220054	22.1	4.1	95.3	yes
22	2-Aug-23	16:56:18	P0950521	20.9	4.1	98.7	yes
23	2-Aug-23	21:58:01	P0950360	23.1	4.5	92.6	yes
24	3-Aug-23	16:58:45	P0950522	23.1	4	98.6	yes
25	3-Aug-23	21:59:25	P1220052	20.2	4.1	91.7	yes
26	4-Aug-23	16:58:35	P1140645	22.4	3.8	98.4	yes
27	4-Aug-23	21:59:35	P1220022	10.2	5.6	25.6	
28	5-Aug-23	16:57:46	P1220050	21.1	4	90.2	yes
29	5-Aug-23	21:59:25	P1220023	22.7	4.5	93.5	yes
30	6-Aug-23	16:59:42	T3340238	22.8	4.1	98.7	yes
31	6-Aug-23	21:59:21	T3340240	22.1	4.3	93	yes
32	7-Aug-23	16:57:57	T3340227	20.8	4.2	92.1	yes
33	7-Aug-23	21:57:43	T3340224	20.8	4.4	88.6	yes
34	8-Aug-23	16:57:16	T3340212	23.3	4.2	98.7	yes
35	8-Aug-23	21:55:06	T3340200	20.7	4.2	75.4	yes
36	9-Aug-23	17:03:55	T3340202	22.7	3.8	98.7	yes
37	9-Aug-23	22:01:10	T3340215	22.5	4.1	98.7	yes
38	10-Aug-23	17:01:24	T3340234	23.4	4.1	98.6	yes
39	10-Aug-23	21:56:37	T3340211	24.2	3.7	101.9	yes
40	11-Aug-23	17:06:58	T3340225	20.7	4	94.4	yes
41	11-Aug-23	22:02:35	T3340229	17	3.9	79.9	yes
42	12-Aug-23	17:04:45	U2630042	22.2	4.1	98.3	yes
43	12-Aug-23	21:57:29	U2511065	21.6	4.6	98.6	yes
44	13-Aug-23	22:11:53	U2620271	22.3	4.2	93.4	yes

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#	Date [UTC]	Time [UTC]	Radiosonde serial number	Ceiling altitude [km]	Rise rate [m/s]	Duration [min]	Descent data
45	14-Aug-23	16:58:49	U2450672	21.9	4	98.6	yes
46	14-Aug-23	22:01:42	U2270228	20.1	4.8	80.5	yes
47	15-Aug-23	16:49:34	U2450670	22.3	4.2	96.2	yes
48	15-Aug-23	22:00:29	U2450667	19.9	4.8	80.9	yes
49	16-Aug-23	16:59:29	U2510858	24.1	3.9	98.1	yes
50	16-Aug-23	21:57:33	U2450671	22.2	4.5	91.6	yes
51	17-Aug-23	16:59:50	U2630039	23.5	4	98.7	yes
52	17-Aug-23	21:58:57	U2270260	23.3	4.3	98.7	yes
53	18-Aug-23	16:59:31	U2630067	20.4	3.9	94.9	yes
54	18-Aug-23	21:57:33	U2450661	23.4	4.2	98.2	yes
55	19-Aug-23	16:58:30	U2630037	23.2	4	97.4	yes
56	19-Aug-23	21:55:28	U2630041	20	4.8	73.6	yes
57	22-Aug-23	17:06:39	U2421118	22.3	4.1	97	yes
58	22-Aug-23	22:00:21	U2430856	21.5	4.5	83.9	yes
59	23-Aug-23	16:58:28	U2450666	10.7	3.9	38.6	
60	23-Aug-23	21:59:13	U2270148	22.7	4.2	95.6	yes
61	24-Aug-23	17:09:43	U2630071	23	4	98.7	yes
62	24-Aug-23	22:01:47	U2510811	23.9	3.8	98.6	yes
63	25-Aug-23	16:57:10	U2270165	20.1	4.3	87.3	yes
64	25-Aug-23	22:05:29	U2450821	21.2	4.1	95.3	yes
65	26-Aug-23	16:58:55	U2450824	21	4.6	80.2	yes
66	26-Aug-23	22:03:58	U2450829	24.4	4.3	98.6	yes
67	27-Aug-23	16:57:22	U2450832	19.9	5.1	70.6	yes
68	27-Aug-23	22:00:08	U2450830	21.2	3.7	98.6	yes
69	28-Aug-23	17:00:13	U2450846	23	3.9	98	yes
70	28-Aug-23	22:00:08	U2510398	23.9	4.1	98.6	yes
71	29-Aug-23	17:00:09	U2510396	23.2	4.1	98.6	yes
72	29-Aug-23	22:33:38	U2510404	22.4	4.2	98.7	yes
73	30-Aug-23	4:41:37	U2510406	21.9	3.9	97.8	yes
74	30-Aug-23	17:00:17	U2510414	22.5	4.2	96.2	yes
75	30-Aug-23	22:03:32	U2510400	23.9	4.1	98.5	yes
76	31-Aug-23	17:07:19	U2510394	23.5	4.1	98.7	yes
77	31-Aug-23	22:01:37	U2510392	24.3	4.5	93.4	yes
78	1-Sep-23	17:07:56	U2510403	22	4.2	90.8	yes
79	1-Sep-23	22:00:08	U2510397	22.5	4.3	91.3	yes
80	2-Sep-23	17:00:09	U2510391	22	4.4	87	yes
81	2-Sep-23	22:10:23	U2510728	22.9	4	98.6	yes
82	3-Sep-23	17:06:24	U2510408	21.5	4.1	95.8	yes
83	3-Sep-23	22:00:08	U2510407	19.7	4.3	85.7	
84	4-Sep-23	17:01:32	U2450826	21.4	3.9	98.6	yes
85	4-Sep-23	22:02:01	U2510723	24.2	3.9	98.1	yes
86	5-Sep-23	17:14:10	U2510393	22	4	98.7	yes
87	5-Sep-23	22:00:05	U2510395	22.7	4.1	97.3	yes
88	6-Sep-23	17:01:30	U2510386	21.7	3.9	98.7	yes
89	6-Sep-23	22:01:17	U2330119	20.2	3.9	89.8	yes
90	7-Sep-23	17:00:07	U2450831	23.8	3.9	98.1	yes

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#	Date [UTC]	Time [UTC]	Radiosonde serial number	Ceiling altitude [km]	Rise rate [m/s]	Duration [min]	Descent data
91	7-Sep-23	22:00:06	U2510387	24.1	3.9	98.2	yes
92	8-Sep-23	17:00:02	U2510399	22.1	3.9	98.7	yes
93	8-Sep-23	22:00:04	U2450847	24.5	4.1	98.1	yes
94	9-Sep-23	17:00:02	U2450818	22.4	4.1	96.4	yes
95	9-Sep-23	21:58:56	U2450823	24.4	3.7	102.9	yes
96	10-Sep-23	16:58:31	U2450828	20.1	4	87.4	yes
97	10-Sep-23	22:03:12	U2510401	24.3	3.9	98.1	yes
98	11-Sep-23	17:00:02	U2510402	24.5	4	98.1	yes
99	11-Sep-23	22:00:04	U2450817	21	3.8	84.8	
100	12-Sep-23	17:00:42	U2450827	22.7	3.7	98.1	yes
101	12-Sep-23	22:00:06	U2450825	20.3	3.9	95.9	yes
102	13-Sep-23	17:00:03	U2450834	24.1	3.8	98.4	yes
103	13-Sep-23	22:04:17	U2450833	21.8	3.8	98.7	yes
104	14-Sep-23	17:05:41	V1250005	22.3	3.8	98.6	yes
105	14-Sep-23	22:00:05	V1241409	23.6	4	98.7	yes
106	15-Sep-23	17:00:11	V1240108	23.6	4	98.7	yes
107	15-Sep-23	22:00:04	V1241347	23.2	3.8	98.5	yes
108	16-Sep-23	17:00:06	V1241426	20.7	3.7	98.7	yes
109	16-Sep-23	22:00:03	V1241425	15	3.9	98.6	yes
110	17-Sep-23	17:00:04	V1241423	23.4	4	98.6	yes
111	17-Sep-23	22:00:03	V1241407	20.7	4.2	90.3	yes
112	18-Sep-23	17:00:05	V1241424	24.6	3.9	98.2	yes
113	18-Sep-23	22:00:02	V1241325	22.6	4.1	96.7	yes
114	19-Sep-23	17:00:02	V1241346	24	3.9	98.3	yes
115	19-Sep-23	22:00:08	V1241310	22	4.1	95.7	yes
116	20-Sep-23	17:00:04	V1241428	15.3	3.6	83.7	yes
117	20-Sep-23	22:00:03	V1241427	23.6	4.3	98.3	yes
118	21-Sep-23	17:12:15	V1241349	24	4.1	98.2	yes
119	21-Sep-23	22:00:03	V1241206	22.5	4.3	92.9	yes
120	22-Sep-23	17:00:15	V1241311	23.8	4	98.4	yes
121	22-Sep-23	21:56:07	V1241312	23.6	3.9	98.4	yes
122	25-Sep-23	16:33:44	V1241410	23.3	4	98.6	yes

8 References

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