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# 1 Globally gridded satellite (GridSat) observations for climate 2 studies

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8 Capsule Summary: “Calibrated and mapped geostationary data provide historical satellite  
9 data to non-satellite experts for studies of weather and climate.”

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19 **Abstract**

20 Geostationary satellites have provided routine, high temporal resolution Earth observations  
21 since the 1970s. Despite the long period of record, use of these data in climate studies has been  
22 limited for numerous reasons, among them: no central archive of geostationary data for all  
23 international satellites exists, full temporal and spatial resolution data are voluminous, and  
24 diverse calibration and navigation formats encumber the uniform processing needed for multi-  
25 satellite climate studies. The International Satellite Cloud Climatology Project set the stage for  
26 overcoming these issues by archiving a subset of the full resolution geostationary data at ~10 km  
27 resolution at 3 hourly intervals since 1983. Recent efforts at NOAA's National Climatic Data  
28 Center to provide convenient access to these data include remapping the data to a standard map  
29 projection, recalibrating the data to optimize temporal homogeneity, extending the record of  
30 observations back to 1980, and reformatting the data for broad public distribution. The Gridded  
31 Satellite (GridSat) dataset includes observations from the visible, infrared window, and infrared  
32 water vapor channels. Data are stored in the netCDF format using standards that permit a wide  
33 variety of tools and libraries to process the data quickly and easily. A novel data layering  
34 approach, together with appropriate satellite and file metadata, allows users to access GridSat  
35 data at varying levels of complexity based on their needs. The result is a climate data record  
36 already in use by the meteorological community. Examples include reanalysis of tropical  
37 cyclones, studies of global precipitation, and detection and tracking of the intertropical  
38 convergence zone.

39

40 With the recent passing of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first U.S. weather satellite,  
41 questions on how to best use historical satellite data come to the forefront of the discussion on  
42 climate observation. There are now over 30 years of globally sampled geostationary and polar  
43 satellite data, and while the visible and infrared imaging instruments on the satellites were not  
44 specifically designed for climate purposes, the record has great potential to be used for  
45 observational climate studies. With this in mind, NOAA recently embarked on an effort to derive  
46 Climate Data Records (CDRs) from environmental satellite data (National Research Council  
47 2004), including geostationary satellites. At present, most CDRs derived from historical satellites  
48 are based on polar orbiting instruments, such as sea surface temperature data (Reynolds et al.  
49 2002). Climatic use of geostationary data has been limited largely to teams of satellite experts –  
50 e.g., the international community activities of the Global Energy and Water Experiment  
51 (GEWEX) such as the International Satellite Cloud Climatology Project (ISCCP) and the Global  
52 Precipitation Climatology Project (GPCP).

53 Numerous issues hinder use of the complete global geostationary data record by the  
54 climate research community. First, each country archives its own geostationary data. Thus, to  
55 obtain global data, one could access data from the U.S. (for the Geostationary Operational  
56 Environmental Satellites, GOES), Europe (for the Meteorological Satellites, Meteosat), Japan  
57 (for the Geostationary Meteorological Satellites, GMS, and Multi-functional Transport Satellite,  
58 MTSAT) and China (for the Feng Yun, FY, geostationary satellite). Additionally, users might  
59 access geostationary data from other nations for climate studies, such as India, South Korea and  
60 Russia. Second, the volume of full resolution data can be unwieldy for any study at climate time-  
61 scales. Third, the data format from each agency will be heterogeneous; furthermore, the data  
62 from any one agency may have multiple file formats. Assuming a user can overcome these

63 hurdles, they must also calibrate (i.e., calculate radiances and brightness temperatures from the  
64 data) and navigate (i.e., determine the latitude and longitude for each image pixel) the data from  
65 each satellite.

66 As mentioned, the ISCCP and GPCP projects are two of the few climate uses of  
67 geostationary data prior to 2000. This is due in part to the international collaboration that  
68 overcame the hindrances described above. In doing so, the ISCCP stored a subset of satellite data  
69 at NCDC called ISCCP B1 that included data from each international meteorological satellite.  
70 However, necessary information about the data such as file format, navigation algorithms, etc.  
71 were not archived. This caused the ISCCP B1 archive to be mostly unusable until a rescue effort  
72 rectified these issues (Knapp et al. 2007) and provided access to the data for 1983 to present. In  
73 addition, further efforts (Knapp 2008b) have expanded the period of record back to 1980.

74 The ISCCP B1 data have since been processed into Gridded Satellite (GridSat) data, a  
75 format that is easily accessed and processed by the climate research community at large. This  
76 paper describes the construction of the dataset – describing some of the aspects of how the data  
77 are provided to facilitate user access – and highlights some of the applications of GridSat. Along  
78 the way, the reader is not only encouraged to consider GridSat as a resource for better  
79 understanding the Earth’s climate, but also as an example of how other observational data could  
80 be provided to a broad user community.

## 81 **GridSat overview**

82 GridSat data are derived from the ISCCP B1 data, which are detailed by Knapp (2008b).  
83 In short, the spatial, temporal, and spectral features of the data are similar to the Hurricane  
84 Satellite (HURSAT) dataset (Knapp and Kossin 2007), but at a global scale. The characteristics  
85 of the GridSat data are provided in Table 1. The data derive from full-disk images whose scans

86 are closest to the synoptic times: 00, 03, ..., 21 UTC. Primarily, image times begin within 15  
87 minutes of the synoptic hour. When data from a synoptic hour are missing, the ISCCP project  
88 filled the gap with the best image available closest to that synoptic time.

89 The GridSat dataset is similar to the NOAA Climate Prediction Center (CPC) globally-  
90 merged IR product, called the CPC-4km product (Janowiak et al. 2001). This product is created  
91 in real-time and used to monitor global precipitation. Because of the similarity between GridSat  
92 and CPC-4km, the details of CPC-4km are provided alongside GridSat in Table 1. The primary  
93 difference between the two datasets is that the CPC-4km product is geared toward real-time  
94 weather and short-term climate applications while GridSat targets long-term global processing.  
95 For instance, both datasets attempt to reduce inter-satellite differences by inter-satellite  
96 normalization, however, GridSat also performs temporal normalization via calibration against  
97 HIRS during the GridSat period of record. Thus, the data are complementary.

98 GridSat data are provided in an equal angle map projection (also called equirectangular  
99 or plate carrée), which facilitates the mapping and subsetting of the data. Since the ISCCP B1  
100 native resolution is approximately 8km, the resolution of the equal area grid is  $0.07^\circ$  latitude  
101 ( $\sim 8\text{km}$  at the Equator). The data span the globe in longitude and range from  $70^\circ\text{S}$  to  $70^\circ\text{N}$ . The  
102 spatial and temporal coverage of the satellites contributing to ISCCP B1 is provided in Figure 1 –  
103 the so-called “geostationary quilt”. The satellite intercalibration by Knapp (2008a) effectively  
104 stitches each quilt piece together, allowing for a consistent global dataset.

105 The satellites included in the GridSat are from agencies that contribute to the ISCCP  
106 project. While the first year of GridSat data (1980) is mostly composed of satellites in the  
107 GOES-East and West positions (Figure 1b), a four-satellite constellation is representative of the  
108 period from 1982 through 1998. (e.g., Figure 1b). Failures of satellites often caused a three-

109 satellite configuration but nearly global coverage is still possible (Figure 1d), though at large  
110 view zenith angles. Finally, the Indian Ocean gap was filled in 1998, completing the global  
111 coverage (Figure 1e). Figure 1a also demonstrates the international collaboration that resulted in  
112 satellite sharing to decrease data gaps, such as when Meteosat 3 was moved west to increase  
113 coverage of the Atlantic Ocean in the early 1990s and when GOES 9 was moved to the Pacific  
114 Ocean in 2003 to fill the gap between GMS-5 and MTSAT-1R. In recent years, coverage has  
115 increased with the provision of the Chinese Feng Yun (FY) geostationary satellites and the loan  
116 of GOES satellites for a South American coverage at 60° west.

### 117 **GridSat Channels**

118 In spite of the diversity of satellites and nations providing data, the ISCCP B1 data  
119 provide a uniform set of observations for the infrared window (IR) and visible channels – at 11  
120 and 0.6  $\mu\text{m}$ , respectively – during the period of record. Since 1998, the infrared water vapor  
121 channel near 6.7  $\mu\text{m}$  is also available on a global basis.

122 The IR channel is a window channel (i.e., a spectral region with little atmospheric  
123 absorption) that senses the Earth's surface under clear sky conditions, cloud top temperatures of  
124 thick clouds, and a combination of cloud and surface for optically thin clouds or broken clouds  
125 within a pixel. Many applications of this channel are discussed below.

126 The visible channel is also a window channel that provides information on clouds and the  
127 surface. This channel also has the potential to provide information on Earth radiation budget  
128 variables such as aerosols (Knapp 2002) and surface albedo (Loew and Govaerts 2010).

129 The water vapor channels are generally centered near 6.7  $\mu\text{m}$ , which is in a water vapor  
130 absorption band making it sensitive to humidity in the upper troposphere. While GridSat water

131 vapor data are temporally too sparse for most atmospheric motion vector applications (where  
132 operational products use 30 min data), it can still provide information on some circulation  
133 patterns.

#### 134 **Inter-satellite calibration**

135 The data in GridSat use the intercalibration provided by ISCCP calibration efforts  
136 (Desormeaux et al. 1993) for the IR and visible channels. The IR channel has also undergone a  
137 second intercalibration using the High resolution Infrared Radiation Sounder (HIRS) channel 8  
138 as a reference, which detected and corrected bias in the ISCCP calibration at cold temperatures  
139 after 2001 (Knapp 2008a).

140 The GridSat IR calibration uncertainty depends on the HIRS calibration as well as the  
141 observed differences between HIRS and the geostationary satellites. First, HIRS is a well-  
142 calibrated and characterized instrument. Shi et al. (2008) estimate inter-satellite differences for  
143 channel 8 to be less than 0.3 K. Furthermore, Cao et al. (2009) report that channel 8 is a good  
144 reference channel. Thus, if a sensor is calibrated against HIRS, then it should be quite stable.  
145 Second, based on the results of Knapp (2008b), the standard deviation of the monthly mean  
146 differences between ISCCP B1 and HIRS provides an estimate of monthly differences while the  
147 temporal trend of that bias provides an estimate of the long-term stability. In short, the GridSat  
148 IR calibration uncertainty is less than 0.5K for any one satellite with a very stable temporal  
149 uncertainty that is less than 0.1 K per decade.

150 The water vapor channel calibration can be tied to a HIRS upper level water vapor  
151 channel (band 12) but is complicated by the switch in central wavelength between HIRS/2 to  
152 HIRS/3 (from 6.7 to 6.5  $\mu\text{m}$ ) and is still being tested.

153 Data are calibrated and stored in GridSat files as brightness temperature (Tb) for  
154 longwave channels and reflectance for the visible channel. The IR data are calibrated following  
155 Knapp (2008a), view zenith corrected following Joyce et al. (2001) and parallax-corrected  
156 following Janowiak et al. (2001).

## 157 **GridSat Production**

158 For each 3-hour time slot, the channels on each satellite are mapped to an equal-angle  
159 grid using nearest-neighbor sampling. Areas of satellite overlap are retained by storing data in  
160 layers (see Figure 2). For each channel, the first layer retains observations with the nadir-most  
161 (i.e., the lowest) view zenith angle, while a secondary layer holds the regions dropped from the  
162 first layer. Similarly, a tertiary layer is retained for the third-best view zenith angles (that are  
163 dropped from the secondary layer). The extra layers are provided for future intercomparisons and  
164 intercalibrations (i.e., developing algorithms for various zenith angles). Furthermore, a satellite  
165 can be reconstructed by combining its contributions to each layer (e.g., by taking all the orange  
166 portions from each row of Figure 2, one can reconstruct the GOES-11 full disk image).

167 In addition to the channel data, satellite identification is stored per pixel with  
168 corresponding satellite information: satellite latitude, longitude and radius. So while pixel-level  
169 satellite view zenith and azimuth angles are not stored, they can be calculated using the Earth  
170 location and the stored satellite position (e.g., Soler and Eisemann 1994). Furthermore,  
171 calibration information for each channel is provided such that original ISCCP B1 satellite counts  
172 can be backed out.

173 Data are stored using netCDF (Rew and Davis 1990) and the Climate and Forecasting  
174 (CF) metadata conventions, which facilitates usage with other software (see sidebar). Channel

175 primary layers (nadir-most observation) are written as 2-dimensional (2D) grids in the netCDF  
176 file, which facilitates processing of multiple files (e.g., aggregation of multiple times, etc.).  
177 Subsequent layers are written as either 2D grids or staggered arrays, which are 1-dimensional  
178 arrays that only record data when they exist. Staggered arrays are more efficient when storing  
179 maps where data are mostly missing, as is often the case for the tertiary layer.

180         Lastly, in keeping with NRC (2004), who recommend that the capability to reprocess  
181 data be incorporated as part of a climate data record program, the GridSat dataset can be  
182 reprocessed at NCDC. The entire period of record can be processed in about one week with  
183 current computing capabilities. So when new calibration coefficients, navigation adjustments or  
184 QC algorithms are developed, the GridSat dataset has the capability to incorporate such  
185 improvements. At present, the GridSat data are updated annually, with a goal to update on a  
186 monthly basis.

## 187 **Sidebar: netCDF and CF: Simplifying data access and** 188 **processing**

189         Recent advances in data services allow access and dissemination of data to a broad user  
190 community such that data servicing is now more than just putting files on an FTP server. Data  
191 servers provide numerous capabilities to users, for example allowing them to download only the  
192 data of interest, which saves download bandwidth and research time. Some of the capabilities are  
193 summarized below along with a real example of how data processing can be simplified with  
194 available tools.

195         The netCDF data format is supported by Unidata and has libraries that allow access to the  
196 data from dozens of programming languages. NetCDF version 4.1 also allows for data  
197 compression that results in smaller storage and bandwidth requirements. The GridSat data are

198 stored in netCDF using the Climate and Forecasting (CF) convention. In doing so, GridSat data  
199 are stored in a manner that other tools recognize. In addition, tools such as the netCDF library  
200 and netCDF operators (NCO) (Zender 2008) are capable of reading files across the Internet  
201 without previously downloading the data.

202         GridSat data are served using the THREDDS data server (TDS) developed by Unidata,  
203 which allows users various options for downloading data. The TDS OPeNDAP access allows an  
204 OPeNDAP client (such as the NetCDF library, NCO, IDV and more) to remotely subset and  
205 download only the desired data slice or pixel. This provides efficient access to very large files or  
206 aggregations (i.e., virtual groups of files) without the user needing to download the entire dataset.  
207 The TDS Web Map Service access allows applications such as GIS, Google Earth, or online  
208 mapping to directly request rendered images (gif, png, jpeg) from the data server. These images  
209 already have a color table applied and can be produced in a variety of predefined projections.  
210 The TDS NetCDF Subset Service provides a web-based 'slice-and-dice' service for users. Users  
211 may extract a spatial and temporal subset of the data and save the results as CF-compliant  
212 NetCDF, XML or comma-separated variable (CSV) text files. Therefore, a variety of user access  
213 methods exist that provide interoperability with many existing software tools. Each method can  
214 be invoked by a single URL, enabling easy automation and scripting.

215         Numerous tools have been created to simplify the processing of CF compliant data. More  
216 than just data visualization, tools like NCO provide command line capabilities to perform  
217 averages, concatenations, and more. For instance, sample code is provided in Figure SB1 that  
218 processes one month of GridSat IR data, creating diurnally averaged IR Tb over the Sahara  
219 Desert for July 2002. Similar code was used to process the global diurnal cycle maps in the  
220 outgoing longwave radiation section. The calls to NCO (*ncra* and *ncrcat*) provide a simple

221 means to average IR Tb (via the  $-v$  flag) for a specific region (via the  $-d$  flag) and concatenate  
222 the files together. The alternative would be writing dozens of lines of source code (e.g., C or  
223 FORTRAN) to read in the data, calculate the diurnal average, define the output file and write the  
224 data. Instead, the seven line shell script accomplishes the same task. The resulting data can then  
225 be displayed easily with GrADS (using only 4 commands), for example, to show the mean  
226 temperature change from 3 to 15 UTC over the Sahara Desert (Figure SB2).

227 In summary, it is clear that processing gridded netCDF data – such as GridSat – is  
228 simplified by the CF convention and the many tools available for serving and processing it.

## 229 **Dataset applications for infrared window data**

230 Here we present a selection of real-world climatological studies that depend upon  
231 GridSat. The aim is to demonstrate the diverse nature of satellite data usage and emphasize the  
232 importance of historic satellite data to numerous scientific communities. The applications of  
233 GridSat described below are limited to the IR channel data, which has received more extensive  
234 inter-satellite calibration. Many of these users are not satellite experts; their research would not  
235 have been completed in a timely manner without GridSat.

### 236 **Tropical cyclones**

237 Given the current questions regarding tropical cyclone variability in a warming climate  
238 and the challenges posed by the large uncertainties and heterogeneities in the historical tropical  
239 records, one very natural application of GridSat is toward the homogenization of these records.

### 240 *Tropical disturbances and cyclogenesis*

241 Tropical disturbances are early precursors of tropical cyclones. Traditionally,  
242 disturbances have been tracked and evaluated according to the Dvorak technique (Dvorak 1975,

243 1984), which estimates intensity based on the shape and evolution of cloud cover. This technique  
244 works best for systems nearing tropical cyclone stage; it is much less effective for weaker  
245 systems. To monitor weak systems, surface vector wind information can provide estimates of  
246 surface vorticity (Bourassa and McBeth-Ford 2010; Sharp et al. 2002), but coverage from a  
247 single scatterometer is insufficient to confidently track tropical disturbances. Therefore, Gierach  
248 et al. (2007) combined cloud-top IR observations with the surface vorticity to identify likely  
249 tropical disturbances, which proved to be effective for the North Atlantic basin and is being  
250 investigated for other tropical cyclone basins using GridSat.

251         Given the limited period of record of scatterometer data, another approach that uses only  
252 the IR data to detect potential tropical disturbances has been developed. One requirement for  
253 tropical cyclogenesis is the existence of a large area of intense and persistent thunderstorms,  
254 called a cloud cluster. Cloud clusters are associated with easterly waves, stalled mid-latitude  
255 fronts, and large areas of atmospheric instability. Owing to their critical importance in the  
256 tropical cyclogenesis process, recent studies (e.g., Hennon and Hobgood 2003) have manually  
257 compiled large datasets of cloud clusters for analysis, a time-consuming task that involves  
258 individually examining thousands of basin-wide IR images.

259         In contrast, Hennon et al. (2011) use GridSat IR data to objectively identify cloud  
260 clusters, based on a definition by Lee (1989). The process uses a threshold to detect deep  
261 convection, and then applies spatial and temporal constraints to determine if the convection is a  
262 cloud cluster. Figure 3 shows the frequency of objectively identified cloud cluster tracks for  
263 1998-2007. The highest densities are found in the Intertropical and South Pacific convergence  
264 zones, North Indian Ocean, and off the west coast of Africa, which are consistent with observed  
265 areas of cloud cluster activity and tropical cyclogenesis. The complete cloud cluster dataset spans

266 nearly 30 years and could be applied to several areas of research, including: intraseasonal and  
267 interannual studies, impacts of climate change on cloud cluster activity, and case studies for use  
268 in tropical cyclogenesis research (e.g., using Knapp et al. 2010).

### 269 *Estimating cyclone intensity and structure*

270 Tropical cyclones are monitored and forecasted by a number of forecast agencies  
271 worldwide. Most forecast agencies provide estimates of the location and intensity of tropical  
272 cyclones in their areas of responsibility, but processes and data have improved over time. This  
273 makes the historical record of TC intensity heterogeneous by construction. Conversely, studies of  
274 the changes to tropical cyclone intensity require data with limited temporal heterogeneities.  
275 HURSAT data is the collocation of GridSat with tropical cyclones in the IBTrACS data record  
276 (Knapp and Kossin 2007), see Figure 4. TC intensity reanalysis by Kossin et al. (2007a) using  
277 HURSAT suggests that the trends in the original TC intensity record are inflated, likely due to  
278 changing procedures and capabilities. However, a significant upward trend in the intensity of the  
279 strongest storms is still present after correction (Elsner et al. 2008). Additionally, the wind  
280 structure inside the tropical cyclone can be derived from HURSAT (Kossin et al. 2007b),  
281 providing information about the extent from the storm center that storm force winds reach.

### 282 *Tropical cyclone transition to extratropical systems*

283 Tropical cyclones moving out of the tropics to the mid-latitudes can undergo significant  
284 structural and intensity modifications due to changes in the surrounding large-scale environment:  
285 a process termed Extratropical Transition (ET). In general, these tropical systems are weakening  
286 as they accelerate poleward over colder sea surface temperatures (or move over land) and into an  
287 increasingly baroclinic environment. The ET process is sensitive to the interaction of the

288 decaying tropical cyclone with the atmospheric circulations and underlying ocean/land surface  
289 processes over mid-latitudes (Jones et al. 2003). ET events can be tremendous rain makers as the  
290 large area of synoptically driven ascent can act on abundant tropical moisture. Numerous studies  
291 show that ET is common in all but the eastern Pacific Ocean (Foley and Hanstrum 1994; Hart  
292 and Evans 2001; Klein et al. 2000; Sinclair 2002). GridSat, via the HURSAT dataset, is being  
293 used to document in detail the remarkable events of late August 1992. During this period, the  
294 first ever documented ET in the Eastern Pacific Ocean: Hurricane Lester over the southwestern  
295 United States.

296         So in addition to the climatic perspective, GridSat data (via HURSAT) provides an  
297 understanding of tropical cyclone conditions throughout their lifetime.

### 298 **Detection of the ITCZ and its variability on different time scales**

299         GridSat's coverage in the tropics is ideal for the study of larger scale weather features  
300 that may exceed the vision of a single geostationary satellite. The ITCZ is one such feature. It  
301 occurs as a narrow band spanning the tropics where the trade winds meet, and is visible as a  
302 region of increased convective activity. The transient nature of the ITCZ makes accurate  
303 detection for process studies challenging. Previous studies used analysis products (e.g.,  
304 Magnusdottir and Wang 2008), manually labeled satellite frames and therefore only use a few  
305 years of data (e.g., Wang and Magnusdottir 2006), or thresholded Tb to identify the ITCZ  
306 (Waliser and Gautier 1993). The latter has the disadvantage of including convection not  
307 associated with the ITCZ. Using GridSat data, Bain et. al. (2011) developed a statistical model  
308 for ITCZ detection that objectively identifies the envelope of convection. The method requires  
309 that the satellite dataset be reliably calibrated over long periods and available at high temporal

310 resolution. GridSat data are ideal for this approach. Figure 5 provides a snapshot of the  
311 objectively identified ITCZ in the east Pacific. The area inside the black curve represents the  
312 envelope of convection that the statistical model has determined is part of the ITCZ. Note that  
313 some isolated convection is not included as part of the ITCZ since it is determined not to be  
314 related to the larger scale feature.

315         Using this technique, a database was created identifying the ITCZ in the east Pacific  
316 Ocean (90 - 180W, 0 - 30N) every 3 hours from 1980 to 2008. The database has been used to  
317 construct detailed analysis of the variability of the ITCZ on interannual and intraseasonal time  
318 scales (Bain et al. 2011). The additional advantage of the high temporal sampling has also  
319 allowed in-depth studies of the diurnal cycle of the ITCZ (Bain et al. 2010), where the ITCZ size,  
320 as well as the character of clouds within in it, were found to vary according to time of day. The  
321 ability to use the same dataset for both short timescales and long timescales lends strength to  
322 investigations of the ITCZ and is therefore particularly useful for relating climatological and  
323 dynamical aspects of the feature.

## 324 **Precipitation**

325         The detection of precipitation is not wholly unrelated to the above applications, as both  
326 tropical cyclones and the ITCZ can cause copious amounts of precipitation. The following details  
327 the study of precipitation using GridSat at global and regional scales.

### 328 *Global precipitation climatologies*

329         The Global Precipitation Climatology Project (GPCP), an international community  
330 activity of GEWEX under the World Climate Research Program (WCRP), provides long-term  
331 global estimates of monthly and daily precipitation (Adler et al. 2003; Huffman et al. 2001).

332 Previous and current GPCP algorithms use compilations of merged geostationary IR Tb whose  
333 period of record, latitudinal extent, and time/space resolution hamper computations. A new  
334 version of the GPCP datasets is now in development, with GridSat-B1 data as one key upgrade.  
335 Based on the contribution of GridSat, it is anticipated that the monthly product will be shifted  
336 from the current 2.5° grid to 0.5°, while the daily will shift from 1° to 0.25°. In addition, the  
337 daily dataset eventually could be pushed from its current start of October 1996, perhaps to the  
338 start of Special Sensor Microwave Imager data in July 1987. For both datasets, the current  
339 latitude bounds for geostationary IR data of 40N-40S will be relaxed to the entire useful range of  
340 simple IR-based estimates, around 50-deg in the summer hemisphere.

341 In addition to these traditional precipitation climatologies, GridSat also facilitates  
342 research on precipitation detection. For instance, GridSat provides complementary information at  
343 high temporal and spatial resolution for three different channels. The high spatial resolution of  
344 GridSat can help to better identify cloud systems capable of producing rain while the high  
345 temporal resolution allows for tracking the development and movement of medium- and large-  
346 scale cloud systems. The data from the IR channel can be used to better identify convective cells  
347 and therefore resolve precipitating systems with a scale smaller than the footprint of a microwave  
348 sensor [similar to the approach of Joyce et al. (2004)]. Merging the multi-spectral and high  
349 resolution GridSat data with data from sensors on polar orbiting satellites might be a fruitful  
350 pursuit, which could allow for temporal interpolation between subsequent overpasses of a  
351 microwave sensor that only provide a few observations per day at a global scale.

352 Erroneous discrimination of optically thin and thick clouds can have a significant effect  
353 on uncertainties in precipitation retrieval (Ba and Gruber 2001). Non-precipitating cirrus clouds  
354 mistakenly interpreted as thick precipitating clouds contribute to overestimation of rain rate.

355 Differencing between GridSat IR window and water vapor channels allows one to discriminate  
356 between optically thin clouds and thick clouds possibly overlaid by cold ice clouds (Turk and  
357 Miller 2005). Thus, GridSat data will likely have a significant impact on improved global  
358 precipitation climatologies.

### 359 *Mercury wet deposition: Polluted rain*

360 At regional scales, Holmes (2008; 2011) applied GridSat data to the study of societal  
361 impacts of precipitation in the eastern United States. Wet deposition is a major source of mercury  
362 to ecosystems, which can be harmful to fish, birds and humans (Lindberg et al. 2007; Mergler et  
363 al. 2007; Scheuhammer et al. 2007). For example, fish in many US water bodies have mercury  
364 concentrations considered unsafe for consumption, motivating efforts to understand and reduce  
365 mercury exposure through precipitation.

366 Mercury deposition in the southeast US is nearly double that in the northeast (Figure 6a)  
367 despite lower anthropogenic emissions in the region (Environmental Protection Agency 2008;  
368 Mercury Deposition Network 2006). Peak seasonal deposition occurs in summer when  
369 convective storms are common. This led Guentzel et al. (2001) and Selin and Jacob (2008) to  
370 hypothesize a causal link between high-altitude wet scavenging in deep convection and the  
371 elevated deposition. Holmes (2008; 2011) tested this hypothesis by correlating IR cloud  
372 temperatures from GridSat with mercury deposition measured by the EPA Mercury Deposition  
373 Network (MDN). Precipitation samples accumulate over one week and the associated cloud  
374 temperatures are calculated as the average over the collection period of daily minimum  
375 temperatures observed within 20 km of the collection site. Deposition clearly increases with  
376 colder temperatures (Figure 6b), but this is partially due to large precipitation depths associated

377 with tall, cold clouds. Figure 6c shows that even for equivalent rainfall depths, mercury  
378 deposition is about 2 times greater in the samples with the coldest average clouds ( $T_b < 240$  K)  
379 compared with the warmest ones ( $T_b > 260$  K). Ongoing work addresses the dynamical  
380 implications of these results.

### 381 **Precipitation and temperature monitoring in data sparse regions**

382 Another societal implication of precipitation is the availability of food production in  
383 regions with little irrigation infrastructure, where adverse trends in rainfall and temperature can  
384 disrupt agriculture and pastoral livelihoods. Our understanding of where rainfall declines or  
385 temperature increases exacerbate food security has been limited by sparse *in situ* data. Therefore,  
386 the US Agency for International Development Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS  
387 NET) has supported the creation and analysis of rainfall and temperature climatologies in food  
388 insecure regions. FEWS NET has begun working extensively with the GridSat data in order to  
389 make finer resolution maps of rainfall and air temperatures over a thirty-year period.

390 Spatial analysis of GridSat IR  $T_b$  percentiles are used over a 4-month period to estimate  
391 mean temperature and total precipitation based on correlation with the sparse *in situ* sites. For  
392 algorithm details, see Funk et al. (2012). The mean 1999-2008 June-September temperature field  
393 is in the top-left of Figure 7. High mountainous areas in Kenya, Ethiopia and near the border of  
394 Cameroon and Nigeria are cool, while the sands of the Sahara and the Afar region of Ethiopia are  
395 very warm. Long-term variations can be mapped by looking at decadal differences (between two  
396 decades: 1984-1993 and 1999-2008).

397 Looking at the temperature changes (Figure 7, bottom left), a substantial warming signal  
398 is apparent, which also appears in the station data. Spatially, however, the strongest warming

399 (>1° C since 1984-1993) appears across a coherent area stretching from Western Kenya and  
400 Ethiopia across the Zaire basin. June-September rainfall, on the other hand, exhibits an increase  
401 across northern Ethiopia and most of the Sahel. Decreases are found across eastern Ethiopia,  
402 most of Kenya and Uganda, and the Zaire basin. The spatial detail of these maps should help us  
403 understand and adapt to decadal climate variations. Such differences may relate to climate  
404 change or may be simply due to inherent climate variability. In either case, decadal fluctuations  
405 can impact food security, hydrological resources, and environmental sustainability. The GridSat  
406 data help us capture shifts in temperature and precipitation, building a high resolution picture of  
407 change. While the GridSat-enhanced analyses are still evolving, it seems likely that these data  
408 will substantially improve our ability to track rainfall and temperature changes, enhancing our  
409 ability to adapt in a changing world.

#### 410 **Outgoing Longwave Radiation**

411 The Earth radiation budget describes the distribution of radiative energy in the Earth-  
412 atmosphere system. The observations of Earth radiation budget parameters at the top of the  
413 atmosphere have been performed from both operational and experimental satellites since the  
414 1970s. The long and continuous time series of Earth radiation budget parameters, e.g., the  
415 outgoing longwave radiation (OLR), is valuable for climate change studies and monitoring. Polar  
416 orbiting satellites provide fairly uniform spatial and angular sampling from a given instrument,  
417 but with relatively poor temporal sampling resolution. GridSat data provide information on the  
418 diurnal variation that is essential for deriving the OLR time series accurately.

419 The HIRS OLR climate data record was generated with a set of climatological OLR  
420 diurnal models (Lee et al. 2007) that help to reduce the monthly OLR errors resulting from the

421 orbital drift of polar-orbiting satellites. Although these models are self-consistent with the HIRS  
422 OLR retrievals, for error budgeting purposes, we would like to assess whether these diurnal  
423 models were truly representative and how significant the inter-annual variations can be. Figure 8  
424 shows the comparison of the HIRS climatological OLR diurnal models for August 2002 with  
425 those derived from the GridSat IR data. Some disagreements are apparent for certain  
426 regions/climate types. Nevertheless, for the majority, they seem to share a high degree of  
427 similarity, both in shape and in phase. These results provide us confidence in the quality and  
428 guidance for future improvement of the OLR climate data record production. Similar  
429 comparisons are necessary for other seasons and years.

430 A hybrid OLR product can then be generated using HIRS observations and GridSat  
431 following Lee et al. (2004). Such a combination would take advantage of both the accuracy of  
432 the HIRS OLR retrieval and the precise diurnal variation signal in GridSat. This product will  
433 improve the temporal integral accuracy for the HIRS climate data record and possibly allow  
434 product generation at a temporal resolution finer than monthly, which would benefit dynamical  
435 diagnostic applications.

## 436 **Future Work**

### 437 **Future applications using visible and water vapor channels**

438 The bulk of the above applications focused on the IR channel, however many areas of  
439 study exist for the global inter-calibrated visible and water vapor channels. The visible channel is  
440 sensitive to clouds and in some regions aerosols as well. Aerosols have a significant role in our  
441 daily lives by affecting human health and in our understanding of the Earth's radiation budget  
442 via the uncertainty in how much solar radiation they reflect to space versus absorb (in addition to

443 how they affect cloud optical properties and lifetime). Knapp (2002) defined a means to detect  
444 the aerosol signal in satellite observations. When this technique is applied to visible GridSat data,  
445 many ground sites – Aerosol Robotic Network sites (Holben et al. 1998) – show a strong aerosol  
446 signal that implies (given a good cloud algorithm) aerosols can be retrieved from GridSat.

447         GridSat data also have the potential to help accurately determine shortwave and  
448 longwave radiative fluxes at the regional to global scale. The Earth’s surface albedo is a key  
449 terrestrial variable in these flux calculations. While surface albedo data are available from the  
450 MODIS sensor since 2000 (Schaaf et al. 2002), long term surface albedo data products that cover  
451 multiple decades previously could only rely on operational weather satellites that were not  
452 designed for climate monitoring. The potential to derive global maps of surface albedo from  
453 mosaics of geostationary observations has been shown by Govaerts et al. (2008) and the GridSat  
454 data might be used for the retrieval of global fields of surface albedo in this way.

455         The water vapor channel provides information on energetics of the upper troposphere.  
456 The channel is sensitive to a broad region of upper tropospheric humidity that can provide  
457 information on the distribution and transport of water vapor in the troposphere (Soden and  
458 Bretherton 1993; Tian et al. 2004). This channel also has the potential to provide information on  
459 water vapor entering the stratosphere (Schmetz et al. 1997) via overshooting convective clouds.  
460 In such cases, the water vapor channel can be warmer than the IR channel for convection that  
461 penetrates the tropopause. GridSat data – in providing global coverage for both channels – has  
462 the potential to help monitor the transport of water vapor.

463 **Dataset improvements**

464           Given the widespread use of GridSat data, efforts are underway to further improve the  
465 dataset. The ISCCP project is revamping software processing to produce higher resolution cloud  
466 products based on ISCCP B1 data. As part of this work, the pixel-level cloud mask will be  
467 incorporated into GridSat, providing information on the presence of clouds in the GridSat data.

468           Furthermore, the use of GridSat data by non-satellite experts suggests that a similar  
469 remapping of other satellite data would benefit more scientists. For example, instruments on  
470 polar orbiting satellites could be remapped in a similar way. This would make data – like that  
471 from AVHRR, HIRS and other instruments – more widely available to a broad base of users.

472           In the future, the GridSat data will incorporate better calibration as it becomes available.  
473 In particular, the WMO Global Space-based Inter Calibration System (GSICS) is working to  
474 inter-calibrate sensors on all meteorological satellites. However, the initial GSICS priority is to  
475 process operational sensors. Furthermore, their current method is to calibrate against space-based  
476 hyper-spectral radiometers, thus limiting their reprocessing efforts to starting in 2002. The  
477 GSICS effort to re-calibrate historical sensors (prior to 2002) has not yet begun. Nonetheless, the  
478 GridSat dataset will be reprocessed as needed to be consistent with GSICS and the NOAA CDR  
479 program.

480           Lastly, the observations that comprise the GridSat data are being revised. The visible and  
481 water vapor radiances will soon be inter-calibrated. The IR satellite view zenith angle correction  
482 could be improved as well because the current algorithm (Joyce et al. 2001) was developed for  
483 satellites in use in 2000 (GOES-8,10, GMS-5, Meteosat-5,7). However, the corrections are likely  
484 satellite dependent, particularly because the older satellites had more water vapor contamination

485 in the infrared window channels. An updated satellite zenith angle correction that is satellite  
486 dependent would decrease the remnant seams still apparent in GridSat IR data.

## 487 **Summary**

488 Geostationary satellites have now been providing weather data for 50 years. Much of  
489 these data have been neglected by climate observation studies due to difficulties with calibration  
490 and data processing over such a long period. Collection and data ownership rights were spread  
491 out across several international agencies. The ISCCP project is overcoming these barriers and  
492 this paper has presented details on the most up-to-date and easily accessible global satellite  
493 record: GridSat.

494 This new record provides equal-angle gridded uniform observations of brightness  
495 temperatures every 3 hours from 1980 to the present for most of the globe. We have  
496 demonstrated the multiple and diverse uses of the data for climate analysis made possible by  
497 GridSat data – from predicting drought and food security in Africa to the detailed and historical  
498 tracking of hurricanes. This only touches on some of the potential uses of GridSat. Accurate  
499 records of global atmospheric fields are essential for future research on climate change as well as  
500 the understanding of the planet’s meteorology.

501 By reconstructing past satellite data and combining them with current satellite  
502 observations, a seamless data record has been obtained for the study of the Earth’s atmospheric  
503 state. In addition, GridSat has given a wide range of users very easy access to this new data  
504 record. Development of GridSat will continue, focusing on improving the current data files and  
505 supporting more applications.

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673

674 **Figure Captions**

675 Figure 1 – a) Time series of ISCCP B1 geostationary satellite coverage at the Equator (limited to  
676 a view zenith angle of 60° for illustrative purposes). b-e) Sample GridSat coverage for typical  
677 satellite coverages: b) Two-satellite coverage with only GOES-East and -West in 1980, c) Four-  
678 satellite coverage that is typical of most of the period 1982-1998, d) typical three-satellite  
679 coverage when the U.S. was operating only one satellite (e.g., 1985-1987 or 1989-1992) and e)  
680 five-satellite coverage that is typical of the current era (1998 to present).

681 Figure 2 - Merged GridSat IR image from 1 Jan. 2008 (left) alongside identification of the  
682 satellites used to construct the IR image (right). The satellites FY-2C (red), GOES-11 (orange),  
683 GOES-12 (yellow), Meteosat-7 (green), Meteosat-9 (blue), and MTSAT-1R (violet) are used.  
684 Black regions denote missing data. The top row is the nadir-most set of observations.  
685 Observations and satellites in the 2<sup>nd</sup> row are those not used in the top row due to larger view  
686 zenith angles. The 3<sup>rd</sup> row consequently represents those observations eliminated from the 2<sup>nd</sup>  
687 row.

688 Figure 3 – Cloud cluster frequency (clusters per year within 55km of any point) for the first  
689 decade of global satellite coverage (1998-2007). Contour levels are set at 1, 5 and 10 per year.

690 Figure 4 - HURSAT image of 1992 Hurricane Andrew from August 23, 1992 along with a time  
691 series of its maximum sustained wind (in knots).

692 Figure 5 - Example of ITCZ detection in the east Pacific using the statistical model for 18  
693 August 2000 at 2100 UTC. The grayscale represents IR temperature (K) from GridSat; the black  
694 line outlines the identified location of the ITCZ. The North American coastline is outlined in  
695 white.

696 Figure 6 - (A) Mercury wet deposition in the eastern United States for 2005. Stars show sites  
697 analyzed here. (B) Mercury wet deposition for summers 2001-2006 and mean infrared (IR) cloud  
698 temperature from GridSat IR. (C) Mercury wet deposition and precipitation for three different  
699 cloud temperature ranges. Lines show mean concentration in 50 mm precipitation bins for the  
700 coldest ( temperature < 240K) and warmest (temperature > 260K) clouds. [Figures adapted from  
701 (Holmes 2008; Holmes et al. 2011)(Mercury Deposition Network 2006)]

702 Figure 7 – June-September (JJAS) air temperature and rainfall estimates based on combinations  
703 of GridSat infrared fields and in situ station observations. The top two panels show decadal  
704 average air temperature (left) and rainfall (right) for the 1999-2008 period. The bottom panels  
705 show the differences between these decadal averages and the 1984-1993 average (the 1999-2008  
706 average minus the 1984-1993 average).

707 Figure 8 - Comparison of diurnal OLR models from the HIRS climatology and GridSat for  
708 August 2002. The GridSat OLR helps to verify the representativeness of the climatological OLR  
709 diurnal models used in the production of the HIRS OLR climate data record. The arrows in the  
710 central panel indicate the phases of the OLR diurnal models with the 12 o'clock local time  
711 pointing north, running counter-clockwise. The surrounding plots compare the diurnal models  
712 for selected regions with distinctively different types of diurnal variations. The mean values of  
713 GridSat OLR in each diurnal plot were adjusted to those of the HIRS to aid visual comparison.  
714

715

716 **Tables**

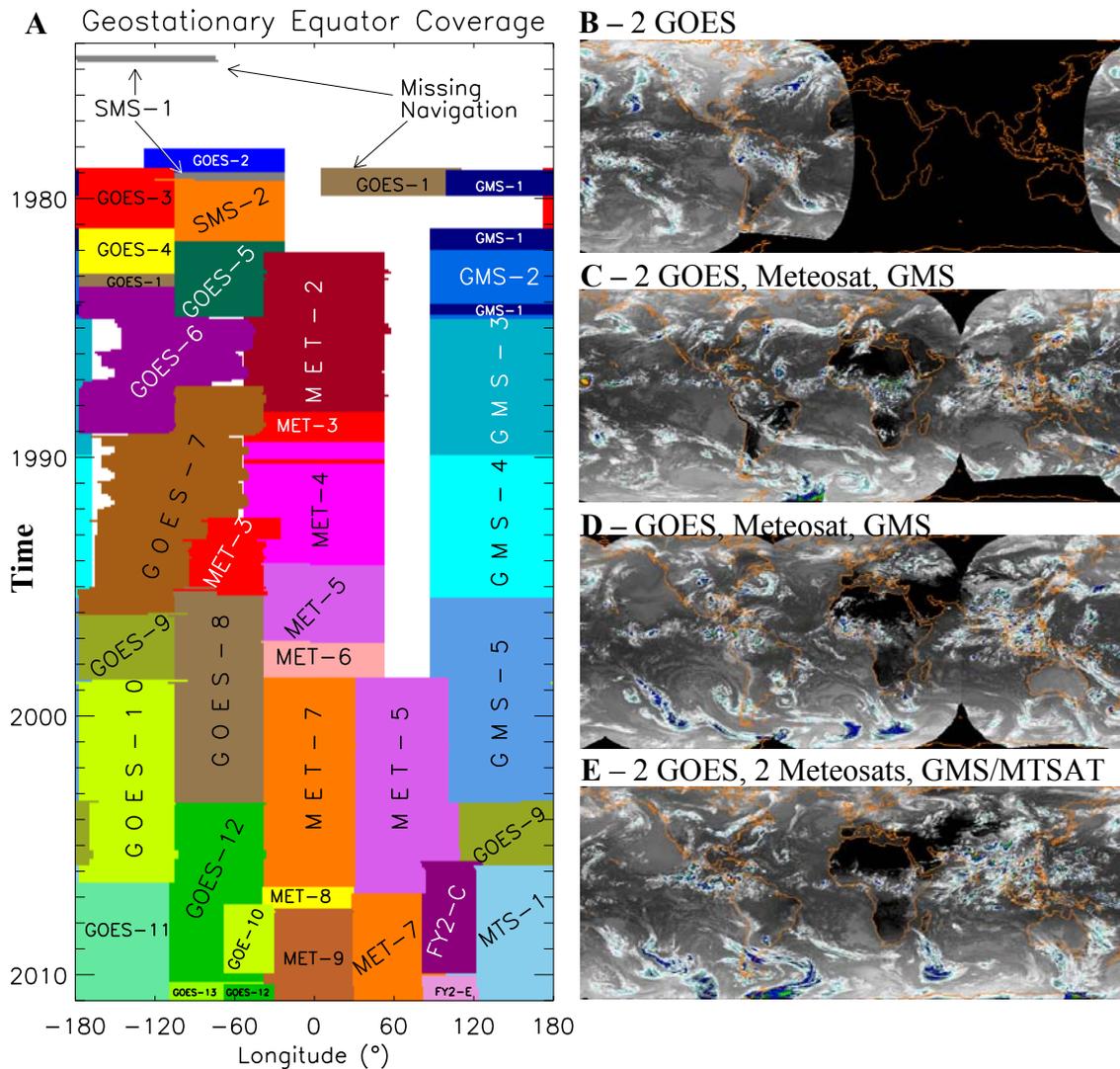
717 Table 1 - Summary of similarities and differences between the CPC-4km product and the

718 GridSat dataset.

	CPC-4km	GridSat
Spatial resolution	4km	8km
Temporal resolution	30 min	180 min
Channels	1 (IR)	3 (IR, water vapor, visible)
Monthly Volume <i>(uncompressed)</i>	45 GB	40 GB
Period of record	2000-present	1980-present
Inter-satellite normalization	Yes	Yes
Temporal normalization	No	Yes
Format	Unformatted binary	netCDF

719

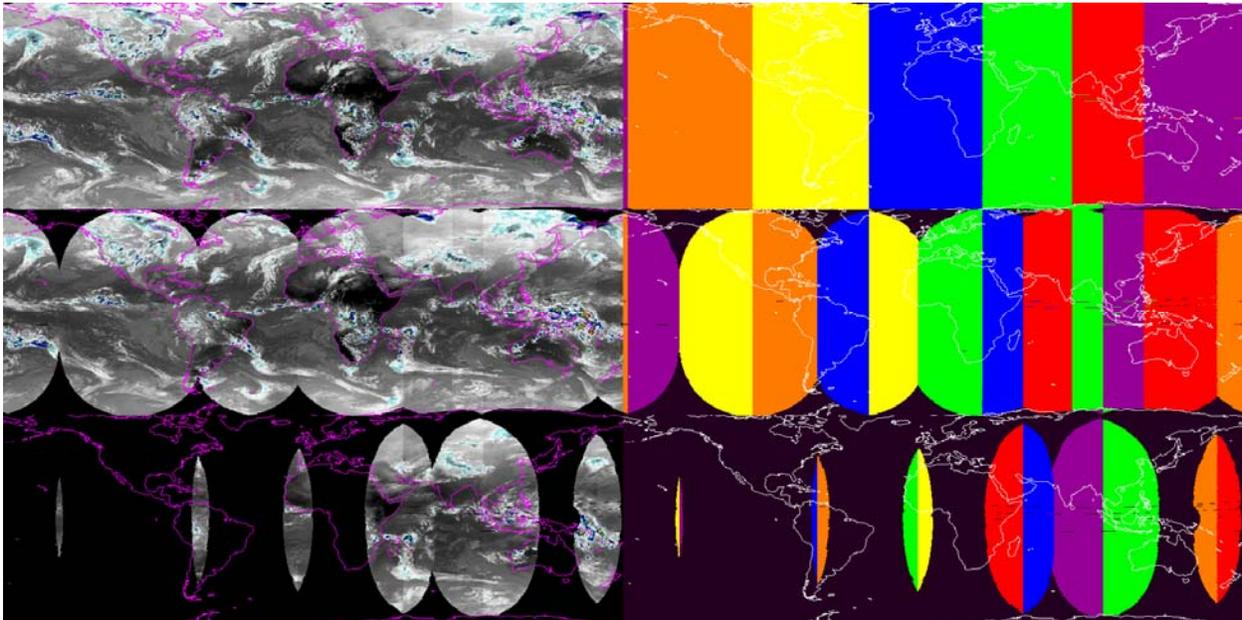
720 **Figures**



721

722 Figure 1 – a) Time series of ISCCP B1 geostationary satellite coverage at the Equator (limited to  
 723 a view zenith angle of 60° for illustrative purposes). b-e) Sample GridSat coverage for typical  
 724 satellite coverages: b) Two-satellite coverage with only GOES-East and -West in 1980, c) Four-  
 725 satellite coverage that is typical of most of the period 1982-1998, d) typical three-satellite  
 726 coverage when the U.S. was operating only one satellite (e.g., 1985-1987 or 1989-1992) and e)  
 727 five-satellite coverage that is typical of the current era (1998 to present).

728



729

730 Figure 2 - Merged GridSat IR image from 1 Jan. 2008 (left) alongside identification of the  
731 satellites used to construct the IR image (right). The satellites FY-2C (red), GOES-11 (orange),  
732 GOES-12 (yellow), Meteosat-7 (green), Meteosat-9 (blue), and MTSAT-1R (violet) are used.  
733 Black regions denote missing data. The top row is the nadir-most set of observations.  
734 Observations and satellites in the 2<sup>nd</sup> row are those not used in the top row due to larger view  
735 zenith angles. The 3<sup>rd</sup> row consequently represents those observations eliminated from the 2<sup>nd</sup>  
736 row.

737 **SWF/GIF**

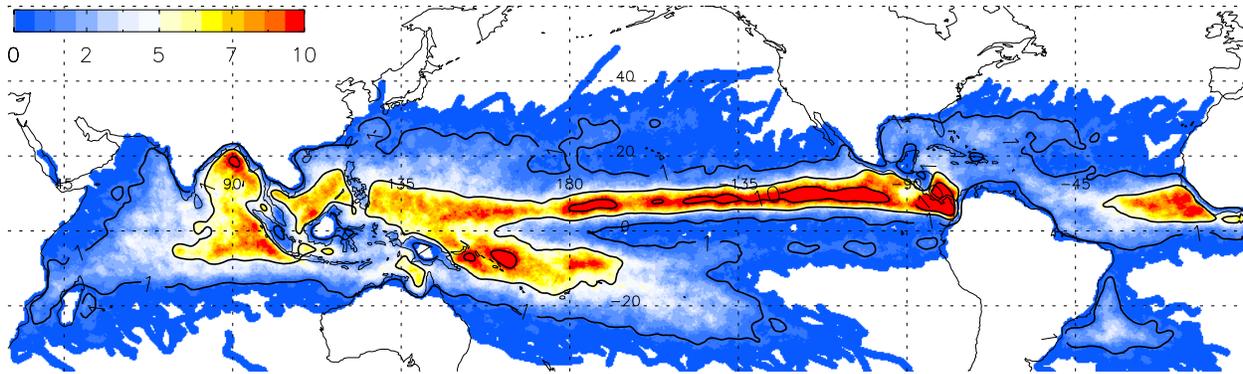
738 Animation location:

739 [ftp://eclipse.ncdc.noaa.gov/pub/misc/kknapp/bams\\_grisat/GriSat-Construction.gif](ftp://eclipse.ncdc.noaa.gov/pub/misc/kknapp/bams_grisat/GriSat-Construction.gif) or

740 [ftp://eclipse.ncdc.noaa.gov/pub/misc/kknapp/bams\\_grisat/GridSat-Construction.swf](ftp://eclipse.ncdc.noaa.gov/pub/misc/kknapp/bams_grisat/GridSat-Construction.swf)

741

742



743

744 Figure 3 – Cloud cluster frequency (clusters per year within 55km of any point) for the first  
745 decade of global satellite coverage (1998-2007). Contour levels are set at 1, 5 and 10 per year.

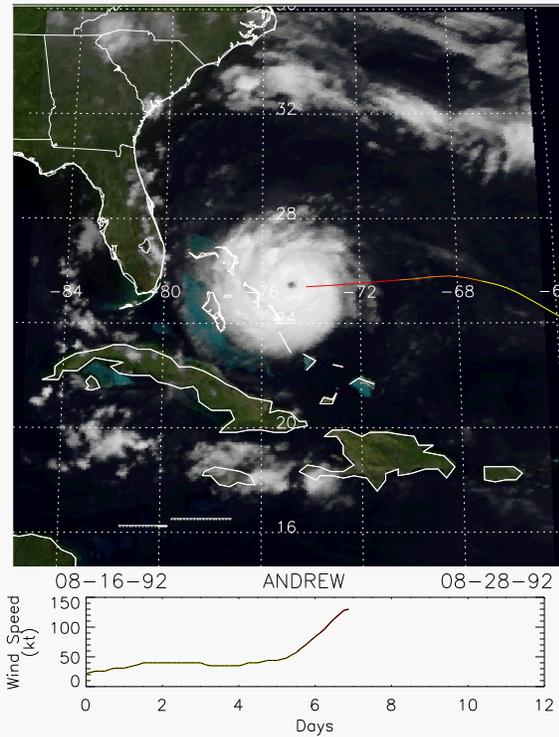
746 Clusters over land and those that formed north of 30° latitude were removed.

747

748

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750



751

752 Figure 4 - HURSAT image of 1992 Hurricane Andrew from August 23, 1992 along with a time  
753 series of its maximum sustained wind (in knots).

754 **MPEG/GIF/SWF**

755 Animation location

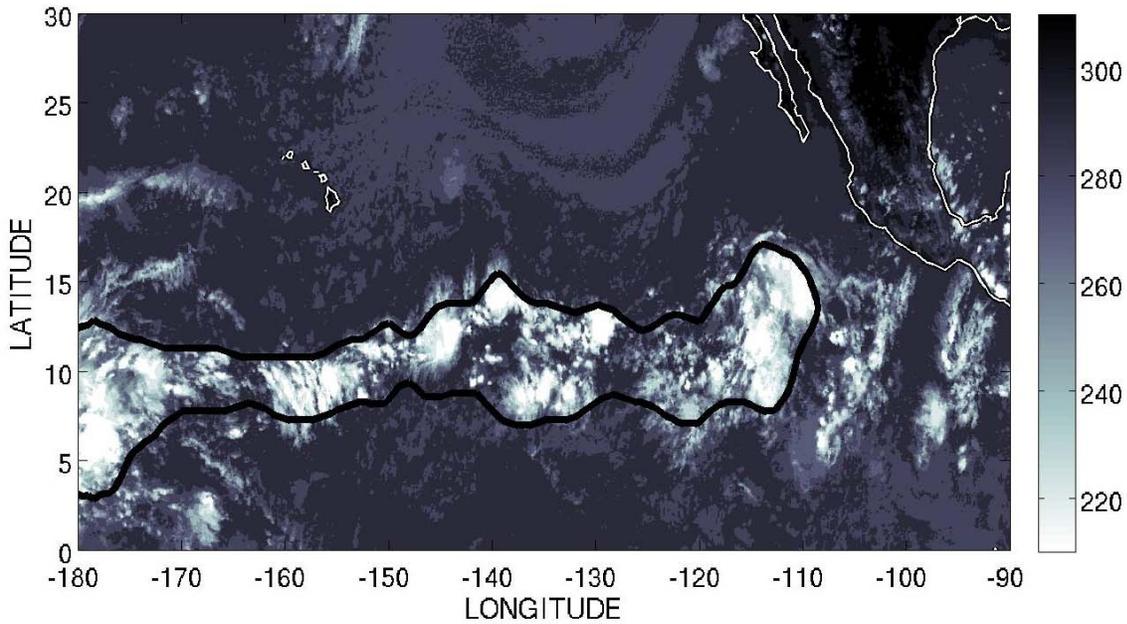
756 <ftp://eclipse.ncdc.noaa.gov/pub/hursat/b1/v03/mpg/1992230NA11325-AND.mpg>  
757 (right click link and "Save as..." then open using Windows Media Player, a codec may be  
758 required)

759 [ftp://eclipse.ncdc.noaa.gov/pub/misc/kknapp/bams\\_grisat/andrew.gif](ftp://eclipse.ncdc.noaa.gov/pub/misc/kknapp/bams_grisat/andrew.gif) or

760 [ftp://eclipse.ncdc.noaa.gov/pub/misc/kknapp/bams\\_grisat/andrew.swf](ftp://eclipse.ncdc.noaa.gov/pub/misc/kknapp/bams_grisat/andrew.swf)

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763

764 Figure 5 - Example of ITCZ detection in the east Pacific using the statistical model for 18  
765 August 2000 at 2100 UTC. The grayscale represents IR temperature (K) from GridSat; the black  
766 line outlines the identified location of the ITCZ. The North American coastline is outlined in  
767 white.

## 768 **GIF/SWF**

769 Animation location:

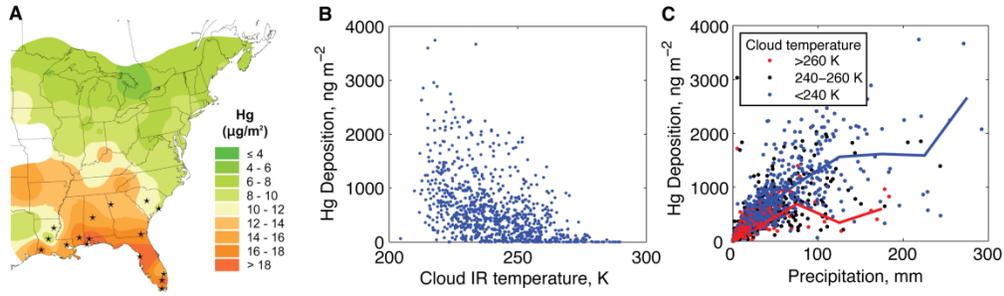
770 [ftp://ftp.ncdc.noaa.gov/pub/data/papers/bams\\_grisat/IRloop.gif](ftp://ftp.ncdc.noaa.gov/pub/data/papers/bams_grisat/IRloop.gif) or

771 [ftp://eclipse.ncdc.noaa.gov/pub/misc/kknapp/bams\\_grisat/IRloop.gif](ftp://eclipse.ncdc.noaa.gov/pub/misc/kknapp/bams_grisat/IRloop.gif) or

772 [ftp://eclipse.ncdc.noaa.gov/pub/misc/kknapp/bams\\_grisat/IRloop.swf](ftp://eclipse.ncdc.noaa.gov/pub/misc/kknapp/bams_grisat/IRloop.swf)

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774

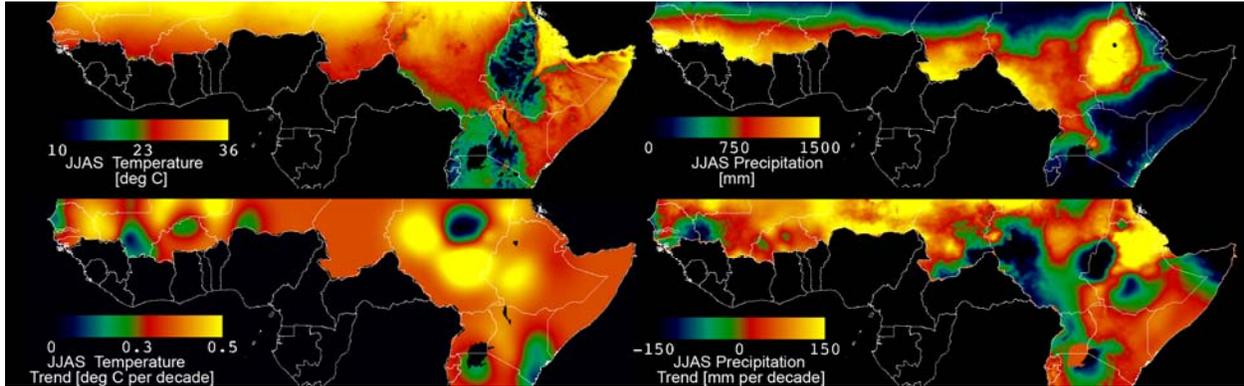


775

776 Figure 6 - (A) Mercury wet deposition in the eastern United States for 2005. Stars show sites  
777 analyzed here. (B) Mercury wet deposition for summers 2001-2006 and mean infrared (IR) cloud  
778 temperature from GridSat IR. (C) Mercury wet deposition and precipitation for three different  
779 cloud temperature ranges. Lines show mean concentration in 50 mm precipitation bins for the  
780 coldest ( temperature < 240K) and warmest (temperature > 260K) clouds. [Figures adapted from  
781 (Holmes 2008; Holmes et al. 2011)(Mercury Deposition Network 2006)]

782

783



784

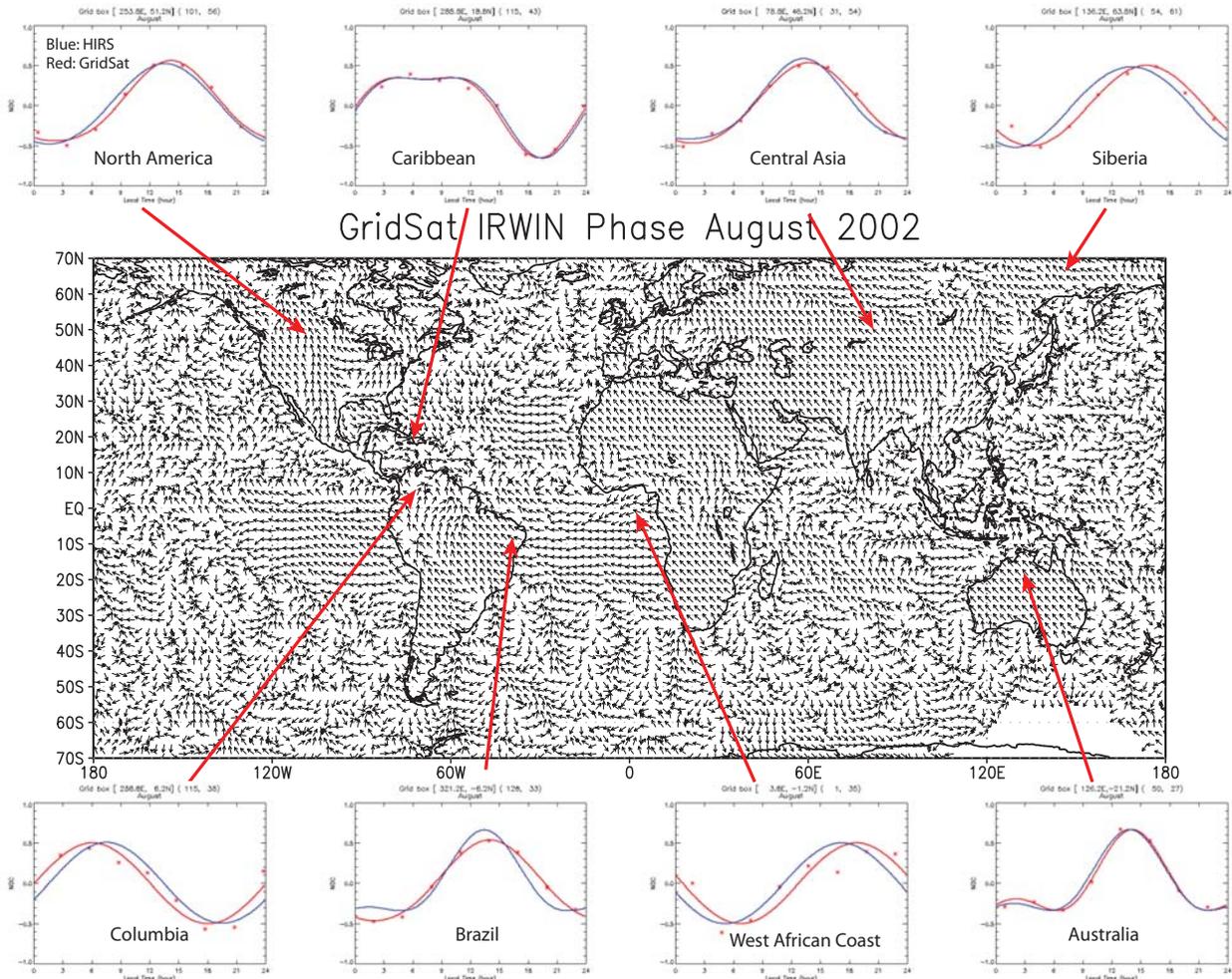
785

786 Figure 7 – June-September (JJAS) air temperature and rainfall estimates based on combinations  
787 of GridSat infrared fields and in situ station observations. The top two panels show decadal  
788 average air temperature (left) and rainfall (right) for the 1999-2008 period. The bottom panels  
789 show the differences between these decadal averages and the 1984-1993 average (the 1999-2008  
790 average minus the 1984-1993 average).

791

792

793



794

795 Figure 8 - Comparison of diurnal OLR models from the HIRS climatology and GridSat for  
 796 August 2002. The GridSat OLR helps to verify the representativeness of the climatological OLR  
 797 diurnal models used in the production of the HIRS OLR climate data record. The arrows in the  
 798 central panel indicate the phases of the OLR diurnal models with the 12 o'clock local time  
 799 pointing north, running counter-clockwise. The surrounding plots compare the diurnal models  
 800 for selected regions with distinctively different types of diurnal variations. The mean values of  
 801 GridSat OLR in each diurnal plot were adjusted to those of the HIRS to aid visual comparison.

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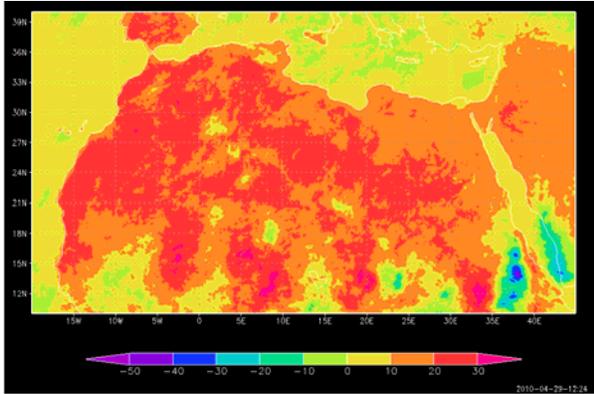
```
#!/bin/bash

for hour in 00 03 06 09 12 15 18 21
do
  ncra GRIDSAT-B1.2002.07.??.$hour.nc \
    -d lat,10.,40. -d lon,-20.,45. -v irwin \
    -o GRIDSAT-B1.2002.07.$hour.nc
done
ncrcat GRIDSAT-B1.2002.07.??.$hour.nc -o GRIDSAT-B1.2002.07.nc
```

805

806 Figure SB1 – BASH code that uses netCDF operators to process one month of GridSat data of  
807 the Sahara Desert into diurnally-averaged brightness temperatures.

808



809

810 Figure SB2 – Average daily IR TOA temperature change (K) between 3 UTC and 15 UTC over  
811 the Saharan desert for August 2002.