

21. DATA REPORT: LATE MIOCENE– QUATERNARY BIOGENIC OPAL ACCUMULATION AT ODP SITE 1143, SOUTHERN SOUTH CHINA SEA¹

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INTRODUCTION

Since the 1970s, Ocean Drilling Program (ODP) and Deep Sea Drilling Program (DSDP) studies have documented high accumulations of biogenic silica and carbonate in the late Miocene–early Pliocene Indian-Pacific Ocean. This high biogenic productivity event, or the “Biogenic Bloom Event,” has been dated from 9.0 to 3.5 Ma (Leinen, 1979; Theyer et al., 1985; Farrell et al., 1995; Dickens and Owen, 1996, 1999; Dickens and Barron, 1997; Berger et al., 1993). It is unknown, however, whether the Biogenic Bloom Event existed in the South China Sea (SCS). High-quality Cenozoic sediment cores taken from the SCS during ODP Leg 184 provide an opportunity to investigate this question. The purpose of this study is to trace and illustrate the change in biogenic productivity in the southern SCS since the late Miocene and the Biogenic Bloom Event in terms of the content and accumulation rate of opal and carbonate at Site 1143.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A total of 463 sediment samples were taken from three cores from Site 1143 (9°21.72'N, 113°17.11'E; water depth = 2722 m; penetration = 516 meters composite depth [mcd]) (Wang, Prell, Blum, et al., 2000) for opal analysis. Samples were taken at intervals from 0.6 to 1.5 m with an average time resolution of ~20 k.y. (Table T1).

T1. Sample information, p. 8.

¹Wang, R., Li, J., and Li, B., 2004. Data report: Late Miocene–Quaternary biogenic opal accumulation at ODP Site 1143, southern South China Sea. *In* Prell, W.L., Wang, P., Blum, P., Rea, D.K., and Clemens, S.C. (Eds.), *Proc. ODP, Sci. Results*, 184, 1–12 [Online]. Available from World Wide Web: <http://www-odp.tamu.edu/publications/184_SR/VOLUME/CHAPTERS/217.PDF>. [Cited YYYY-MM-DD]

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The opal analysis was performed in the Laboratory of Marine Geology of the Ministry of Education, Tongji University, People's Republic of China, following the methods proposed by Mortlock and Froelich (1989). Opal concentration values in the 463 samples range from 0.33 to 23.35 wt%, with an average value of 2.16 wt%. Precision and reproducibility of this method were estimated from the duplicate analyses of 47 random samples. The discrepancy between the two values of the same samples ranges from -1.68% to 14.76%, with an average of ±4.75%. The replicated measurements of 47 samples indicate that the average discrepancy of duplicate analyses is relatively low and document high accuracy and reproducibility. Therefore, we believe that this method may be used for values <5%, although the low opal values (<5%) should be regarded with suspicion (Mortlock and Froelich, 1989).

Mass accumulation rates (MARs) of opal and carbonate are calculated according to the following equation:

$$\text{MAR (g/cm}^2\text{/k.y.)} = Wc \times \text{LSR} \times \text{DBD}$$

where

- Wc = opal and carbonate contents (wt%),
- LSR = the linear sedimentation rate (cm/k.y.), and
- DBD = the dry bulk density (g/cm³).

The latter is calculated by interposition of the DBD data at this site (Wang, Prell, Blum, et al., 2000). The data for carbonate and total mass accumulation rates used in the present study are from Wang, Prell, Blum, et al. (2000).

AGE MODEL

Fifteen planktonic foraminiferal stratigraphic events were used to provide an age model for Site 1143 (Table T2; Fig. F1) (Li and Jian, 2001). The Brunhes/Matuyama boundary is present at 42.54 mcd, corresponding to an age of 0.78 Ma (Wang, Prell, Blum, et al., 2000). Microtektites are found at 42.81 mcd, with an age of ~0.8 Ma (Wang et al., 2000). Figure F1 shows the age-depth model of sedimentation rates between stratigraphic control points that are assumed to be constant. Based on the sedimentation rate, the age of the bottom sediments is assigned to be ~12.3 Ma. No obvious hiatuses are found at Site 1143 over the past 12.3 m.y., although slumped sediments have been reported over two short intervals (7.5–7.4 and 6.9–6.8 Ma) (Wang, Prell, Blum, et al., 2000).

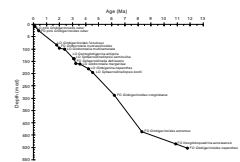
RESULTS

The results of opal analysis at Site 1143 indicate the following variabilities (Fig. F2):

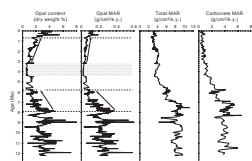
1. 12.3–7.9 Ma: opal content and MAR were relatively high and obviously variable (average opal = ~2.9 wt%; average opal MAR = 0.24 g/cm²/k.y.).
2. 7.90–5.8 Ma: opal content and MAR dropped sharply (average opal = 2.0 wt%; average opal MAR = 0.16 g/cm²/k.y.).

T2. Planktonic foraminiferal biostratigraphic datum levels, p. 9.

F1. Age-depth model, p. 6.



F2. Changes of opal content and MARs, p. 7.



3. 5.8–4.4 Ma: opal content and MAR were stable (average opal = 1.2 wt%; average opal MAR = 0.06 g/cm²/k.y.).
4. 4.4–3.2 Ma: opal content and MAR were at their lowest (average opal = 0.63 wt%; average opal MAR = 0.02 g/cm²/k.y.).

Both opal content and MAR increased from ~3.2 Ma and then showed a rapid increase at ~0.7 Ma (Table T3). The increase from low values (4.4–3.2 Ma) could be important in understanding the response of the SCS to large-scale Northern Hemisphere glaciation.

Changes in opal content and MAR directly reflect changes in sea-surface productivity: higher opal MAR indicates higher surface productivity, and lower opal MAR indicates lower surface productivity. Thus, the variations of surface productivity for the past 12.3 m.y. in the southern SCS can be reconstructed in terms of opal content and MAR data at Site 1143. The surface productivity was enhanced and varied during the period from 12.3 to 7.9 Ma, reduced sharply during the period from 7.9 to 5.8 Ma, and was relatively stable during the period from 5.8 to 4.4 Ma. The lowest levels during the period occurred from 4.4 to 3.2 Ma and then increased from ~3.2 Ma and showed a rapid increase at ~0.7 Ma.

The extremely high biogenic silica accumulation rates were first found in the central equatorial Pacific from the late Miocene to the early Pliocene (Leinen, 1979). This was confirmed and designated as the “Biogenic Bloom Event” during DSDP Leg 85 (Theyer et al., 1985). According to a study during ODP Leg 138, biogenic accumulation rates evidently increased in the eastern equatorial Pacific from the late Miocene to the early Pliocene, with high peaks of carbonate MAR between 6.5 and 3.5 Ma. High opal MAR was contemporaneous with high carbonate MAR, indicating a biogenic bloom (Farrell et al., 1995). Dickens and others documented that the Biogenic Bloom Event occurred commonly in the Indian-Pacific Ocean from the late Miocene to the early Pliocene, when the surface productivity increased conspicuously in the upwelling areas of the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Based on data from 12 ODP sites, they concluded that the age of the Biogenic Bloom Event was 9.0–3.5 Ma (Dickens and Owen, 1996, 1999; Dickens and Barron, 1997). The Biogenic Bloom Event was also reported at the Ontong Java Plateau during ODP Leg 130. Both high biogenic sedimentation and accumulation rates occurred during the period from 9.4 to 4.1 Ma, indicating high biogenic productivity (Berger et al., 1993).

As shown in Figure F2, high biogenic productivity is clearly indicated by high values in opal, carbonate, and total MAR as well as opal content from 12.3 to 5.8 Ma at Site 1143, which corresponds to the late Miocene–early Pliocene Biogenic Bloom Event reported from the eastern equatorial Pacific, Indian Ocean, and Ontong Java Plateau. Thus, the conclusion can be drawn that the late Miocene Biogenic Bloom Event occurred in the southern SCS.

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T3. Opal content and MARs, p. 10.

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Figure F1. Age-depth model for Site 1143, based on planktonic stratigraphic datum levels given in Table T2, p. 9. FO = first occurrence, LO = last occurrence.

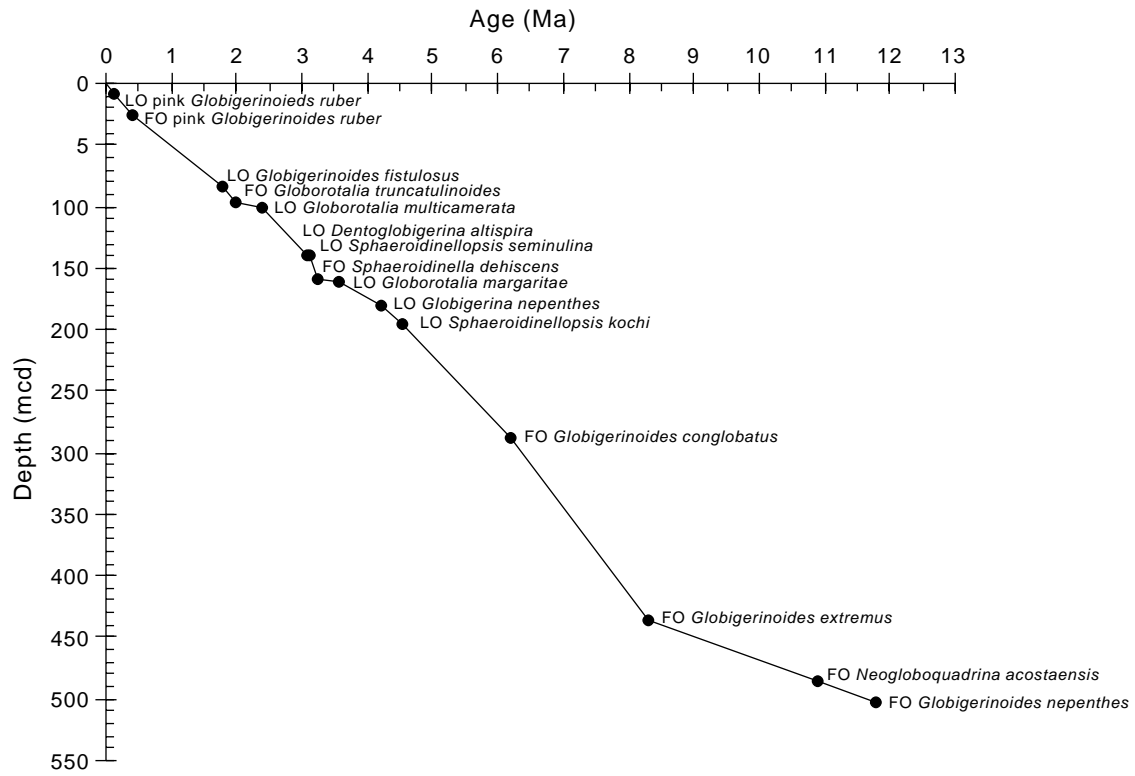


Figure F2. Changes of opal content and mass accumulation rate (MAR) and total and carbonate MARs at Site 1143, southern South China Sea. Hatched area = lowest interval of opal content and MAR. Dashed lines = the change boundaries of opal content and MAR.

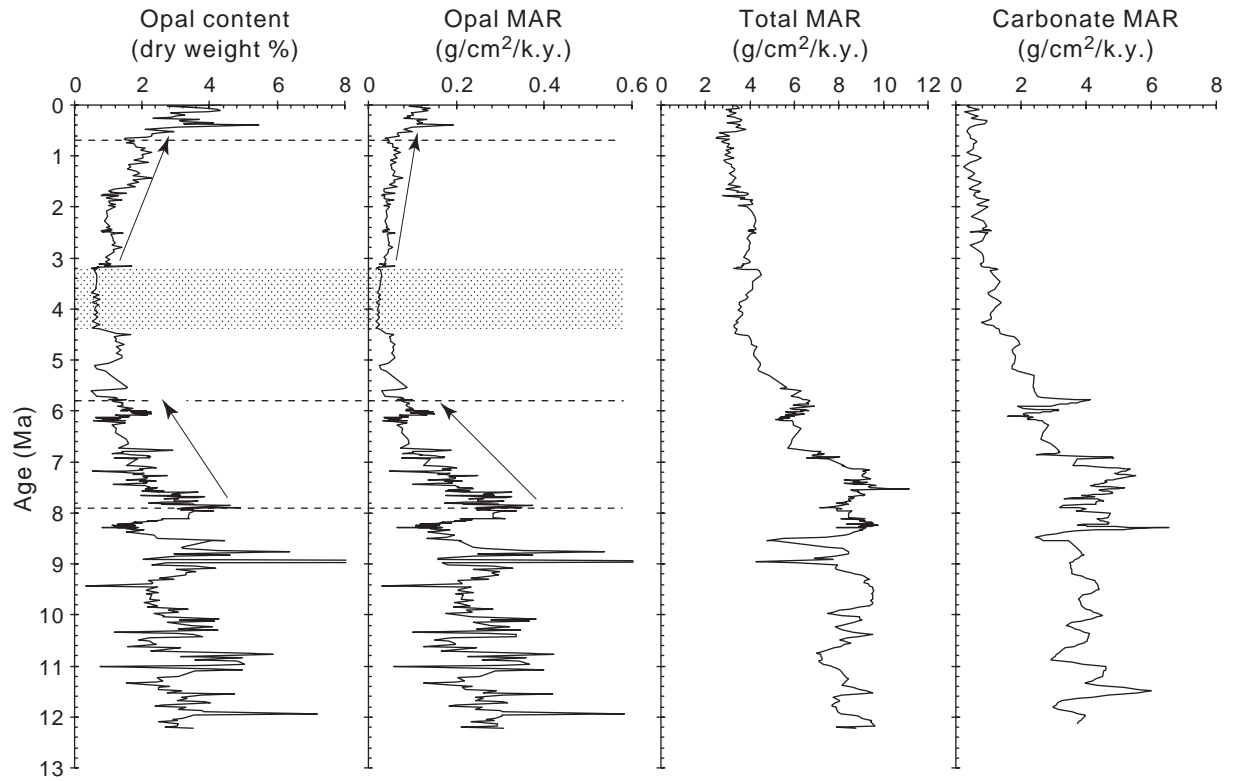


Table T1. Sample information, Site 1143.

Depth (mcd)	Sample interval (m)	Sample number
0-186.7	1.5	126
188.2-413.8	1.2	180
414.0-511.8	0.6	157

Table T2. Planktonic foraminiferal biostratigraphic datum levels, Site 1143.

Stratigraphic datum	Depth (mcd)	Age (Ma)
LO pink <i>Globigerinoides ruber</i>	8.07	0.12
FO pink <i>Globigerinoides ruber</i>	25.03	0.4
LO <i>Globigerinoides fistulosus</i>	83.4	1.8
FO <i>Globorotalia truncatulinoides</i>	96.09	2.0
LO <i>Globorotalia multicamerata</i>	101.77	2.4
LO <i>Dentoglobigerina altispira</i>	138.98	3.09
LO <i>Sphaeroidinellopsis seminulina</i> (Ss. spp.)	138.98	3.12
FO <i>Sphaeroidinella dehiscens</i>	158.08	3.25
LO <i>Globorotalia margaritae</i>	161.58	3.58
LO <i>Globigerina nepenthes</i>	180.67	4.2
LO <i>Sphaeroidinellopsis kochi</i>	196.22	4.53
FO <i>Globigerinoides conglobatus</i>	288.39	6.2
FO <i>Globigerinoides extremus</i>	435.4	8.3
FO <i>Neogloboquadrina acostaensis</i>	484.5	10.9
FO <i>Globigerinoides nepenthes</i>	502.99	11.8

Notes: FO = first occurrence, LO = last occurrence. Adopted from Li and Jian, 2001.

Table T3. Data of opal content and MAR, Site 1143. (See table note. Continued on the next two pages.)

Depth (mcd)	Age (Ma)	Opal (wt%)	Opal MAR (g/cm ² / k.y.)	Depth (mcd)	Age (Ma)	Opal (wt%)	Opal MAR (g/cm ² / k.y.)	Depth (mcd)	Age (Ma)	Opal (wt%)	Opal MAR (g/cm ² / k.y.)
0.470	0.007	4.343	0.139	101.590	2.387	1.030	0.043	202.920	4.907	1.414	0.059
1.970	0.029	2.729	0.093	103.530	2.410	0.937	0.039	203.820	4.958	1.400	0.060
3.770	0.056	3.983	0.140	105.030	2.419	1.045	0.045	205.620	5.059	1.010	0.045
5.270	0.078	4.232	0.123	106.530	2.427	1.030	0.044	206.520	5.110	0.580	0.026
6.770	0.101	4.296	0.135	108.030	2.436	1.094	0.047	207.420	5.160	0.647	0.028
8.270	0.126	3.938	0.122	109.530	2.445	1.111	0.046	207.840	5.184	0.776	0.034
9.770	0.155	2.850	0.097	111.030	2.454	0.965	0.038	208.520	5.222	0.930	0.041
11.270	0.186	3.269	0.102	112.530	2.464	0.780	0.032	209.720	5.290	1.065	0.052
12.770	0.216	2.978	0.089	113.490	2.471	1.063	0.042	220.940	5.545	1.553	0.088
13.950	0.240	2.873	0.096	114.990	2.482	0.828	0.034	221.840	5.560	1.503	0.081
15.450	0.267	2.319	0.079	116.490	2.492	1.020	0.043	223.040	5.580	1.037	0.062
16.950	0.288	3.684	0.133	117.990	2.503	1.247	0.053	223.790	5.592	0.490	0.031
18.450	0.309	3.097	0.112	119.490	2.513	1.450	0.060	231.380	5.717	0.661	0.039
19.950	0.330	3.195	0.112	120.990	2.537	1.077	0.043	232.580	5.737	1.220	0.076
21.450	0.351	4.128	0.123	123.370	2.610	1.154	0.045	233.480	5.752	1.259	0.079
22.950	0.371	3.230	0.109	124.870	2.656	1.150	0.045	234.380	5.766	1.010	0.065
24.490	0.396	5.452	0.195	126.370	2.702	1.206	0.049	235.580	5.786	1.520	0.100
25.990	0.442	3.017	0.102	127.870	2.748	1.110	0.044	236.480	5.801	1.122	0.075
27.490	0.480	2.083	0.079	129.370	2.794	1.409	0.056	237.380	5.816	1.222	0.081
28.990	0.513	2.937	0.099	130.870	2.841	1.157	0.046	238.580	5.835	1.430	0.093
30.490	0.542	2.553	0.067	132.370	2.887	1.168	0.045	238.880	5.840	1.420	0.094
31.990	0.571	2.290	0.065	133.730	2.929	1.091	0.041	240.080	5.860	1.405	0.093
33.490	0.600	2.271	0.070	135.230	2.975	0.923	0.034	240.600	5.869	1.413	0.088
34.390	0.617	2.171	0.055	136.730	3.021	1.035	0.041	241.800	5.888	1.434	0.086
35.890	0.646	1.489	0.037	138.230	3.067	0.917	0.037	242.700	5.901	1.329	0.088
37.390	0.675	1.460	0.045	139.730	3.096	0.970	0.038	243.700	5.908	1.274	0.088
38.890	0.704	1.772	0.049	141.230	3.109	1.063	0.040	250.740	5.954	1.736	0.101
40.390	0.733	1.543	0.044	142.910	3.123	0.722	0.026	251.940	5.962	1.411	0.085
41.890	0.762	1.770	0.054	144.410	3.136	1.043	0.039	252.840	5.968	1.617	0.103
44.110	0.813	1.835	0.055	145.910	3.148	0.877	0.032	253.740	5.974	1.484	0.097
45.610	0.851	2.080	0.068	147.410	3.161	1.682	0.061	254.940	5.981	1.563	0.104
47.110	0.889	1.969	0.058	148.910	3.173	0.650	0.024	255.840	5.987	1.371	0.086
48.610	0.926	2.284	0.072	150.410	3.186	0.731	0.025	256.740	5.993	2.138	0.136
50.110	0.964	1.982	0.057	151.910	3.198	0.491	0.017	257.940	6.001	1.822	0.117
51.610	1.002	2.020	0.060	152.830	3.206	0.697	0.023	258.840	6.007	1.681	0.106
53.110	1.043	2.009	0.066	154.330	3.219	0.582	0.022	259.440	6.011	1.847	0.111
54.270	1.079	1.779	0.050	155.830	3.231	0.623	0.027	260.640	6.019	2.633	0.147
55.770	1.124	2.184	0.064	157.330	3.244	0.601	0.026	261.540	6.025	1.689	0.096
57.270	1.170	1.609	0.051	158.830	3.321	0.656	0.029	262.440	6.030	1.934	0.114
58.770	1.215	1.664	0.053	160.330	3.462	0.643	0.026	263.640	6.038	1.720	0.104
60.270	1.260	1.558	0.052	162.870	3.622	0.608	0.025	264.540	6.044	2.413	0.144
61.770	1.305	1.825	0.059	164.370	3.671	0.504	0.020	265.440	6.050	2.557	0.151
63.270	1.351	1.916	0.059	165.870	3.719	0.727	0.028	266.640	6.058	1.963	0.119
64.050	1.374	1.739	0.056	167.370	3.768	0.569	0.022	267.540	6.064	1.795	0.116
65.550	1.420	2.294	0.077	168.870	3.817	0.751	0.029	268.440	6.070	2.164	0.132
67.050	1.465	1.746	0.057	170.370	3.866	0.514	0.018	270.180	6.081	1.364	0.077
68.550	1.510	1.893	0.061	172.020	3.919	0.709	0.025	271.060	6.087	1.221	0.071
70.050	1.555	1.573	0.048	173.520	3.968	0.617	0.022	272.250	6.095	1.481	0.089
71.550	1.601	1.809	0.064	175.020	4.017	0.577	0.020	273.150	6.100	1.334	0.078
73.050	1.646	1.205	0.035	176.520	4.065	0.696	0.026	274.060	6.106	1.638	0.091
73.950	1.671	1.091	0.035	178.020	4.114	0.578	0.021	275.260	6.114	1.332	0.071
75.450	1.687	1.027	0.035	179.520	4.163	0.697	0.025	276.160	6.120	1.591	0.089
76.950	1.703	1.101	0.038	181.020	4.206	0.629	0.022	277.060	6.126	0.618	0.036
78.450	1.718	1.089	0.040	182.200	4.233	0.535	0.018	278.270	6.134	0.638	0.037
79.950	1.734	1.549	0.060	183.700	4.264	0.573	0.020	278.900	6.138	0.983	0.055
81.450	1.750	0.842	0.033	185.200	4.296	0.755	0.025	279.940	6.145	1.196	0.064
82.950	1.767	0.790	0.030	186.700	4.328	0.655	0.021	280.850	6.151	1.377	0.076
83.990	1.781	1.307	0.036	188.200	4.360	0.514	0.017	282.040	6.159	0.820	0.045
85.490	1.808	0.946	0.036	189.700	4.392	0.765	0.026	282.940	6.164	1.043	0.054
86.990	1.835	1.063	0.038	193.540	4.473	1.243	0.041	283.840	6.170	1.193	0.062
88.490	1.862	1.410	0.058	194.440	4.492	1.660	0.058	285.040	6.178	1.379	0.075
89.990	1.889	1.011	0.041	195.340	4.511	1.355	0.053	285.940	6.184	1.517	0.087
91.490	1.917	1.052	0.043	196.240	4.544	1.170	0.046	286.850	6.190	0.552	0.032
92.990	1.944	1.209	0.050	197.140	4.582	1.255	0.050	288.040	6.236	1.497	0.089
94.090	1.964	1.008	0.035	198.040	4.632	1.205	0.049	288.610	6.268	1.107	0.066
95.590	1.993	1.213	0.047	198.940	4.683	1.465	0.060	289.860	6.346	1.239	0.078
97.090	2.070	0.962	0.039	199.840	4.734	1.256	0.054	290.760	6.435	1.215	0.075
98.590	2.176	0.990	0.042	201.120	4.806	1.366	0.058	291.950	6.553	1.524	0.090
100.090	2.282	0.892	0.038	202.020	4.856	1.247	0.052	292.860	6.642	1.594	0.093

Table T3 (continued).

Depth (mcd)	Age (Ma)	Opal (wt%)	Opal MAR (g/cm ² / k.y.)
481.520	10.742	5.149	0.361
482.120	10.774	5.871	0.421
482.720	10.806	3.126	0.225
483.320	10.838	4.952	0.360
483.920	10.870	3.551	0.258
484.520	10.901	4.800	0.342
485.120	10.930	4.904	0.351
485.720	10.959	5.037	0.367
486.320	10.989	3.977	0.300
486.920	11.018	0.748	0.058
487.520	11.047	3.915	0.310
488.120	11.076	4.969	0.400
488.660	11.103	3.570	0.288
490.620	11.198	3.074	0.254
491.220	11.227	2.439	0.204
491.820	11.256	2.481	0.209
492.420	11.286	2.615	0.218
493.020	11.315	2.407	0.200
493.620	11.344	1.543	0.127
494.220	11.373	2.406	0.195
494.820	11.402	2.801	0.235
495.420	11.432	2.486	0.214
496.020	11.461	2.470	0.221
496.620	11.490	3.153	0.291
497.220	11.519	2.740	0.262
497.820	11.548	4.727	0.420
498.420	11.578	3.762	0.307
499.020	11.607	3.152	0.245
499.650	11.637	3.320	0.260
500.320	11.670	3.051	0.245
500.920	11.699	3.845	0.307
501.520	11.728	4.019	0.315
502.120	11.758	2.589	0.200
502.720	11.787	2.385	0.183
503.320	11.816	3.286	0.258
503.920	11.845	3.077	0.243
504.520	11.875	3.795	0.300
505.120	11.904	3.827	0.303
505.720	11.933	7.172	0.581
506.320	11.962	3.535	0.303
506.920	11.991	3.434	0.304
507.520	12.021	3.193	0.289
508.120	12.050	2.912	0.268
508.720	12.079	3.039	0.287
509.180	12.101	2.486	0.234
510.020	12.142	3.080	0.293
510.620	12.171	3.050	0.293
511.220	12.201	2.674	0.211
511.820	12.230	3.514	0.309

Note: MAR = mass accumulation rate.