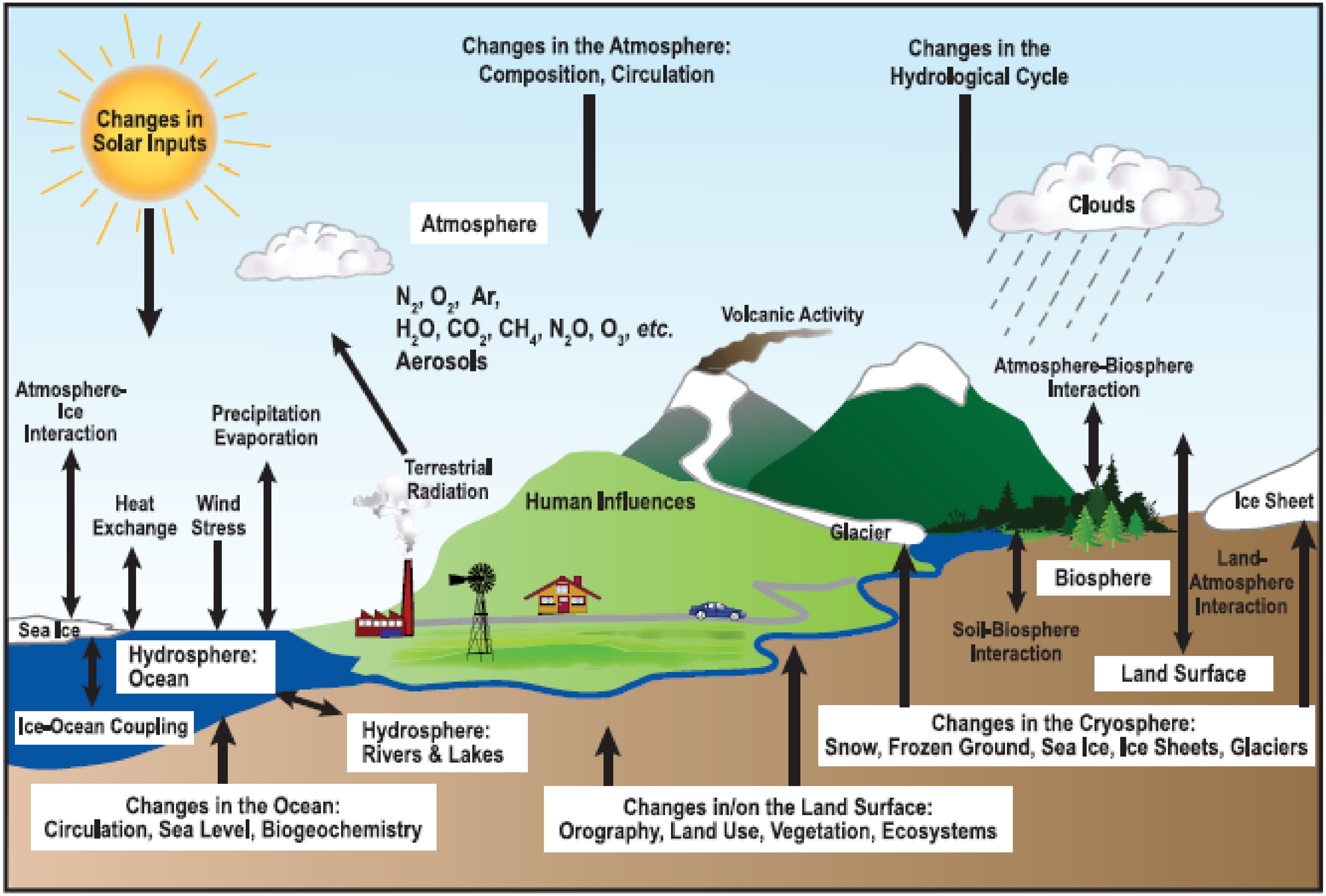
Climate Sensitivity, Forcings, And Feedbacks

Forcings and Feedbacks in the Climate System



Forcings and Feedbacks

Consider the total flux of radiation through the top of the atmosphere:

$$F_{TOA} = F_{solar} - F_{IR}$$

Each term on the right can be regarded as function of the surface temperature, T_s, and many other variables x_i :

$$F_{TOA} = F_{TOA}\left(T_s, x_1, x_2, ...x_N\right)$$

By chain rule,

$$\delta F_{TOA} = 0 = \frac{\partial F_{TOA}}{\partial T_s}\delta T_s + \sum_{i=1}^{N}\frac{\partial F_{TOA}}{\partial x_i}\delta x_i$$

Now let's call the N^{th} process a "forcing", Q:

$$\delta F_{TOA} = 0 = \frac{\partial F_{TOA}}{\partial T_s}\delta T_s + \sum_{i=1}^{N-1} \frac{\partial F_{TOA}}{\partial x_i}\delta x_i + \delta Q$$

$$= \frac{\partial F_{TOA}}{\partial T_s}\delta T_s + \sum_{i=1}^{N-1} \frac{\partial F_{TOA}}{\partial x_i}\frac{\partial x_i}{\partial T_s}\delta T_s + \delta Q$$

Then

$$\frac{\partial T_s}{\partial Q} \equiv \lambda_R = -\frac{1}{\frac{\partial F_{TOA}}{\partial T_s} + \sum_{i=1}^{N-1} \frac{\partial F_{TOA}}{\partial x_i}\frac{\partial x_i}{\partial T_s}}$$

$$Let \quad S \equiv \left(-\frac{\partial F_{TOA}}{\partial T_s} \right)^{-1}$$

Climate sensitivity without feedbacks

$$\frac{\partial T_s}{\partial Q} \equiv \lambda_R = \frac{S}{1 - S \sum_{i=1}^{N-1} \frac{\partial F_{TOA}}{\partial x_i} \frac{\partial x_i}{\partial T_s}}$$

Climate sensitivity

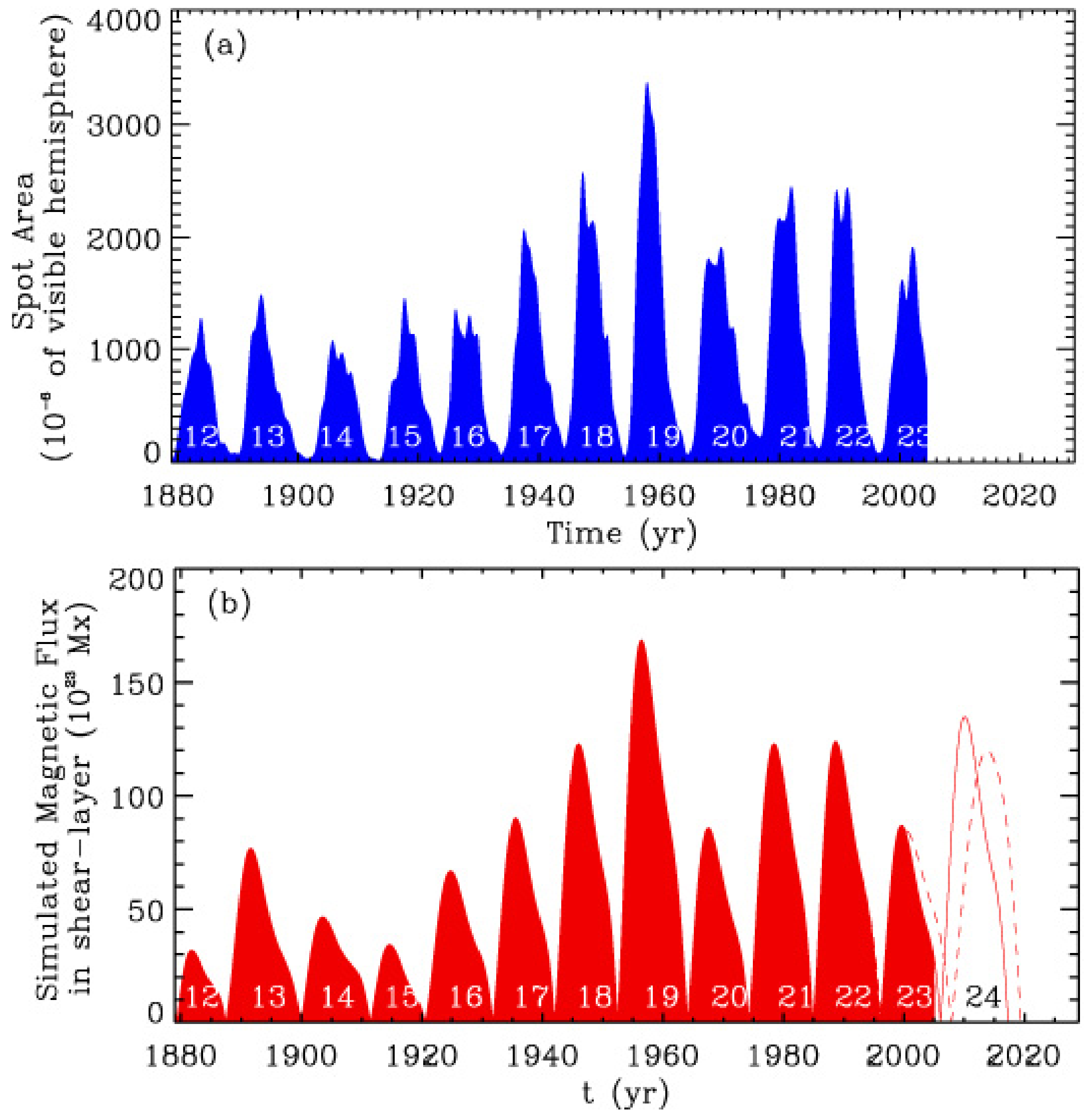
Feedback factors; can be of either sign

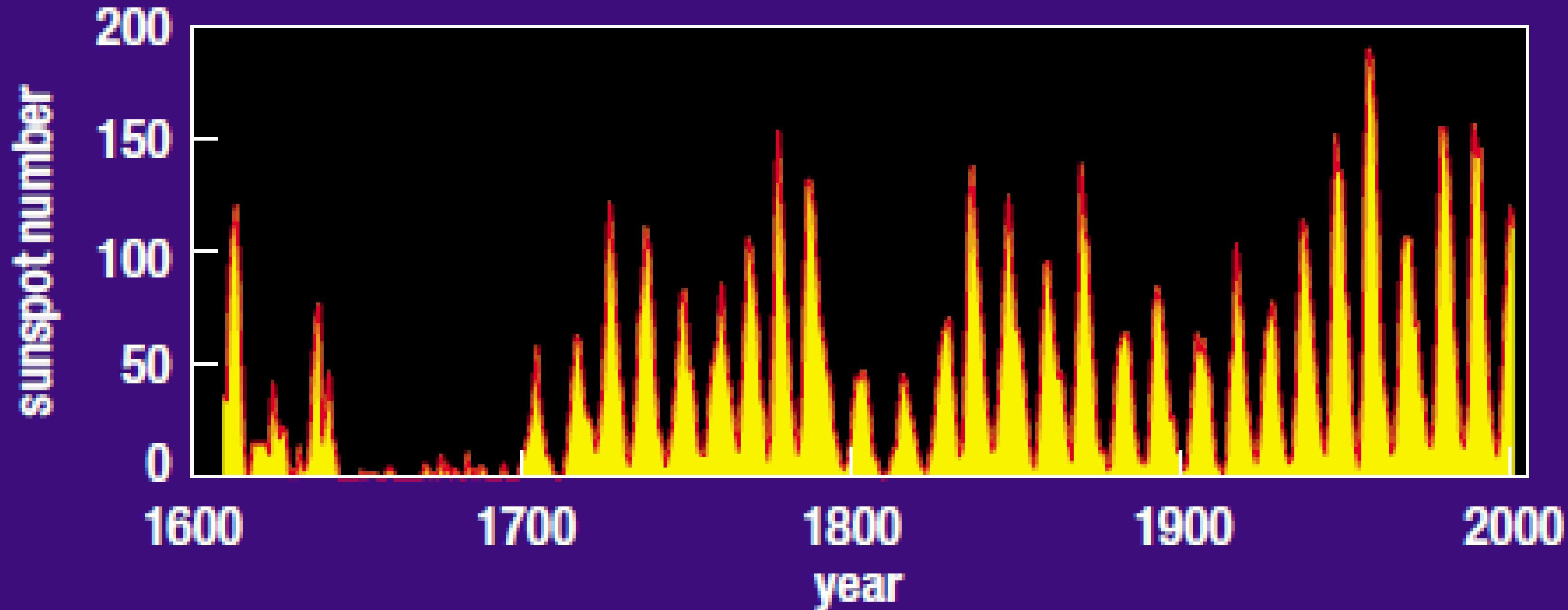
Note that feedback factors do NOT add linearly in their collective effects on climate sensitivity

Examples of Forcing:

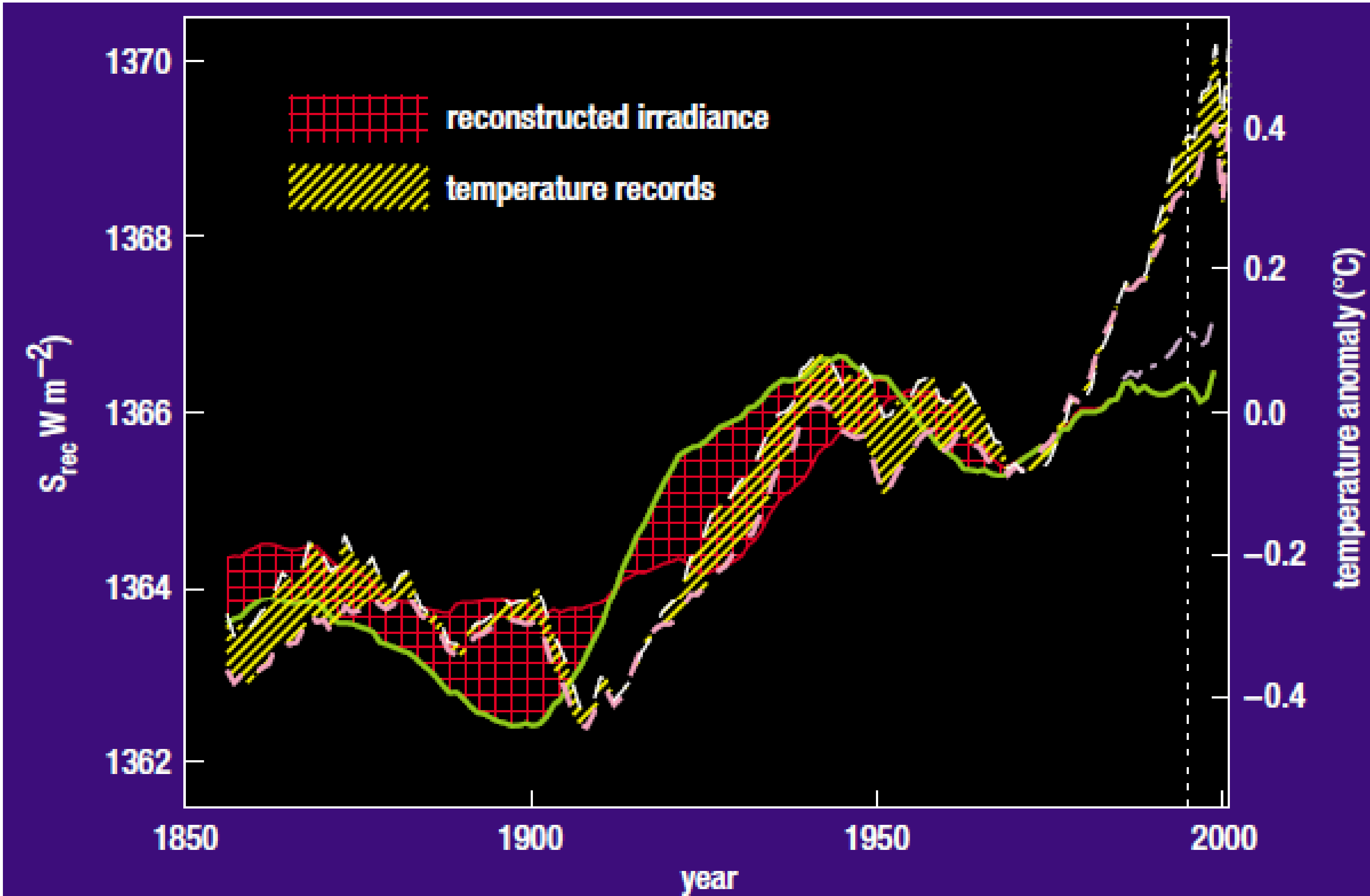
- Changing solar constant
- Changing concentrations of non-interactive greenhouse gases
- Volcanic aerosols
- Manmade aerosols
- Land use changes

Solar Sunspot Cycle





200
150
100
50
0
sunspot number
1600
1700
1800
1900
2000
year



11: Two reconstructions of total solar irradiance combined with measurements, where available (enclosing the red shading) and two climate records (enclosing the yellow shading) spanning roughly 150 years.

Satellite measurements of solar flux

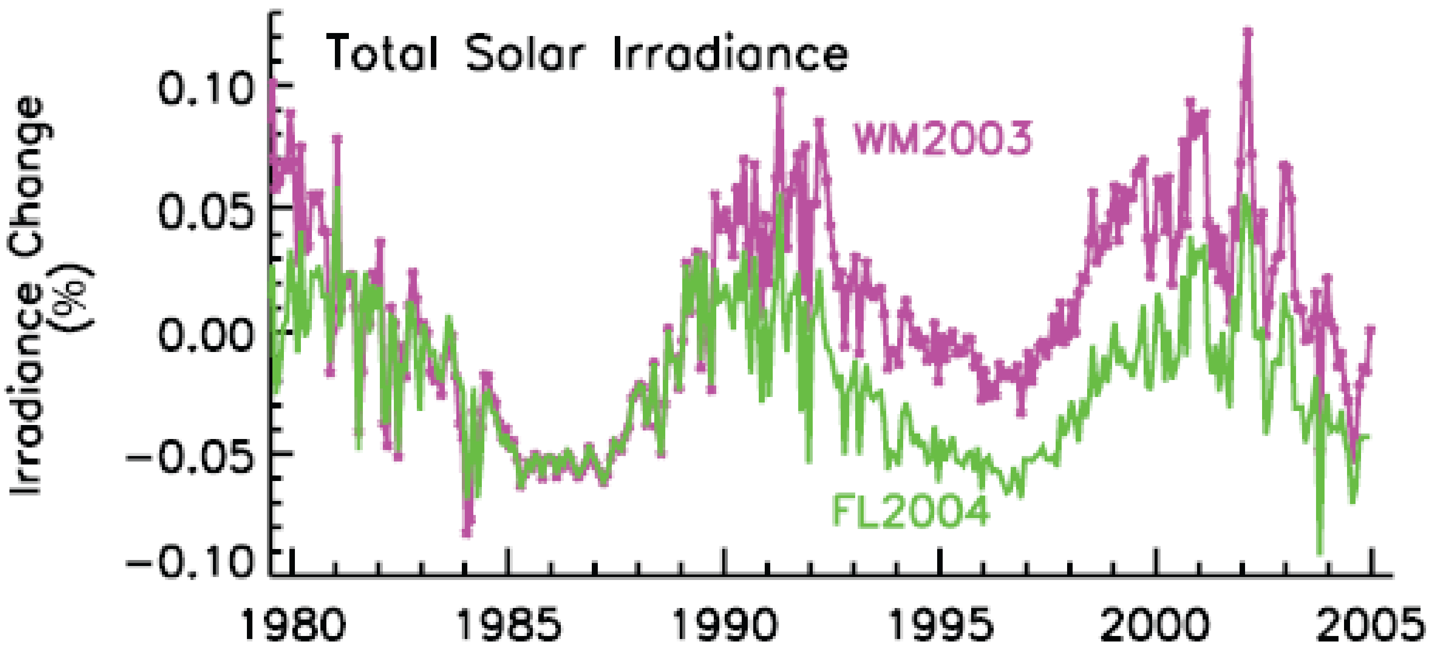


Figure 2.16. *Percentage change in monthly values of the total solar irradiance composites of Willson and Mordvinov (2003; WM2003, violet symbols and line) and Fröhlich and Lean (2004; FL2004, green solid line).*

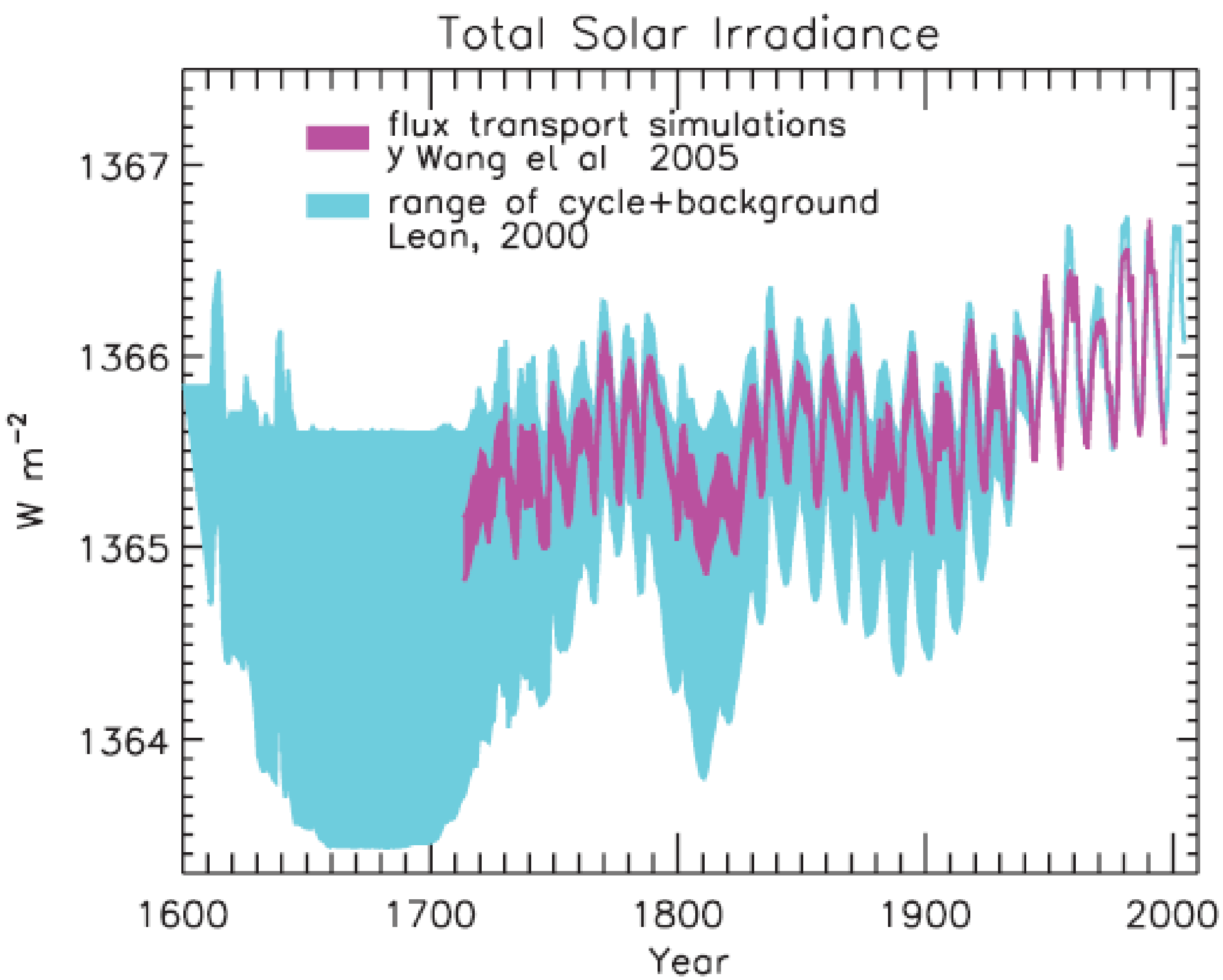
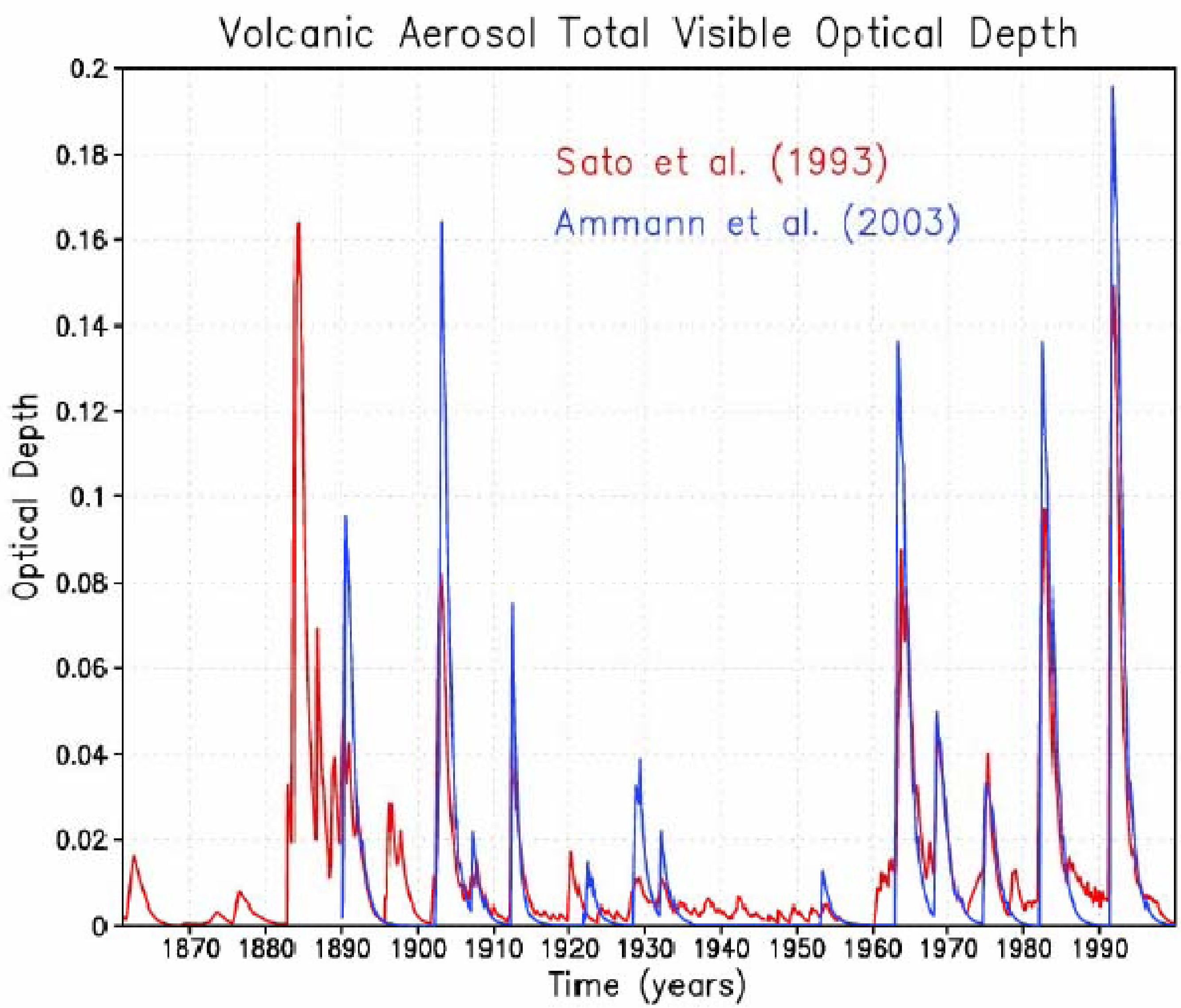


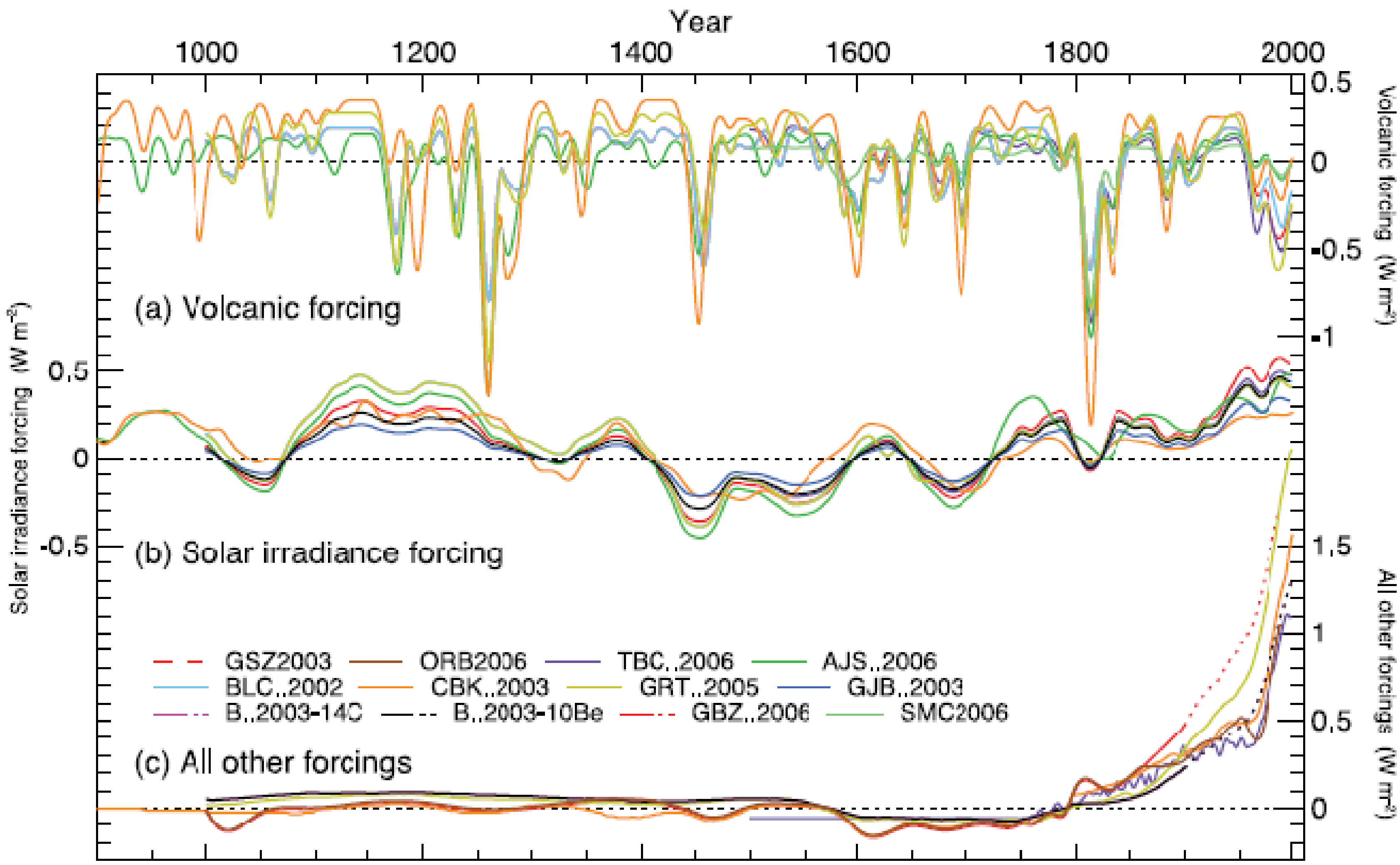
Figure 2.17. *Reconstructions of the total solar irradiance time series starting as early as 1600. The upper envelope of the shaded regions shows irradiance variations arising from the 11-year activity cycle. The lower envelope is the total irradiance reconstructed by Lean (2000), in which the long-term trend was inferred from brightness changes in Sun-like stars. In comparison, the recent reconstruction of Y. Wang et al. (2005) is based on solar considerations alone, using a flux transport model to simulate the long-term evolution of the closed flux that generates bright faculae.*

Inferences based on Models of Solar Variability

Recent History of Volcanic Eruptions



Variation with Time of Natural Climate Forcings:



Examples of Feedbacks:

- Water vapor
- Ice-albedo
- Clouds
- Surface evaporation
- Biogeochemical feedbacks

Estimates of Climate Sensitivity

$$\frac{\partial T_s}{\partial Q} \equiv \lambda_R = \frac{S}{1 - S\sum_{i=1}^{N-1} \frac{\partial F_{TOA}}{\partial x_i}\frac{\partial x_i}{\partial T_s}}$$

$$S \equiv \left(-\frac{\partial F_{TOA}}{\partial T_s}\right)^{-1}$$

Suppose that $T_s = T_e + constant$ and that shortwave radiation is insensitive to T_s:

$$F_{TOA} = -\sigma T_e^4, \quad \frac{\partial F_{TOA}}{\partial T_s} = -\frac{\partial}{\partial T_s}\sigma T_e^4 = -4\sigma T_e^3 = -3.8 Wm^{-2}K^{-1}$$

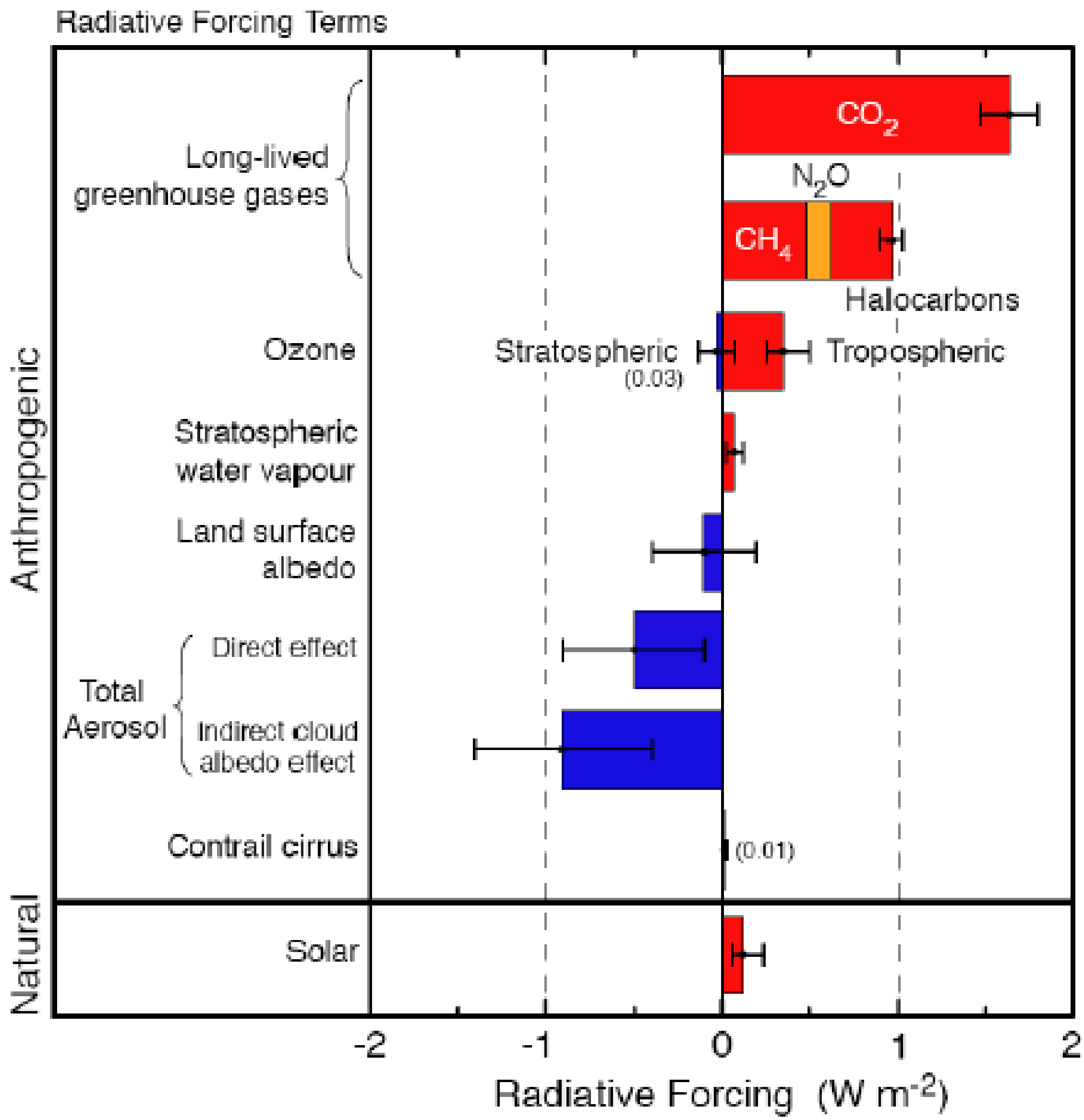
$$S = 0.26K\left(Wm^{-2}\right)^{-1}$$

Examples of Forcing Magnitudes:

- A *1.6%* change in the solar constant, equivalent to $4\ Wm^{-2}$, would produce about 1^oC change in surface temperature

- Doubling CO_2, equivalent to $4\ Wm^{-2}$, would produce about 1^oC change in surface temperature

Contributions to net radiative forcing change, 1750-2004:



Examples of feedback magnitudes:

- Experiments with one-dimensional radiative-convective models suggest that holding the relative humidity fixed,

$$\left(\frac{\partial F_{TOA}}{\partial q}\right)\left(\frac{\partial q}{\partial T_s}\right)_{RH} \cong 2\,Wm^{-2}K^{-1},$$

$$S\left(\frac{\partial F_{TOA}}{\partial q}\right)\left(\frac{\partial q}{\partial T_s}\right)_{RH} \cong 0.5$$

This, by itself, doubles climate sensitivity; with other positive feedbacks, effect on sensitivity is even larger

Ice-Albedo Feedback

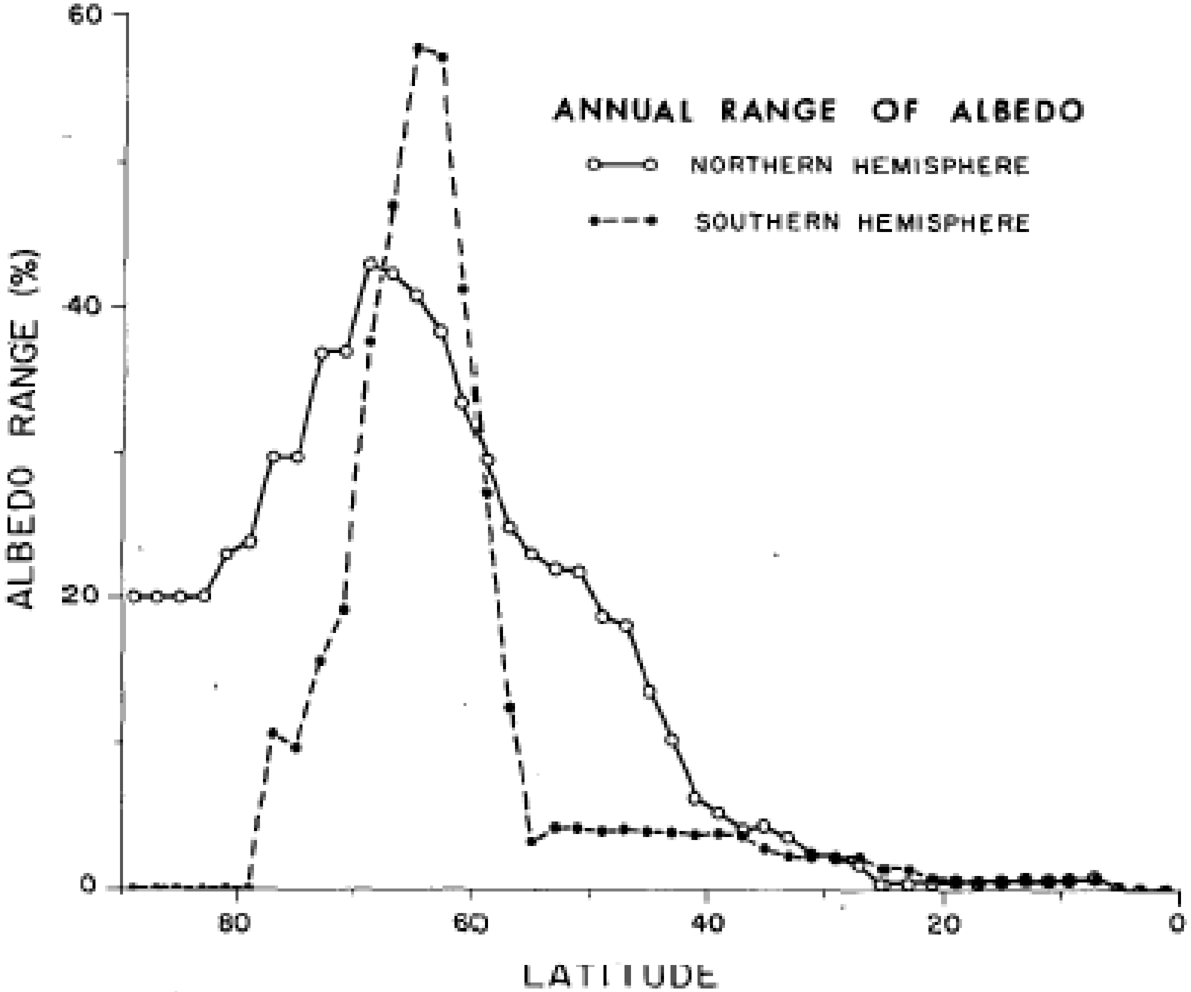
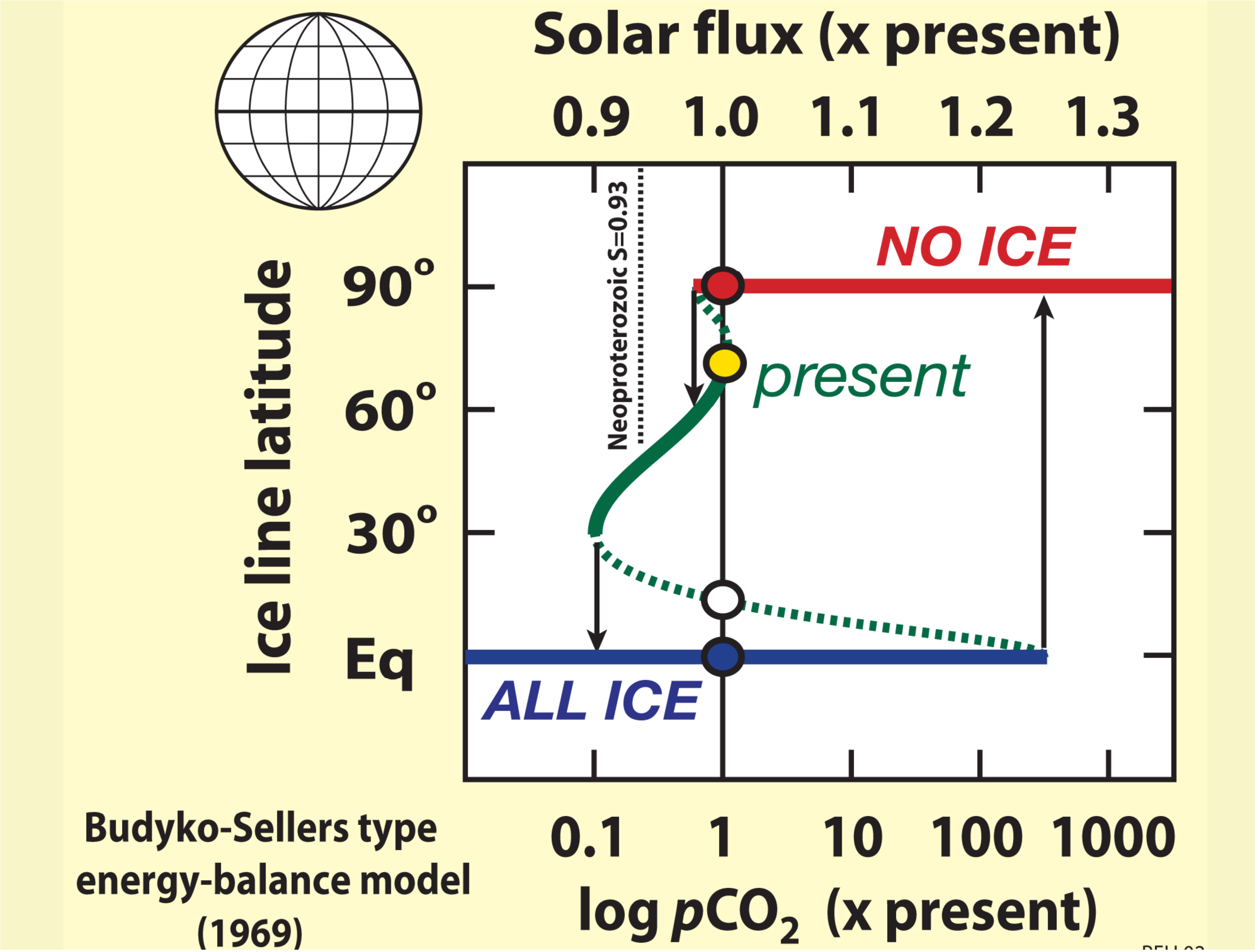


FIG. 1. Annual range of zonal monthly surface albedo estimates by 2° latitudinal belts.


Solar flux (x present)
0.9
1.0
1.1
1.2
1.3
Neoproterozoic S=0.93
NO ICE
present
ALL ICE
Ice line latitude
90°
60°
30°
Eq
0.1
1
10
100
1000
log pCO_2 (x present)
Budyko-Sellers type
energy-balance model
(1969)