

This discussion paper is/has been under review for the journal Biogeosciences (BG).
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Soil-atmosphere exchange of ammonia in a non-fertilized grassland: measured emission potentials and inferred fluxes

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Received: 5 March 2014 – Accepted: 1 May 2014 – Published: 27 May 2014

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Published by Copernicus Publications on behalf of the European Geosciences Union.

BGD

11, 7541–7574, 2014

Soil-atmosphere exchange of NH₃ in a non-fertilized grassland

G. R. Wentworth et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures



Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



Abstract

A 50 day field study was carried out in a semi-natural, non-fertilized grassland in south-western Ontario, Canada during the late summer and early autumn of 2012. The purpose was to explore surface–atmosphere exchange processes of ammonia (NH_3) with a focus on bi-directional fluxes between the soil and atmosphere. Measurements of soil pH and ammonium concentration ($[\text{NH}_4^+]$) yielded the first direct quantification of soil emission potential ($\Gamma_{\text{soil}} = [\text{NH}_4^+]/[\text{H}^+]$) for this land type, with values ranging from 35 to 1850 (an average of 290). The soil compensation point, the atmospheric NH_3 mixing ratio below which net emission from the soil will occur, exhibited both a seasonal trend and diurnal trend. Higher daytime and August compensation points were attributed to higher soil temperature. Soil-atmosphere fluxes were estimated using NH_3 measurements from the Ambient Ion Monitor Ion Chromatograph (AIM-IC) and a simple resistance model. Vegetative effects were neglected due to the short canopy height and significant Γ_{soil} . Inferred fluxes were, on average, $2.6 \pm 4.5 \text{ ng m}^{-2} \text{ s}^{-1}$ in August (i.e. net emission) and $-5.8 \pm 3.0 \text{ ng m}^{-2} \text{ s}^{-1}$ in September (i.e. net deposition). These results are in good agreement with the only other bi-directional exchange study in a semi-natural, non-fertilized grassland. A Lagrangian dispersion model (HYSPLIT) was used to calculate air parcel back trajectories throughout the campaign and revealed that NH_3 mixing ratios had no directional bias throughout the campaign, unlike the other atmospheric constituents measured. This implies that soil-atmosphere exchange over a non-fertilized grassland can significantly moderate near-surface NH_3 concentrations. In addition, we provide indirect evidence that dew and fog evaporation can cause a morning increase of $[\text{NH}_{3(g)}]$. Implications of our findings on current NH_3 bi-directional exchange modelling efforts are also discussed.

Soil-atmosphere exchange of NH_3 in a non-fertilized grassland

G. R. Wentworth et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures



Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



1 Introduction

Atmospheric ammonia ($\text{NH}_{3(g)}$) is the most abundant alkaline gas and is important for many biogeochemical and atmospheric processes (Seinfeld and Pandis, 2006). It neutralizes acidic aerosol, leading to increased mass loadings of fine atmospheric particulate matter ($\text{PM}_{2.5}$) which reduces visibility and can cause adverse health effects (Pope et al., 2002). In addition, deposition of NH_3 and other forms of reactive nitrogen (i.e. NO_x , HNO_3) can lead to eutrophication, soil acidification, and loss of biodiversity in sensitive ecosystems (Krupa, 2003). NH_3 is primarily emitted through agricultural activities (i.e. fertilization, animal waste) with minor contributions from transportation and chemical industries (Reis et al., 2009).

$\text{NH}_{3(g)}$ exists in equilibrium with aqueous ammonia ($\text{NH}_{3(aq)}$) in surface reservoirs (i.e. apoplastic tissues of plants or soil pore water) that, at least in theory, can be described by the Henry's law constant (K_H). The $\text{NH}_{3(aq)}$ is also in equilibrium with aqueous-phase ammonium ($\text{NH}_4^+_{(aq)}$), governed by the acid dissociation constant (K_a) of NH_4^+ and the pH of the solution. The gas-phase concentration above this aqueous phase at thermodynamic equilibrium is known as the compensation point (χ) and can, to a first approximation, be predicted according to:

$$\chi = \frac{K_a \cdot [\text{NH}_4^+_{(aq)}]}{K_H \cdot [\text{H}^+]} \quad (1)$$

where $[\text{H}^+]$ is the concentration of the hydronium ion in solution. If the atmospheric mixing ratio of NH_3 over a surface is below this value, net emission from the surface pool is expected until the equilibrium NH_3 value (i.e. χ) is reached and vice versa. In order to account for the temperature dependence of the equilibrium constants, the van't Hoff equation must be applied so Eq. (1) can be updated to:

$$\chi = 13587 \cdot \Gamma \cdot e^{\frac{-10396K}{T}} \times 10^9 \quad (2)$$

BGD

11, 7541–7574, 2014

Soil-atmosphere exchange of NH_3 in a non-fertilized grassland

G. R. Wentworth et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

◀

▶

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



Soil-atmosphere exchange of NH₃ in a non-fertilized grassland

G. R. Wentworth et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures



Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



which is dependent on the surface properties given in Eqs. (1) and (2). Significant effort has gone into measuring and modelling NH₃ fluxes over a wide variety of land types to provide a more thorough understanding of this framework (Massad et al., 2010; Zhang et al., 2010, and references therein). Canopy-scale resistance models of varying complexity have been developed and successfully employed to mechanistically describe NH₃ fluxes (e.g. Nemitz et al., 2001; Personne et al., 2009; Sutton et al., 1995). A detailed list of these models is available in Flechard et al. (2013).

While extremely useful, these mechanistic canopy-scale models are often too complex to be directly incorporated into regional or global chemical transport models. As a result, recent efforts have focused on simplifying previous models by empirically parameterizing certain components (usually Γ), with either a constant for each land type or a function using parameters (i.e. fertilizer application, regional long-term NH₃ concentration) that are easily assimilated into the regional and global models (Bash et al., 2013; Cooter et al., 2010, 2012; Pleim et al., 2013; Wen et al., 2013; Wichink Kruit et al., 2010, 2012). Incorporating bi-directional NH₃ exchange in these large scale atmospheric models generally improves model performance. For instance, Bash et al. (2013) reduced the biases and error in both NH_x deposition and aerosol concentration by coupling CMAQ (Community Multiscale Air-Quality) to an agroecosystem model and allowing for bi-directional exchange over the continental US. Wichink Kruit et al. (2012) incorporated bi-directional exchange in the chemical transport model LOTOS-EUROS and found better agreement between measured and modelled NH₃ mixing ratios across Europe, although some domains were still biased low by up to a factor of 2. Large uncertainties still exist for the parameterizations of Γ for both stomata and soil over most land types as a result of sparse measurements. Field measurements of soil and vegetation [NH₄⁺] and [H⁺], along with atmospheric NH₃ mixing ratios are required to evaluate the performance of regional air quality models attempting to parameterize bi-directional exchange.

Reviews by Massad et al. (2010) and Zhang et al. (2010) have summarized the studies to date that have explored bi-directional surface–atmosphere NH₃ fluxes over a wide

grassland can significantly impact near-surface NH_3 concentrations, and that evaporation of dew can release large quantities of NH_3 .

2 Methods and materials

2.1 Field site

5 Measurements were obtained from 12 August to 2 October 2012 at a rural site near Egbert, ON located approximately 70 km north of Toronto. The long-term sampling site, Centre for Atmospheric Research Experiments (CARE, $44^\circ 13' 51''$ N, $79^\circ 46' 58''$ W, 251 m above sea-level), is operated by Environment Canada and situated in an agricultural area. Figure 1 shows the location of CARE in relation to major Canadian cities and is coloured according to annual NH_3 emissions from 2008 (NPRI, 2008). Canada's National Pollutant Release Inventory (NPRI) does not include soil or vegetative emissions from non-managed ecosystems. The site is located on a sharp transition with high NH_3 emissions to the south and negligible emissions to the north. Air masses originating from the south are typically polluted since they pass over urban, industrial and agricultural areas of southern Ontario and the northeastern United States, whereas cleaner air usually arrives from the north (e.g. Rupakheti et al., 2005). As a result, soil-atmosphere exchange of NH_3 can be examined under a wide range of atmospheric pollution regimes.

15 The site itself is surrounded by 60 ha of semi-natural, non-fertilized grassland. The soil sampling area is contained within a radius of 10 m as this is the approximate flux footprint of the air sampling instrumentation explained in Sect. 2.4. Fertilizer has not been applied to the soil in at least 15 years. Grass at the site was cut on 27 June but remained uncut for the duration of the study. Over the course of the study, the grass grew from about 10 cm to a final height of 20 cm. The soil is sandy loam with an organic carbon content of roughly 5 % and a cation exchange capacity (CEC) of $22.7 \text{ cmol kg}^{-1}$.

BGD

11, 7541–7574, 2014

Soil-atmosphere exchange of NH_3 in a non-fertilized grassland

G. R. Wentworth et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

◀

▶

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



The CEC reflects the soil's ability to retain cations (including NH_4^+) and at this site is an intermediate value relative to other soils.

2.2 Bi-directional exchange framework

For surfaces with minimal vegetation and a high soil emission potential (Γ_{soil}), the exchange between the soil and atmosphere is expected to dominate the bi-directional flux (Personne et al., 2009; Sutton et al., 2009). In these environments, it should be reasonable to estimate the v_{ex} by only considering resistances affecting the exchange across the soil–atmosphere interface. As such, v_{ex} in this paper is approximated using Eq. (4) which was derived from Su et al. (2011) who parameterized HONO soil fluxes in a similar fashion. This method is also the same as the two-layer resistance model developed by Nemitz et al. (2001) but neglects the stomatal and cuticular components.

$$v_{\text{ex}} = \frac{1}{R_a + R_b + R_{\text{inc}} + R_{\text{soil}}} \quad (4)$$

The aerodynamic (R_a) and quasi-laminar (R_b) resistances reflect the macro and molecular-scale turbulence, respectively, between the soil and measurement height of $\text{NH}_3(\text{g})$. The in canopy (R_{inc}) and soil (R_{soil}) resistances account for processes within the canopy and at the soil interface that hinder the exchange of gases. According to the theory outlined in Hicks et al. (1987), R_a and R_b can be calculated as such:

$$R_a = \frac{\ln(z_{\text{ref}}) - \ln(z_0)}{\kappa \cdot u_*} \quad (5)$$

$$R_b = \frac{2}{\kappa \cdot u_*} \cdot \left(\frac{Sc}{Pr} \right)^{2/3} \quad (6)$$

where z_{ref} is the height of the NH_3 measurement (2.7 m), z_0 the roughness length, equal to 0.05 m for uncut grass (Seinfeld and Pandis, 2006), and the von Karman constant $\kappa = 0.4$. The Schmidt number ($Sc = 0.58$) and Prandtl number ($Pr = 0.72$) are

Soil-atmosphere exchange of NH_3 in a non-fertilized grassland

G. R. Wentworth et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

◀

▶

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



taken from Hicks et al. (1987) and account for the diffusivity of NH_3 and heat transfer, respectively. The friction velocity, u_* , can be calculated by:

$$u_* = \sqrt[4]{\frac{u'w'^2}{u'^2 + v'w'^2}} \quad (7)$$

where u' and v' are the deviations from the streamline corrected half-hour mean of the horizontal component of wind velocity and w' is the vertical component (Wilczak et al., 2001).

Parameterizations for R_{inc} and R_{soil} vary and are empirically determined through measurements of net vertical flux above a given bulk surface. The former is found to be dependent on the canopy height, season and land use whereas the latter is primarily dictated by the Henry's law constant and reactivity of the pollutant. For the present study, values of $R_{\text{inc}} = 100 \text{ s m}^{-1}$ and $R_{\text{soil}} = 60 \text{ s m}^{-1}$ are employed based on the work by Wesely (1989). These values correspond to resistances for a range land in midsummer with lush vegetation and a soil pH of 6.

It should be reiterated that using Eqs. (3) to (7) to estimate soil-atmosphere NH_3 fluxes neglects any vegetative effects (e.g. recapture of NH_3 , stomatal emission) and that this serves only as an approximation of NH_3 fluxes between the soil and the atmosphere.

2.3 Soil measurements

Measurements of soil $[\text{NH}_4^+]$, pH and temperature were necessary to calculate the χ . Soil cores were collected in triplicate on six days during the campaign, all within 30 feet of the atmospheric measurement inlet. The sampling methodology outlined below is based on work done by Li et al. (2012) and van Miegrout (1995). Samples were collected six times throughout the campaign on the days listed in Table 1. Sites 1, 2 and 3 correspond to small ($\sim 1 \text{ m}^2$) areas 10 m west, directly below, and 10 m east of the sonic anemometer, respectively. The soil was sampled more frequently towards the end of the campaign since meteorology (i.e. precipitation, air temperature) was highly

Soil-atmosphere exchange of NH_3 in a non-fertilized grassland

G. R. Wentworth et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

◀

▶

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



**Soil-atmosphere
exchange of NH₃ in a
non-fertilized
grassland**

G. R. Wentworth et al.

[Title Page](#)[Abstract](#)[Introduction](#)[Conclusions](#)[References](#)[Tables](#)[Figures](#)[⏪](#)[⏩](#)[◀](#)[▶](#)[Back](#)[Close](#)[Full Screen / Esc](#)[Printer-friendly Version](#)[Interactive Discussion](#)

variable and was expected to perturb the Γ_{soil} to a greater extent than in August when meteorological conditions were more stable. After removing grass and any residual litter (of which there was very little), a PVC tube (2" inner diameter) was inserted into the ground to a depth of 10 cm and a soil core was removed by pulling out the tube with a soil core intact. Each core was thoroughly mixed and an ~ 8 g subsample was immediately placed into a pre-weighed extract solution (50 mL of 0.25 % KCl w/w) and transported on ice back to the lab for analysis. After shaking for 30 min, extracts were gravity filtered (ashless filter #40, Whatman Ltd., Maidstone, UK) then sent through a 0.2 μ m PES membrane syringe filter (Pall Ion Chromatography Acrodisc[®], VWR International, Mississauga, ON). Ammonium, nitrate, and nitrite were then quantified using two Ion Chromatograph (IC) ICS-2000 systems (Dionex Inc., Sunnyvale, CA) operated with suppressed conductivity detection and reagent-free eluent (potassium hydroxide for anions, methanesulphonic acid for cations). Gradient elution schemes were optimized so that analyte peaks were baseline resolved. CS12A analytical and CG12A guard columns were used for the cation IC, and AS19 analytical and AG19 guard columns for the anion IC. In both cases, 25 μ L loops were used. ICs were calibrated by injection of commercially available (Dionex Corp., Sunnyvale, CA) mixed standards of 7 anions (F^- , Cl^- , NO_2^- , Br^- , NO_3^- , SO_4^{2-} , PO_4^{3-}) and 6 cations (Li^+ , Na^+ , NH_4^+ , K^+ , Mg^{2+} , Ca^{2+}). Serial dilutions of the standards in matrix-matched 0.25 % KCl allowed for a five-point calibration which yielded reasonable calibration curves (slope of $R^2 > 0.99$) for all analytes. Extraction with a 0.25 % KCl solution proved sufficient to desorb all accessible ions in the soil matrix, yet dilute enough to allow for quantification of NH_4^+ and NO_3^- in every sample. The inherent assumption is that the extract solution sufficiently mimics the ability of soil pore water to liberate NH_4^+ ions from the soil matrix to participate in soil-air exchange. Flechard et al. (2013) have suggested fundamental analytical research is required to assess the validity of this assumption, but this is outside the scope of this current study. A field blank was run with every triplicate to account for any contamination (always less than 1 % of the measured soil $[\text{NH}_4^+]$) from sample handling and extraction.

**Soil-atmosphere
exchange of NH₃ in a
non-fertilized
grassland**G. R. Wentworth et al.

[Title Page](#)[Abstract](#)[Introduction](#)[Conclusions](#)[References](#)[Tables](#)[Figures](#)[◀](#)[▶](#)[◀](#)[▶](#)[Back](#)[Close](#)[Full Screen / Esc](#)[Printer-friendly Version](#)[Interactive Discussion](#)

Soil pH was measured by mixing ~ 10 g of soil with an equal mass of deionized water (1 : 1 soil : DIW slurry). A standard pH electrode (SympHony 14 002-782, VWR International, Mississauga, ON) was immediately immersed in the slurry until a stable pH reading was obtained. This was done in triplicate for each soil core and an average pH for each was calculated. Performing the pH measurements in a saline solution of 0.25 % KCl desorbs more H⁺ and was found to lower the pH reading by up to 1 unit relative to extraction into deionized water, which has been reported previously (e.g. Walker et al., 2014). Soil temperature was logged hourly using 5 in situ sensors (iButtons, Maxim Integrated, San Jose, CA) placed 10 cm deep dispersed across the 30 foot radius of the soil sampling area. Moisture content was determined gravimetrically for a subsample (~ 3 g) of each core by drying in an oven at 105 °C for at least 24 h.

2.4 Atmospheric measurements

Ambient NH_{3(g)} mixing ratios were needed to infer both the direction and magnitude of soil-atmosphere fluxes. Measurements of NH₄⁺, SO₄²⁻, NO₃⁻ in PM_{2.5} and their precursor gases (SO₂, and HNO₃) were also important to aid in interpretation of air mass trajectory. These water-soluble gases and ions in PM_{2.5} were measured continuously on-line every hour with the Ambient Ion Monitor-Ion Chromatographs (AIM-IC) system (Model 9000D, URG, Chapel Hill, NC). The set-up has been explained in detail elsewhere (Markovic et al., 2012) and is described here only briefly. Ambient air is pulled at 3 L min⁻¹ through a PM_{2.5} impactor to remove coarse particles. Gases are stripped from the sample flow by a liquid parallel plate denuder with a 2 mM H₂O₂ solution continuously flowing over the surface. Particles have sufficient inertia to pass through the denuder assembly and enter a supersaturated steam condensation coil where they are grown hygroscopically and collected as an aqueous solution. The aqueous sample then travels through a 22 m sample line to the IC systems where the ~ 5 mL aliquots (collected over an hour) are separately injected and quantified for water soluble ions. The inlet box was mounted on a tower 3 m above the ground.

Soil-atmosphere exchange of NH_3 in a non-fertilized grassland

G. R. Wentworth et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

◀

▶

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



our knowledge, the results presented here represent the first values of Γ_{soil} directly measured in a non-fertilized grassland. These measurements underscore the importance of distinguishing between fields that receive fertilization and those that do not. The Γ_{g} range from Zhang et al. (2010) is not applicable to the field at CARE, whereas the estimation ($\Gamma_{\text{g}} = 500$) from Massad et al. (2010) is more suitable.

It is worth comparing Γ_{soil} to the range of stomatal emission potentials (Γ_{stom}) in grasslands proposed by Zhang et al. (2010) (Fig. 2, green line). Γ_{stom} values (300 to 3000) are based on roughly 50 measurements from over two dozen studies which reflect the narrower range in Γ_{stom} compared to Γ_{g} . Massad et al. (2010) also parameterized Γ_{stom} , but did so by empirically fitting measurements to total annual N input instead of using a constant value for each land use type. These suggested Γ_{stom} values from each review are on the same order as the Γ_{soil} measured in this study, suggesting that in a non-fertilized field the soil and vegetation might have a very similar propensity to either emit or uptake NH_3 (i.e. they likely have similar χ).

3.2 Inferred soil compensation point and fluxes

A linear interpolation of Γ_{soil} between the six sampling dates in combination with hourly soil temperature measurements were used to generate a time series of soil compensation point (χ_{soil} , black trace in Fig. 3a) according to Eq. (2). The shaded region around χ_{soil} was calculated from a linear interpolation of $\pm 1\sigma$ in Γ_{soil} measurements and therefore reflects the uncertainty in χ_{soil} attributed to variability in soil pH and $[\text{NH}_4^+]$. Hourly gas-phase NH_3 measured by the AIM-IC (orange trace) is also shown. These two traces frequently cross meaning that repeated switching between soil emission and atmospheric deposition is predicted. There is a clear decline in χ_{soil} throughout the campaign that is mostly attributable to a decrease in soil temperature (T_{soil}) as shown by the grey trace at the top of Fig. 3a.

There is a diurnal trend in χ_{soil} with lower values during the night time that is a consequence of T_{soil} and has been observed before for stomatal compensation points (Van Hove et al., 2002). It is possible there is a diurnal trend in Γ_{soil} that is not captured

by the periodic soil sampling regime. However, this is unlikely since additional measurements from a nearby site found that spatial heterogeneity in soil $[\text{NH}_4^+]$ was much larger than the temporal variability in 24 soil grabs taken 6 h apart (soil grabs were in triplicate) over the course of two days.

The χ_{soil} diurnal trends are more evident in Fig. 3b and c, which show time-of-day plots for August and September, respectively. During both months, NH_3 peaks between 08:00–10:00 in the morning and is typically at a minimum during the evening where it plateaus at around 2 ppb, which has been observed previously in the region (e.g. Ellis et al., 2011). Mixing ratios were fairly similar in both months, although the morning peak in August was larger than in September. On the other hand, χ_{soil} values were significantly lower in September as a result of lower soil temperatures. Accordingly, the diurnal profiles of the difference between χ_{soil} and $[\text{NH}_3]$ (red trace) in Fig. 3b and c are distinct. In August, the difference between χ_{soil} and $[\text{NH}_3]$ is positive throughout the majority of the day (excluding 07:00–11:00 in the morning) indicating a net flux from the soil to the atmosphere. On the other hand, in September the difference is negative throughout the entire day meaning the soil is a continuous sink for atmospheric NH_3 . This suggests a clear transition from the soil being a net source to a net sink for NH_3 due to lower soil temperatures. It should be noted that grass senescence had not yet begun and that there was no appreciable accumulation of litter, which has been shown to act as a strong source of NH_3 (e.g. David et al., 2009; Mattsson et al., 2009; Mattsson and Schjoerring, 2003).

In order to determine the magnitude of this exchange, the v_{ex} was estimated using Eqs. (4) to (7) and the flux was calculated from Eq. (3). The diurnal profile of NH_3 fluxes (in $\text{ng m}^{-2} \text{s}^{-1}$) for both months is shown in Fig. 4. Throughout August there is an average net NH_3 emission from the soil of $2.6 \pm 4.5 \text{ ng m}^{-2} \text{ s}^{-1}$. In September, there was an average net deposition of $5.8 \pm 3.0 \text{ ng m}^{-2} \text{ s}^{-1}$ from the atmosphere to the surface. Average fluxes measured by Wichink Kruit et al. (2007) were $4 \text{ ng m}^{-2} \text{ s}^{-1}$ in summer and $-24 \text{ ng m}^{-2} \text{ s}^{-1}$ in autumn, which are on the same order of the flux values estimated in this study. Wichink Kruit et al. (2007) used their measured fluxes to infer

Soil-atmosphere exchange of NH_3 in a non-fertilized grassland

G. R. Wentworth et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures



Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



tres) gradient in the emissions inventory suggesting that no such local source exists. A more likely explanation is that bi-directional exchange of NH_3 between the surface and atmosphere modulates near-surface NH_3 mixing ratios sufficiently to eliminate any directional bias that would result from traditional emission sources.

5 Considering the relatively low Γ_{soil} and small magnitude of soil fluxes, it is reasonable to ask whether such an exchange could have a noticeable effect on observed NH_3 mixing ratios. First, a simple calculation was performed to see if the soil reservoir contained enough NH_4^+ to sustain fluxes during the month of August. To do this, the following assumptions were made: NH_3 exchange occurs in the top 10 cm of soil, the soil
10 is equilibrating a 1000 m atmospheric boundary layer and soil density is 1.5 g cm^{-3} . Figure 6 shows that even during peak soil emission in the afternoon, less than 1% of the soil NH_4^+ pool is required to equilibrate the entire boundary layer. Furthermore, much of this lost soil NH_4^+ would be regained during the inferred morning deposition event. Considering that the turnover time for most soil NH_4^+ pools is on the order of
15 a day (Booth et al., 2005) it is safe to assume that there is sufficient NH_4^+ in non-fertilized grasslands to maintain fluxes to the atmosphere. Second, this exchange could only sufficiently impact NH_3 mixing ratios if it occurs quickly enough. To test this, fast (0.005 m s^{-1} , at 14:00) and slow (0.003 m s^{-1} , at 01:00) average exchange velocities from August were used to calculate the time it would take the system (soil and atmosphere) to arrive halfway to equilibrium with an atmospheric height of 1000 m as well
20 as with the height at which AIM-IC measurements were made (3 m). For 1000 m, the timescale is calculated to be between 40 and 62 h for the fast and slow v_{ex} , respectively. However, for a height of 3 m, only 7 and 11 min are required to get halfway to equilibrium. Although this calculation neglects vertical mixing beyond 3 m (which will occur),
25 these short timescales suggest soil-atmosphere exchange is an important component of observed negative $[\text{NH}_{3(\text{g})}]$ gradients with height. In other words, soil-atmosphere exchange over non-fertilized grasslands has the ability to strongly influence near-surface NH_3 despite the low Γ_{soil} (relative to fertilized fields) whereas the impact on NH_3 levels throughout the boundary layer is dampened due to slower exchange.

Soil-atmosphere exchange of NH_3 in a non-fertilized grassland

G. R. Wentworth et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

◀

▶

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



3.4 Morning Increase of NH₃

A morning increase in NH_{3(g)} between 08:00–10:00 is clearly evident in Fig. 3b and c and has been observed elsewhere (e.g. Bash et al., 2010; Ellis et al., 2011; Flechard et al., 2013; Nowak et al., 2006; Wichink Kruit et al., 2007). The factors contributing to this phenomenon at CARE are not entirely clear but may include one or more of: dew evaporation, volatilization of particulate NH₄NO₃, emission from plants/soil, and/or mixing down of NH₃ rich air entrained above the nocturnal boundary layer. Wichink Kruit et al. (2007) observed a similarly timed increase that coincided with a decrease in leaf wetness. Furthermore, Flechard et al. (1999) and Bussink et al. (1996) found that water layers sorbed on leaves can store significant quantities of NH₃ even at an RH below 100 %. Although no leaf wetness sensor was employed during this study, we use night time RH as a surrogate for dew and fog formation. Figure 7 shows the difference between the morning NH_x (\equiv NH_{3(g)} + NH_{4(particulate)}⁺) and the average overnight NH_x concentration. NH_x was chosen to eliminate any bias caused by volatilisation of NH₄NO_{3(p)} to NH_{3(g)} and HNO_{3(g)} as temperatures rise. Mornings following a night during which RH was above 0.9 had an average Δ NH_x of 207 ± 37 nmol m⁻³, whereas increases during mornings following drier nights (RH < 0.9) were about half that with an average 94 ± 16 nmol m⁻³. Although the RH benchmark of 0.9 only serves as a surrogate for dew formation, this finding does suggest that pools of surface water (i.e. dew or fog), which form on nights that have a high RH, can act as significant NH_x reservoirs that release NH₃ upon evaporation in the mid-morning. This is corroborated by measurements from Burkhardt et al. (2009) who report an approximate water film thickness of 0.1 mm during dew events and an average dew [NH₄⁺] of 3.5 mg kg⁻¹ in a grassland canopy. If all of the NH₄⁺ were to be released as NH_{3(g)} upon dew evaporation, this reservoir would release about 20 μ mol m⁻² of NH_{3(g)} into the atmosphere, which corresponds to an increase of 20 nmol m⁻³ throughout a 1000 m boundary layer, equivalent to an increase in mixing ratio of 0.5 ppb. Such a release could have a significant impact on near surface NH_{3(g)} measurements and manifest itself as a large morning increase

Soil-atmosphere exchange of NH₃ in a non-fertilized grassland

G. R. Wentworth et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

◀

▶

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



of $\text{NH}_3(\text{g})$. The role of dew and fog as a night-time reservoir definitely merits further investigation and could be an important process within this bi-directional framework.

Since NH_x morning increases plateau at $\sim 100 \text{ nmol m}^{-3}$ at an RH below 0.85, there are likely other contributing factor(s) that lead to this morning enhancement of NH_3 .

Bash et al. (2010) observed a similar morning rise over a fertilized corn field and attributed it to plant and/or soil processes. However, CARE contains significantly less vegetation and is non-fertilized. Walker et al. (2013) suggest surface-air NH_3 exchange is impacted by ions that can accumulate in dew as well as the pH of the dew. In addition, Fig. 4 reveals there are predicted deposition fluxes to the soil during the morning. It is highly unlikely that a substantial rise in Γ_{soil} could occur over the span of a few hours. Stomatal emission cannot be conclusively ruled out as a significant contribution. However, if this were an important factor one would expect sunrise (when stomata open) and the spike to coincide, but given that sunrise at CARE was between 06:00 and 07:15 throughout the campaign, stomatal emission is not likely the driving factor behind this trend at CARE. It is also possible this morning increase is linked to the break-up of the nocturnal boundary layer, as observed by Walker et al. (2006) who measured surface NH_3 fluxes over a fertilized soy bean field. Observations from this study rule out soil emissions and suggest that dew/fog evaporation plays a key role in enhancing morning NH_3 mixing ratios.

4 Conclusions

Measurements of Γ_{soil} and T_{soil} in a non-fertilized grassland were used to construct a time series of χ_{soil} over a 50 day period. Γ_{soil} ranged from 35 to 1850 with an average value of 290 which is well below the $2000 < \Gamma_g < 200\,000$ suggestion by Zhang et al. (2010) for grasslands. Zhang et al. (2010) recommended this range based on field studies exclusively in fertilized grasslands, which is likely the reason Γ_g values in this study are lower. Indeed the distinction between fertilization and non-fertilization is critical in accurately assessing bi-directional exchange. Our findings are more in line

BGD

11, 7541–7574, 2014

Soil-atmosphere exchange of NH_3 in a non-fertilized grassland

G. R. Wentworth et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures



Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



with the parameterizations of Massad et al. (2010) who suggest a Γ_g of 500 for semi-natural, non-fertilized areas without vegetation. Seasonal and diurnal trends in χ_{soil} were observed with lower values at night and in September due to decreases in T_{soil} .

Fluxes of NH_3 between the soil and atmosphere were estimated using $[\text{NH}_{3(\text{g})}]$ measurements and a simple resistance scheme that neglects the influence of vegetation. August fluxes were primarily upwards, except between 07:00–11:00, and resulted in an average emission of $2.6 \pm 4.5 \text{ ng m}^{-2} \text{ s}^{-1}$ from the soil. September was characterized by exclusive deposition from the atmosphere at a rate of $5.8 \pm 3.0 \text{ ng m}^{-2} \text{ s}^{-1}$. These values are similar to fluxes measured by Wichink Kruit et al. (2007) who reported fluxes of 4 and $-24 \text{ ng m}^{-2} \text{ s}^{-1}$ in the summer and autumn, respectively.

HYSPLIT analysis revealed that air masses passing through Toronto were enriched in atmospheric pollutants, except NH_3 . Since CARE lies on a sharp gradient of high emissions to the south and low emission to the north, this lack of directional bias implies that bi-directional exchange efficiently modulates NH_3 mixing ratios. Back-of-the-envelope calculations confirm that: (1) the reservoir of NH_4^+ in soil of non-fertilized grasslands is large enough to sustain fluxes to the atmosphere, and (2) fluxes are rapid enough to impact surface concentrations on a relevant timescale.

Figure 7 suggests that dew and fog evaporation can enhance the frequently observed morning increase in NH_3 . It is unlikely that soil emissions contribute to this increase as deposition to the soil is predicted during the morning.

More research is needed to explore seasonal and annual trends in Γ_{soil} , Γ_{stomata} and χ_{canopy} across all land types, particularly those lacking in measurements. Since regional scale models require these parameters as direct inputs there is great utility in taking a “bottom-up” approach (i.e. measuring Γ instead of inferring it from flux data). Even though non-fertilized fields have lower nitrogen content, evidence provided here suggests surface–atmosphere exchange can still affect near-surface concentrations and that this process should be considered when measuring ambient NH_3 over non-fertilized surfaces. The role of fog and dew as a night-time reservoir for water-soluble

BGD

11, 7541–7574, 2014

Soil-atmosphere exchange of NH_3 in a non-fertilized grassland

G. R. Wentworth et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

⏪

⏩

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



gases also requires further attention as it may greatly enhance morning NH_3 concentrations and is currently not incorporated in models.

Acknowledgements. The AIM-IC was available through support to J. G. M. from the Canada Foundation for Innovation and the Ontario Research Fund. G. R. W. and P. K. G. acknowledge funding from the NSERC Integrating Atmospheric Chemistry and Physics from Earth to Space (IACPES) program. The authors are grateful to Environment Canada and the staff at CARE, as well as Greg Evans and Cheol-Heon Jeong for providing a mobile lab to house the instrumentation during the campaign.

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Soil-atmosphere exchange of NH_3 in a non-fertilized grassland

G. R. Wentworth et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

◀

▶

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



Soil-atmosphere exchange of NH₃ in a non-fertilized grassland

G. R. Wentworth et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures



Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



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Soil-atmosphere exchange of NH₃ in a non-fertilized grassland

G. R. Wentworth et al.

[Title Page](#)
[Abstract](#)
[Introduction](#)
[Conclusions](#)
[References](#)
[Tables](#)
[Figures](#)




[Back](#)
[Close](#)
[Full Screen / Esc](#)
[Printer-friendly Version](#)
[Interactive Discussion](#)


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Soil-atmosphere exchange of NH₃ in a non-fertilized grassland

G. R. Wentworth et al.

[Title Page](#)
[Abstract](#)
[Introduction](#)
[Conclusions](#)
[References](#)
[Tables](#)
[Figures](#)




[Back](#)
[Close](#)
[Full Screen / Esc](#)
[Printer-friendly Version](#)
[Interactive Discussion](#)


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Soil-atmosphere exchange of NH₃ in a non-fertilized grassland

G. R. Wentworth et al.

[Title Page](#)
[Abstract](#)
[Introduction](#)
[Conclusions](#)
[References](#)
[Tables](#)
[Figures](#)
[Back](#)
[Close](#)
[Full Screen / Esc](#)
[Printer-friendly Version](#)
[Interactive Discussion](#)


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Soil-atmosphere exchange of NH₃ in a non-fertilized grassland

G. R. Wentworth et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

◀

▶

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



Table 1. Soil parameters measured in this study.

Date	Site	[NH ₄ ⁺] (mg kg ⁻¹ wet soil)	pH (1 : 1 slurry soil : deionized water)	Average Γ_{soil} ($\pm 1\sigma$)
13 Aug	1	1.4	6.9	978 ± 750
	2	1.67	7.3	
	3	0.85	7	
28 Aug	1	1.43	6.6	290 ± 110
	2	0.31	7	
	3	0.87	6.9	
13 Sep	1	1.31	5.81	51 ± 20
	2	0.17	6.87	
	3	0.51	6.09	
20 Sep	1	1.01	5.8	176 ± 140
	2	0.89	6.81	
	3	0.94	6.53	
25 Sep	1	2.1	6.22	172 ± 43
	2	0.6	6.57	
	3	0.93	6.59	
27 Sep	1	0.61	6.16	91 ± 40
	2	0.46	6.59	
	3	0.25	6.95	

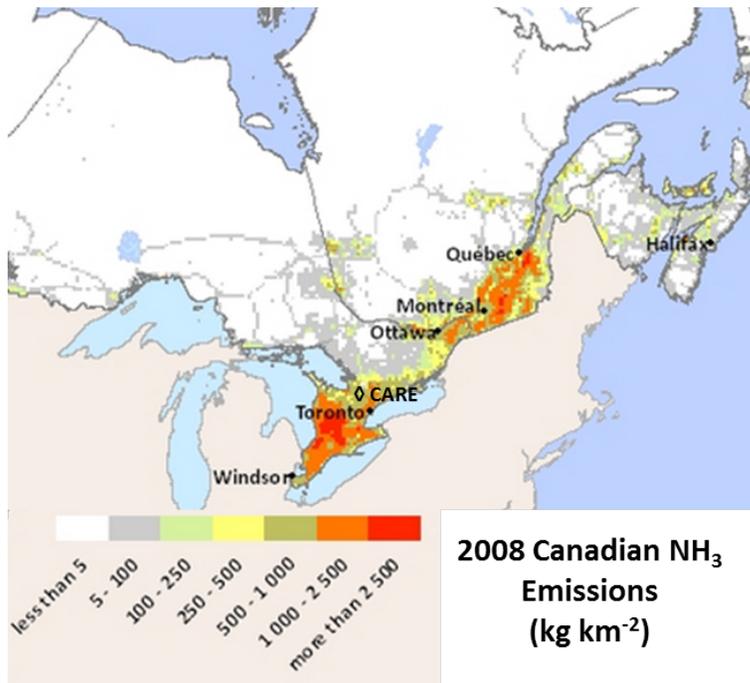


Figure 1. Location of CARE (◇) and major cities in the surrounding area. The map is coloured by annual NH₃ emissions according to the 2008 emission inventory.

BGD

11, 7541–7574, 2014

Soil-atmosphere exchange of NH₃ in a non-fertilized grassland

G. R. Wentworth et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

⏪

⏩

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



Soil-atmosphere exchange of NH_3 in a non-fertilized grassland

G. R. Wentworth et al.

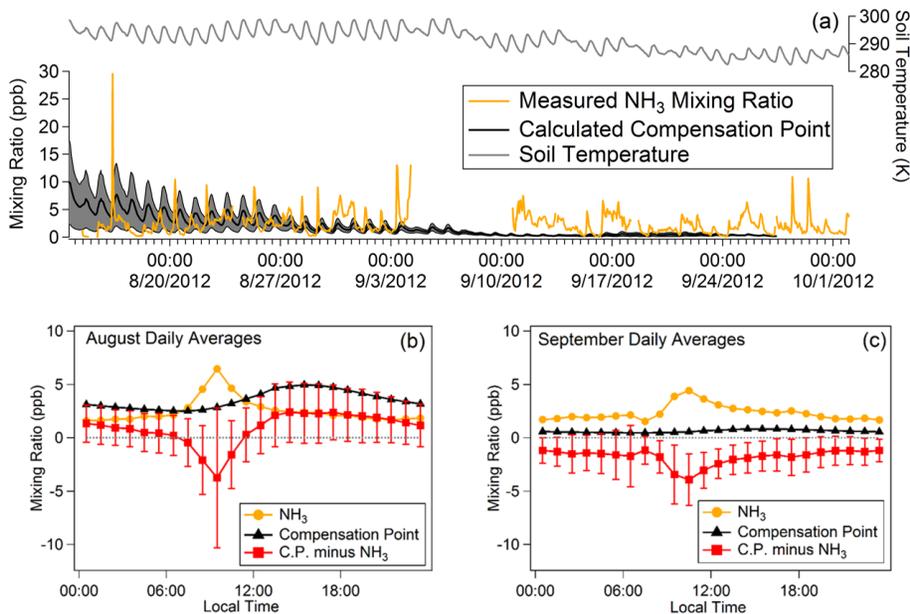


Figure 3. (a) Time series of NH_3 mixing ratio ($[\text{NH}_3]$, orange trace), χ_{soil} (black trace), and soil temperature (T_{soil} , grey trace) throughout the campaign. χ_{soil} was calculated using a linear interpolation of Γ_{soil} and hourly soil temperature measurements. The shaded region around χ_{soil} was calculated by linear interpolation of $\pm 1\sigma$ of Γ_{soil} and reflects the uncertainty in χ_{soil} as a result of uncertainty in Γ_{soil} measurements. (b) and (c) show time of day plots for the average $[\text{NH}_3]$, χ_{soil} , and difference between the two ($\chi_{\text{soil}} - [\text{NH}_3]$, red trace) for August and September, respectively. Errors bars in (b) and (c) represent $\pm 1\sigma$, and are only included for the difference trace for clarity.

[Title Page](#)
[Abstract](#)
[Introduction](#)
[Conclusions](#)
[References](#)
[Tables](#)
[Figures](#)
[Back](#)
[Close](#)
[Full Screen / Esc](#)
[Printer-friendly Version](#)
[Interactive Discussion](#)


Soil-atmosphere exchange of NH_3 in a non-fertilized grassland

G. R. Wentworth et al.

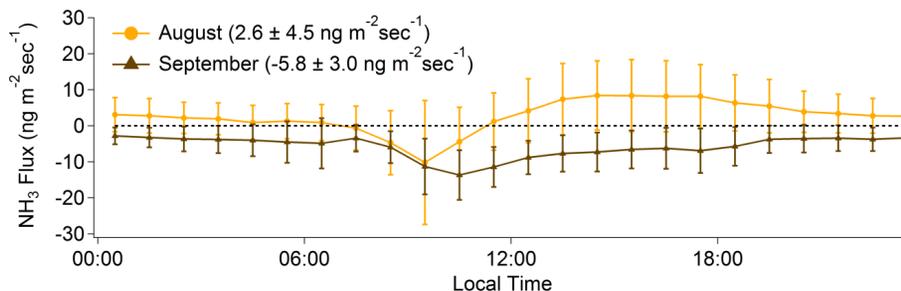


Figure 4. Time of day plot showing the average hourly NH_3 flux in August (orange trace) and September (brown trace). A positive flux indicates emission from the soil, whereas a negative flux indicates deposition from the atmosphere.

[Title Page](#)[Abstract](#)[Introduction](#)[Conclusions](#)[References](#)[Tables](#)[Figures](#)[◀](#)[▶](#)[◀](#)[▶](#)[Back](#)[Close](#)[Full Screen / Esc](#)[Printer-friendly Version](#)[Interactive Discussion](#)

Soil-atmosphere exchange of NH_3 in a non-fertilized grassland

G. R. Wentworth et al.

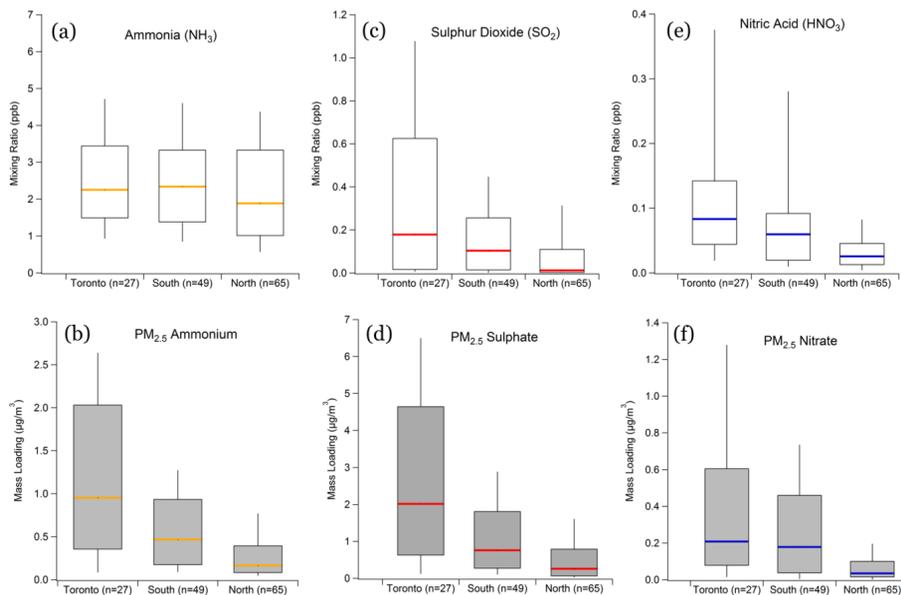


Figure 5. Atmospheric concentrations of various constituents: **(a)** NH_3 , **(b)** particulate NH_4^+ , **(c)** SO_2 , **(d)** particulate SO_4^{2-} , **(e)** HNO_3 , and **(f)** particulate NO_3^- binned by air mass origin calculated from HYSPLIT back trajectories every 6 h throughout the campaign. The line denotes the median value, the interquartile range is encompassed within the box, and the end of the whiskers are the 10th and 90th percentiles. The number of back trajectories in each bin is given on the x-axis in brackets.

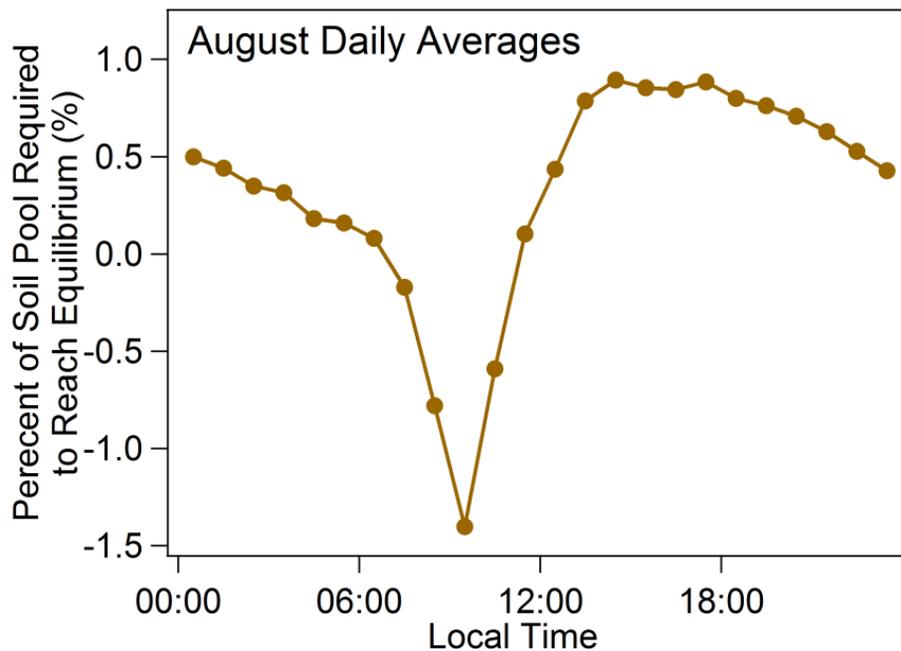


Figure 6. Estimated percent of the soil NH_4^+ pool required to equilibrate with the boundary layer (assumed to be 1000 m) using the average fluxes during August. It was assumed that the top 10 cm of soil exchanges and the density of soil is 1.5 g cm^{-3} . Positive values indicate fluxes are from the soil to the atmosphere (i.e. the soil is losing NH_4^+).

Soil-atmosphere exchange of NH_3 in a non-fertilized grassland

G. R. Wentworth et al.

Title Page

Abstract Introduction

Conclusions References

Tables Figures

◀ ▶

◀ ▶

Back Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



