

# 1 Carbon Dioxide and Methane Fluxes at the Air-Sea Interface of Red 2 Sea Mangroves

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## 11 12 Abstract

13  
14 Mangrove forests are highly productive tropical and subtropical coastal systems that provide a  
15 variety of ecosystem services, including the sequestration of carbon. While mangroves are  
16 reported to be the most intense carbon sinks among all forests, they can also support large  
17 emissions of greenhouse gases (GHG), such as carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and methane (CH<sub>4</sub>), to the  
18 atmosphere. However, data derived from arid mangrove systems like the Red Sea are lacking.  
19 Here, we report net emission rates of CO<sub>2</sub> and CH<sub>4</sub> from mangroves along the eastern coast of  
20 the Red Sea, and assess the relative role of these two gases in supporting total GHG emissions to  
21 the atmosphere. Diel CO<sub>2</sub> and CH<sub>4</sub> emission rates ranged from -3452 to 7500 μmol CO<sub>2</sub> m<sup>-2</sup> d<sup>-1</sup>  
22 and from 0.9 to 13.3 μmol CH<sub>4</sub> m<sup>-2</sup> d<sup>-1</sup>, respectively. The rates reported here fall within  
23 previously reported ranges for both CO<sub>2</sub> and CH<sub>4</sub>, but maximum CO<sub>2</sub> and CH<sub>4</sub> flux rates in the  
24 Red Sea are 10 to 100-fold below those previously reported for mangroves elsewhere. Based on  
25 the isotopic composition of the CO<sub>2</sub> and CH<sub>4</sub> produced, we identified potential origins of the  
26 organic matter that support GHG emissions. In all but one mangrove stand, GHG emissions  
27 appear to be supported by organic matter from mixed sources, potentially reducing CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes  
28 and instead enhancing CH<sub>4</sub> production, a finding that highlights the importance of determining  
29 the origin of organic matter in GHG emissions. Methane was the main source of CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalents  
30 despite the comparatively low emission rates in most of the sampled mangroves, and therefore

31 deserves careful monitoring in this region. By further resolving GHG fluxes in arid mangroves,  
32 we will better ascertain the role of these forests in global carbon budgets.

33

34

## 35 1 Introduction

36

37 Mangrove forests, typically growing in the intertidal zones of tropical and subtropical coasts, are  
38 highly productive components of coastal ecosystems and adapted to high salinity and anoxic  
39 conditions associated with waterlogged sediments. Mangrove forests cover a global estimated  
40 area of 137,760 km<sup>2</sup> (Giri et al., 2011) and are typically constrained by temperature, with  
41 greatest biomass and species diversity in the equatorial zone (Alongi, 2012). Mangroves rank  
42 amongst the most threatened ecosystems in the biosphere, with losses estimated at 50% of their  
43 global extent over the past 50 years (Alongi, 2012). These losses affect nearly all mangrove  
44 regions but the Red Sea, where mangrove coverage has increased by 12% over the past four  
45 decades (Almahasheer et al., 2016).

46

47 Loss of mangrove forest represents a loss of valuable ecosystem services, including habitat and  
48 nursery for marine species, coastal protection from erosion due to wave action, and the filtration  
49 of harmful pollutants from terrestrial sources (Alongi, 2008), as well as loss of CO<sub>2</sub> sink  
50 capacity. Additionally, mangroves can become a source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions  
51 from disturbed soil carbon stocks (Donato et al., 2011; Alongi, 2014). Hence, mangrove  
52 conservation and restoration have been proposed as important components of so-called Blue  
53 Carbon strategies to mitigate climate change (Duarte, et al., 2013). Indeed, mangroves are  
54 reported to be the most intense carbon sinks among all forests, supporting carbon sequestration  
55 rates and organic carbon stocks as much as five times higher than those in terrestrial forests  
56 (Donato et al., 2011). While mangrove forests cover less than 1% of total coastal ocean area,  
57 they contribute to almost 15% of total carbon sequestration in coastal ecosystems (Alongi, 2012),  
58 making mangrove forests highly effective in terms of carbon sequestration per unit area. The  
59 management of mangroves to maximize CO<sub>2</sub> removal and subsequent storage is gaining  
60 momentum as a cost-effective strategy to mitigate climate change.

61

62 However, mangrove forests act as both carbon sinks and sources and have been reported to  
63 support large GHG emissions in the forms of CO<sub>2</sub> and CH<sub>4</sub> (Allen et al., 2007; Kristensen et al.,  
64 2008a; Chen et al., 2016). Whereas concerns are focused on GHG emissions following mangrove  
65 disturbance, estimated at 0.02 – 0.12 Pg C yr<sup>-1</sup> globally (Donato et al., 2011), undisturbed

66 mangrove sediments also support GHG emissions (Purvaja and Ramesh, 2000; Kristensen et al.,  
67 2008b; Chauhan et al., 2015). Recent reports specifically highlight the importance of methane in  
68 flux estimates, as emissions of CH<sub>4</sub>, with a higher global warming potential, can offset mangrove  
69 carbon burial by as much as 20% (Rosentreter et al., 2018b). Previous studies on GHG emission  
70 rates either focus on the soil-atmosphere interface, highlighting substantial flux ranges with  
71 mangroves reported to act as negligible (Alongi, 2005) to considerable sources (Livesley and  
72 Andrusiak, 2012; Chen et al., 2016), or examine net fluxes at the air-sea interface, with few  
73 studies in arid systems. Comparisons of carbon sequestration rates between mangrove stands  
74 have revealed that climatic conditions play an important role, with mangroves in the arid tropics,  
75 such as those in the Red Sea, supporting the lowest carbon sequestration rates (Almahasheer et  
76 al. 2017). Likewise, GHG emissions from mangrove forests may vary with climate, with most  
77 reported rates to-date derived from the wet tropics (Alongi et al., 2005; Chauhan et al., 2015;  
78 Chen et al., 2016). Whereas Red Sea mangroves are considered to play a minor role as CO<sub>2</sub>  
79 sinks, their role may be greater than portrayed by low carbon burial rates if they also support  
80 very low GHG emissions, thereby leading to a balance comparable to mangroves in the wet  
81 tropics.

82 Here we report air-sea emission rates of CO<sub>2</sub> and CH<sub>4</sub>, along with their carbon isotopic  
83 composition, from incubations of inundated mangrove sediments cores along the Saudi coast of  
84 the Red Sea. We assess the relative role of these two gases in supporting total GHG emissions as  
85 well as their fluctuations along the day-night cycle.

86

## 87 **2 Materials and Methods**

88

### 89 **2.1 Study area**

90

91 We sampled seven mangrove forests along the eastern coast of the Red Sea (Fig. 1). We  
92 collected triplicate sediment cores by inserting translucent PVC tubes (30.5 cm in height and 9.5  
93 cm in diameter) into mangrove sediments, collecting approx. 20 cm of sediment and a top  
94 seawater layer. The overlying water was regularly replaced by fresh seawater from the  
95 corresponding station in order to fill the remaining core volume and to measure CO<sub>2</sub> and CH<sub>4</sub>  
96 fluxes from underlying sediments during incubations. Mangrove sediments were sampled five to

97 ten meters from the forest edge, typically in the center of the mangrove belt. We sampled two  
98 stations (S1 and S2) in January and February 2017 and the other five mangrove stations (S3-S7)  
99 in March on board the R/V Thuwal as part of a scientific cruise. The cores collected from S1 and  
100 S2 were immediately transported to the laboratory, placed in seawater baths and enclosed in  
101 environmental growth chambers (Percival Scientific Inc., Perry, IA, USA) with 12:12 light  
102 cycles at a constant temperature of 26°C. The sediment cores collected during the scientific  
103 cruise were transported immediately on board and placed in open aquarium tanks with running  
104 seawater in order to keep them close to *in situ* temperature. Salinity and temperature were  
105 routinely recorded using a CTD. Additionally, sediment chlorophyll *a* and nutrient (organic  
106 carbon and nitrogen) content were analyzed from cores collected during the scientific cruise.

107

## 108 **2.2 Sediment characteristics**

109

110 The chlorophyll *a* content of the sediment was measured by fluorometry. The surface layer of  
111 each replicate core was collected and frozen until further analysis. Prior to chlorophyll *a*  
112 extraction, the sediment samples were left at room temperature to thaw. The chlorophyll *a*  
113 was extracted by adding 7 ml of 90% acetone to 2 ml of sediment sample. After a 24h incubation at  
114 4° C in dark conditions, the samples were centrifuged and the chlorophyll *a* content in the  
115 supernatant was measured on a Trilogy fluorometer. The nutrient (organic carbon and nitrogen)  
116 content of the sediment was analyzed on an Organic Elemental Analyzer (Flash 2000) after  
117 acidification of sediment samples. —

118

## 119 **2.3 Measurement of greenhouse gas fluxes**

120

121 We measured CO<sub>2</sub> and CH<sub>4</sub> air-sea fluxes using two different techniques. The CO<sub>2</sub> and CH<sub>4</sub>  
122 fluxes from stations S1 and S2 were measured using the closed water circuit technique and the  
123 CO<sub>2</sub> and CH<sub>4</sub> fluxes from the rest of the stations sampled during the scientific cruise (S3-S7)  
124 were measured using the headspace technique.

125

### 126 **2.3.1 Measurement of CO<sub>2</sub> and CH<sub>4</sub> fluxes in sediment core incubations using** 127 **closed water circuit technique**

128

129 We incubated mangrove sediment cores from stations S1 and S2 using a closed water circuit  
130 technique in order to measure changes in CO<sub>2</sub> and CH<sub>4</sub> concentrations. Before starting the  
131 incubation, the seawater above the sediment from each core was replaced by fresh seawater  
132 collected from the same location, avoiding disturbance of the sediment. Then, the seawater from  
133 the core was recirculated by a peristaltic pump in an enclosed water circuit through a membrane  
134 equilibrator (Liqui-cel mini module, 3M, Minnesota, USA). This setup enables the equilibration  
135 of gases in dissolution with an enclosed air circuit. The air from the enclosed air circuit was then  
136 passed through a desiccant column (calcium sulfate, WA Hammond Drierite Co., LTD, Ohio,  
137 USA) and flowed into a cavity ring-down spectrometer (CRDS; Picarro Inc., Santa Clara, CA,  
138 USA) to continuously measure the CO<sub>2</sub> and CH<sub>4</sub> concentration. We ran the incubations for at  
139 least 30 minutes under light (200 μmol photons m<sup>-2</sup> s<sup>-1</sup>) and dark conditions.

140

141 The concentration of CO<sub>2</sub> in the water circuit (μmol ml<sup>-1</sup>) was calculated by Eq. (1):

$$142 \quad [CO_2] = H_{cp} \times [HP\_CO_2] \times (1 - p_{H_2O}), \quad (1)$$

143 where  $H_{cp}$  is the Henry constant (mol ml<sup>-1</sup> atm<sup>-1</sup>) calculated using R marelac package (Soetaert  
144 et al., 2016);  $[HP\_CO_2]$  is the given concentration of CO<sub>2</sub> (ppm), and  $p_{H_2O}$  is the water vapor  
145 pressure (atm).

146 The CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes were calculated from the change in CO<sub>2</sub> concentration over time during our  
147 incubations, correcting by the seawater volume present in each core. Then, the fluxes were  
148 transformed to an aerial basis (μmol m<sup>-2</sup> h<sup>-1</sup>) by taking into account the core surface area. Finally,  
149 the daily fluxes (μmol m<sup>-2</sup> d<sup>-1</sup>) were calculated by multiplying the CO<sub>2</sub> flux obtained under light  
150 conditions by the number of light hours plus the CO<sub>2</sub> flux obtained under dark conditions by the  
151 number of dark hours.

152 The CH<sub>4</sub> fluxes were calculated in the same manner as for the CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes, with the exception  
153 that the Henry constant was calculated using Eq. (2):

$$154 \quad \beta = H_{cp} \times (RT), \quad (2)$$

155 where  $H_{cp}$  is the Henry constant ( $\text{mol ml}^{-1} \text{atm}^{-1}$ ),  $R$  is the ideal gas constant ( $82.057338 \text{ atm ml}$   
156  $\text{mol}^{-1} \text{K}^{-1}$ ),  $T$  is standard temperature ( $273.15 \text{ K}$ ), and  $\beta$  is the Bunsen solubility coefficient of  
157  $\text{CH}_4$ , extracted from Wiesenburg and Guinasso (1979).

### 158 **2.3.2 Measurement of $\text{CO}_2$ and $\text{CH}_4$ fluxes in sediment core incubations using the** 159 **headspace technique**

160 Mangrove sediment cores from stations S3 to S7 were incubated using a headspace technique in  
161 order to measure changes in  $\text{CO}_2$  and  $\text{CH}_4$  concentrations. Before starting the incubation, the  
162 seawater above the sediment from each core was replaced by fresh seawater from the running  
163 seawater system, leaving a headspace of 200 ml. Each core was sealed with a stopper equipped  
164 with a gas-tight valve serving as a headspace sampling port. The sealed core was left for 1 hour  
165 before the first headspace sampling to allow equilibration between seawater and air phases. Each  
166 core was sampled with a syringe, withdrawing 15 ml of air from the equilibrated headspace.  
167 Headspace samples were periodically drawn from each sediment incubation over a 24-hour  
168 incubation period. The  $\text{CO}_2$  and  $\text{CH}_4$  concentrations in the headspace samples along with their  
169 isotopic composition ( $\delta^{13}\text{C}-\text{CO}_2$  and  $\delta^{13}\text{C}-\text{CH}_4$ ) were measured with a CRDS (Picarro Inc., Santa  
170 Clara, CA, USA) connected to a small sample isotopic module extension (SSIM A0314, Picarro  
171 Inc., Santa Clara, CA, USA). We ran standards (730 ppm  $\text{CO}_2$ , 1.9 ppm  $\text{CH}_4$ ) before and after  
172 every three samples.

173 The concentration of dissolved  $\text{CO}_2$  in the seawater after equilibrium was calculated from the  
174 concentration in the equilibrated headspace (ppm) as described previously by Wilson et al.  
175 (2012) for other gases:

$$176 \quad [\text{CO}_2]_w = 10^{-6} \beta m_a p_{dry}, \quad (3)$$

177 where  $\beta$  is the Bunsen solubility coefficient of  $\text{CO}_2$  ( $\text{mol ml}^{-1} \text{atm}^{-1}$ ),  $m_a$  is the given  
178 concentration of  $\text{CO}_2$  in the equilibrated headspace (ppm), and  $p_{dry}$  is atmospheric pressure (atm)  
179 of dry air. The Bunsen solubility coefficient of  $\text{CO}_2$  was calculated using Eq. (4):

$$180 \quad \beta = H_{cp} \times (RT) \quad (4)$$

181 where  $H_{cp}$  is the Henry constant ( $\text{mol ml}^{-1} \text{ atm}^{-1}$ ) calculated using R marelac package (Soetaert  
182 et al., 2016),  $R$  is the ideal gas constant ( $82.057338 \text{ atm ml mol}^{-1} \text{ K}^{-1}$ ) and  $T$  is standard  
183 temperature (273.15 K). The atmospheric pressure of dry air ( $p_{dry}$ ) was calculated using Eq. (5):

$$184 \quad p_{dry} = p_{wet} (1 - \%H_2O) \quad (5)$$

185 where  $p_{wet}$  is the atmospheric pressure of wet air corrected by the effect of multiple syringe  
186 draws from the same core, applying Boyle's law.

187 The initial concentration of dissolved  $\text{CO}_2$  in seawater before equilibrium was then calculated as:

$$188 \quad [\text{CO}_2]_{aq} = ([\text{CO}_2]_w V_w + 10^{-6} m_a V_a) / V_w \quad (6)$$

189 where  $[\text{CO}_2]_w$  is the concentration of dissolved  $\text{CO}_2$  in the seawater after equilibrium,  $V_w$  is the  
190 volume of seawater (ml) and  $V_a$  is the headspace volume (ml) in the core. Finally, treating the  
191 gas as ideal, the units were converted to nM using Eq. (7):

$$192 \quad [\text{CO}_2]_{aq} = 10^9 * p_{dry} [\text{CO}_2]_{aq} / (RT) \quad (7)$$

193 where  $R$  is the ideal gas constant ( $0.08206 \text{ atm l mol}^{-1} \text{ K}^{-1}$ ) and  $T$  is temperature (K).

194 The  $\text{CO}_2$  fluxes were calculated from the change in  $\text{CO}_2$  concentration over time during our  
195 incubations, correcting by the seawater volume present in each core. Then, the fluxes were  
196 transformed to an aerial basis ( $\mu\text{mol m}^{-2} \text{ d}^{-1}$ ) by taking into account the core surface area. Finally,  
197 the day and night fluxes ( $\mu\text{mol m}^{-2} \text{ h}^{-1}$ ) were calculated from the change in  $\text{CO}_2$  concentration  
198 between consecutive samplings during day and night time, respectively.

199 The  $\text{CH}_4$  fluxes were calculated in the same manner as for the  $\text{CO}_2$  fluxes, with the exception  
200 that the Bunsen solubility coefficient of  $\text{CH}_4$  was calculated according to Wiesenburg and  
201 Guinasso (1979).

202

## 203 **2.4 Isotopic composition of $\text{CO}_2$ ( $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ - $\text{CO}_2$ ) and $\text{CH}_4$ ( $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ - $\text{CH}_4$ )**

204



205 The isotopic signature of the CO<sub>2</sub> and CH<sub>4</sub> produced during incubations was estimated by  
206 conducting keeling plots (Pataki et al. 2003; Thom et al. 2003; Garcias-Bonet and Duarte 2017).  
207 Briefly, the δ<sup>13</sup>C of the CO<sub>2</sub> and CH<sub>4</sub> produced was extracted from the intercept of the linear  
208 regression between the inverse of the gas partial pressure and the isotopic signature.

209

210 The data set is available from Sea et al. (2018).

211

### 212 **3 Results**

213

214 The mean (± SE) diel CO<sub>2</sub> and CH<sub>4</sub> emission rates for the seven sites were 372 ± 1309 μmol CO<sub>2</sub>  
215 m<sup>-2</sup> d<sup>-1</sup> and 5.6 ± 1.6 μmol CH<sub>4</sub> m<sup>-2</sup> d<sup>-1</sup>, respectively. We observed high variability among the  
216 seven mangrove forest sites studied, with net CO<sub>2</sub> and CH<sub>4</sub> diel emission rates ranging from  
217 -3452 to 7500 μmol CO<sub>2</sub> m<sup>-2</sup> d<sup>-1</sup> and from 0.9 to 13.3 μmol CH<sub>4</sub> m<sup>-2</sup> d<sup>-1</sup>, respectively (Table 1).

218

219 Mangrove sediments absorbed CO<sub>2</sub> during daytime and emitted CO<sub>2</sub> during night time at 5 out of  
220 7 stations, with means (± SE) of -54.6 ± 37 μmol CO<sub>2</sub> m<sup>-2</sup> h<sup>-1</sup> and 86 ± 120 μmol CO<sub>2</sub> m<sup>-2</sup> h<sup>-1</sup>  
221 respectively (Table 1, Fig. 2). However, in three out of seven sites, heterotrophic activities  
222 outbalanced photosynthesis on a 24h basis. At two sites, S3 and S6, we found an increase of the  
223 CO<sub>2</sub> emissions between day and night, contradictory to the classical daytime primary  
224 production–night-time respiration pattern, possibly indicative of a light mediated increase of  
225 heterotrophic processes.

226

227 Methane emissions did not show circadian patterns with linear increases in CH<sub>4</sub> concentration in  
228 our incubations (Fig. 2) and with similar light and dark rates (0.26 ± 0.08 and 0.21 ± 0.07 μmol  
229 CH<sub>4</sub> m<sup>-2</sup> h<sup>-1</sup> (mean ± SE), respectively (Table 1). In terms of total GHG contribution, the mean  
230 CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalents (CO<sub>2</sub>e) emission to the atmosphere was 564 ± 1284 μmol CO<sub>2</sub>e m<sup>-2</sup> d<sup>-1</sup> (mean ±  
231 SE) using the 100 years' time horizon global warming potential (Myhre et al., 2013). Inundated  
232 mangrove sediments were net emitters of CO<sub>2</sub>e in three out of seven sites (Table 1), and in five  
233 out of seven mangrove stands sampled, CH<sub>4</sub> was the main source of CO<sub>2</sub>e to the atmosphere.

234

235 While no overall trend was revealed through the relationship between day and night fluxes for  
236 CO<sub>2</sub> and CH<sub>4</sub> (Fig. 3), consistencies are evident at specific mangrove stations. For example,  
237 night CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are clearly visible at S2, while S3 appears to emit CO<sub>2</sub> during daylight  
238 hours. No relationship was apparent between GHG fluxes and the densities of organic carbon or  
239 nitrogen in the sediment. There was no discernible trend between gas fluxes and chlorophyll *a*  
240 content in surface sediments.

241  
242 The isotopic signatures of the produced CO<sub>2</sub> ( $\delta^{13}\text{C-CO}_2$ ) ranged from -11.21 to -25.72 ‰ as  
243 derived from keeling plots (Fig. 4, Table 1). The  $\delta^{13}\text{C-CO}_2$  was similar for almost all stations,  
244 with the exception of S3 that had a  $\delta^{13}\text{C-CO}_2$  of -25.72 ‰. The isotopic composition of the  
245 produced CH<sub>4</sub> ( $\delta^{13}\text{C-CH}_4$ ) ranged from -71.28 to -87.08 ‰, with a mean  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  signature of -80.61  
246 ‰ (Fig. 4, Table 1).

247

## 248 **4 Discussion**

249

### 250 **4.1 Greenhouse gas fluxes**

251

252 The CO<sub>2</sub> and CH<sub>4</sub> emissions reported in this study show that Red Sea mangroves can act as a  
253 source of GHG to the atmosphere. Values reported from this study fall within previously  
254 reported ranges for both CH<sub>4</sub> and CO<sub>2</sub>, but maximum CH<sub>4</sub> and CO<sub>2</sub> flux rates in the Red Sea are  
255 up to 100 fold below those reported elsewhere. Compiled global values for GHG fluxes range  
256 from -16.9 to 629.2 mmol CO<sub>2</sub> m<sup>-2</sup> d<sup>-1</sup> and -2.1 to 25,974 μmol CH<sub>4</sub> m<sup>-2</sup> d<sup>-1</sup>, with mean (±SE)  
257 maximum emission rates averaging 202.3 ± 48 mmol m<sup>-2</sup> d<sup>-1</sup> and 4783.6 ± 2783 μmol m<sup>-2</sup> d<sup>-1</sup> for  
258 CO<sub>2</sub> and CH<sub>4</sub> respectively (Table 2).

259

260 The variability in GHG emission rates reported in this study could be attributed to spatial  
261 differences, as cores were taken from different parts of each forest. Indeed, previous studies  
262 report significant discrepancies in emission rates in fringe versus forest positions (Allen et al.,  
263 2007). Additionally it is possible that differences in flux rates may exist as a result of sediment  
264 disturbance from the coring process. The effects of mangrove pneumatophores and possible  
265 bioturbation from infaunal species such as burrowing crabs were not considered here yet could

266 pose another possible source of variation in results as the presence of these structures influences  
267 oxygenation of sediment and pore water exchange, identified as driving factors in varying CO<sub>2</sub>  
268 levels (Call et al., 2014; Rosentreter et al., 2018). These factors likely affect relevant redox  
269 processes and would therefore be useful to quantify in future studies.

270  
271 Uniformity of day and night emission rates for CH<sub>4</sub> was observed in Red Sea mangrove stands,  
272 with mean ( $\pm$  SE) CH<sub>4</sub> emission rates of  $0.28 \pm 0.08 \mu\text{mol CH}_4 \text{ m}^{-2} \text{ h}^{-1}$  during the day and  $0.24 \pm$   
273  $0.08 \mu\text{mol CH}_4 \text{ m}^{-2} \text{ h}^{-1}$  during night; this is consistent with previous work reporting that emission  
274 rates for CH<sub>4</sub> do not vary significantly during light and dark hours in mangrove forests (Allen et  
275 al., 2007). It has been suggested instead that variables such as sediment temperature are more  
276 significant in their contributions to emission rates (Allen et al., 2007; Allen et al., 2011).  
277 Incubated sediment cores kept at constant temperature do not reflect the range of temperatures  
278 experienced by mangrove sediments over the diurnal cycle; future studies examining GHG  
279 emissions under more realistic temperature fluctuations are needed. Seasonal studies of longer  
280 duration have reported increased emission rates during warmer seasons (Chen et al., 2016;  
281 Livesley and Andrusiak, 2012). Methane concentrations typically remain low due to anaerobic  
282 methane oxidation processes that take place near sediment surfaces (Kristensen et al., 2008a),  
283 consistent with the low CH<sub>4</sub> emission rates from Red Sea mangrove sediments observed here.  
284 Additionally, environments of high salinity like the Red Sea have been associated with decreased  
285 CH<sub>4</sub> emissions, as sulfate-reducing bacteria are thought to outcompete methanogens  
286 (Poffenbarger et al., 2011).

287  
288 Methane emission rates at the air-sea interface of Red Sea mangrove sediments, although quite  
289 low, become more substantial when considered in terms of global warming potential. In this  
290 study, CH<sub>4</sub> was, despite the comparatively low emission rates, the main source of CO<sub>2</sub>e in the  
291 majority of sampled mangroves, and therefore deserves careful monitoring in this region.  
292 Reported organic carbon burial rates of Red Sea mangroves of  $3.42 \text{ mmol C m}^{-2} \text{ d}^{-1}$   
293 (Almahasheer et al. 2017) are 10 times larger than the combined average CO<sub>2</sub> and CH<sub>4</sub> emission  
294 rates reported here ( $0.37 \text{ mmol C m}^{-2} \text{ d}^{-1}$ ), suggesting that these mangrove sediments could act as  
295 net atmospheric carbon sinks; however, significant alkalinity and DIC exports have been  
296 identified from mangroves as well (Sippo et al., 2016), necessitating future studies which

297 measure these exports to neighboring habitats in order to close the carbon budget and determine  
298 the role of Red Sea mangroves in potential climate change mitigation. Currently, protection  
299 measures and further reforestation efforts are being deployed along the Red Sea that will further  
300 expand the area of mangroves (Almhasheer et al. 2016). The rationale for conserving mangroves  
301 in the climate change context is not adequately represented by their net carbon sink capacity  
302 when undisturbed, but rather by the emissions resulting from their disturbance. Indeed, previous  
303 studies analyzing anthropogenic impacts on methane emission rates from mangrove sediments  
304 have shown that disturbance significantly increases methane emissions (Purvaja and Ramesh,  
305 2001; Chen et al., 2011). This provides an additional rationale to conserve, and continue to  
306 expand, Red Sea mangroves.

307  
308 While this study provides new insights on GHG fluxes from arid mangroves, the methods used  
309 here solely measure the air-sea fluxes of dissolved gases. If CO<sub>2</sub> is produced from underlying  
310 sediments, it enters the water column and becomes a part of the carbonate system, with  
311 possibility of conversion to bicarbonate (HCO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup>) and carbonate (CO<sub>3</sub><sup>2-</sup>) ions; these dominating  
312 species represent over 99% of the dissolved inorganic carbon (DIC) under current atmospheric  
313 and oceanic conditions (Zeebe and Wolf-Gladrow, 2001). Therefore, the air-sea equilibration  
314 methods used in this study do not measure DIC fluxes, but only the fluxes of the dissolved CO<sub>2</sub>.  
315 component of this larger system.

316  
317 Frankignoulle and Borges (2001) show that CO<sub>2</sub> can be measured either directly (using  
318 equilibrator techniques and spectroscopy or chromatography) or indirectly (by making  
319 calculations based on pH, total alkalinity, and DIC). The methodology presented in this study  
320 represents the former, utilizing an air-sea equilibrator connected to a CRDS to measure GHG  
321 fluxes at the air-sea interface. Research conducted by Borges et al. (2003) utilizes the indirect  
322 approach, using pH and total alkalinity measurements in Papua New Guinea to calculate DIC  
323 and CO<sub>2(dis)</sub> (for a computational discussion see Frankignoulle and Borges, 2001). Both methods  
324 measure at the air-sea interface (Table Two) but are not directly comparable, as a full  
325 determination of the carbonate system was not carried out in the present study. Similarly, studies  
326 using equilibrator techniques that measure the dissolved CO<sub>2</sub> fraction of seawater to the  
327 atmosphere are influenced by the seawater carbonate system and further steps of isotopic fraction

328 (discussed below), and are therefore not directly comparable to those studies which measure  
329 GHG fluxes from exposed mangrove sediments to the atmosphere (Table Two).

330

#### 331 **4.2 Isotopic composition of emitted gases**

332

333 There were no relationships between GHG fluxes and sediment properties, such as chlorophyll *a*,  
334 nitrogen density, and organic carbon density, suggesting that other factors have greater influence  
335 on GHG flux rates in this region. Since mangroves can receive large contributions of organic  
336 carbon from other sources (Newell et al., 1995), such as algal mats, seagrass and seaweed,  
337 examination of the isotopic composition of emitted carbon provides insights into the origin of the  
338 organic carbon supporting GHG fluxes in mangrove sediments; however, it should be noted that  
339  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  values reported in this study occur after several steps of isotopic fractionation and may  
340 therefore influence results. Isotope effects can cause an unequal distribution of isotopes between  
341 DIC components; for example as  $\text{CO}_2$  is produced from mangrove sediments and becomes part  
342 of the carbonate system (likely forming  $\text{HCO}_3^-$  after equilibration), molecules containing the  
343 heavier carbon isotope—with a higher activation energy—will typically react more slowly  
344 (Zeebe and Wolf-Gladrow, 2001), promoting a higher concentration of the heavy isotope in  
345 unreacted  $\text{CO}_2$  and a relative depletion of this heavier isotope in resulting  $\text{HCO}_3^-$ . Similarly, this  
346 preferential incorporation and movement of molecules containing lighter isotopes can affect  
347 resulting carbon isotope ratios after air-sea equilibration (with depletion of lighter isotopes in  
348 seawater as a result of fractionation).  $\text{CO}_2$  measured in this study is subject to these processes  
349 and may not reflect the isotopic ratios of carbon originally emitted; rather, the signatures  
350 measured in this study should be seen as a proxy which reflects isotopic ratios of air-sea  
351 discrimination and biological processing (decomposition, respiration, and photosynthesis),  
352 resulting after carbon isotope fractionation. Interpretation of results is therefore subject to this  
353 limitation.

354

355 The isotopic signature of the  $\text{CO}_2$  ( $\delta^{13}\text{C}\text{-CO}_2$ ) produced by mangrove sediments in four out of the  
356 five mangrove stands with available isotopic data was heavier (from  $-11.2 \pm 0.6$  to  $-15.9 \pm 1.1$   
357 ‰; Table 1) than the isotopic signature of mangrove tissues, suggesting decomposition of  
358 organic matter from mixed sources (Kennedy et al. 2010). Specifically, the isotopic signature of

359 the mangroves found in the central Red Sea has been recently reported as  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{leaves}} = -26.98 \pm$   
360  $0.15 \text{ ‰}$ ,  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{stems}} = -25.75 \pm 0.16 \text{ ‰}$  and  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{roots}} = -24.90 \pm 0.17 \text{ ‰}$  for mangrove leaves, stems  
361 and roots while the mean isotopic signature of other primary producers in the central the Red Sea  
362 has been reported as  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{seaweed}} = -12.8 \pm 0.5 \text{ ‰}$  and  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{seagrass}} = -8.2 \pm 0.2 \text{ ‰}$  for seaweed and  
363 seagrass tissues, respectively (Almahasheer et al. 2017). However, in one mangrove stand (S3)  
364 the  $\delta^{13}\text{C}\text{-CO}_2$  was much lighter ( $-25.72 \pm 0.21 \text{ ‰}$ ), potentially indicating mangrove tissues. Thus,  
365 according to the isotopic signature, the  $\text{CO}_2$  produced in mangrove sediments would be  
366 supported by mangrove biomass in only one mangrove stand out of the five sampled sites with  
367 available isotopic data. Moreover, the mean isotopic signature of the  $\text{CH}_4$  produced in mangrove  
368 sediments ( $\delta^{13}\text{C}\text{-CH}_4 = -80.6 \text{ ‰}$ ) tentatively confirms its biogenic origin, which normally ranges  
369 from  $-40$  to  $-80 \text{ ‰}$ , depending on the isotopic signature of the organic compounds being  
370 biologically decomposed (Reeburgh, 2014). The lowest  $\delta^{13}\text{C}\text{-CH}_4$  was detected in S3, coinciding  
371 with the lowest  $\delta^{13}\text{C}\text{-CO}_2$  value, suggesting that the organic matter being decomposed by  
372 methanogens likely came from mangrove tissues as well.

373  
374 Interestingly, the mangrove with the lightest  $\delta^{13}\text{C}\text{-CO}_2$  and  $\delta^{13}\text{C}\text{-CH}_4$  (S3), showed the lowest  
375 daily  $\text{CO}_2$  flux ( $-1524 \pm 686 \text{ } \mu\text{mol CO}_2 \text{ m}^{-2} \text{ d}^{-1}$ ) but the highest  $\text{CH}_4$  emission rate ( $13.3 \pm 9.5$   
376  $\mu\text{mol CH}_4 \text{ m}^{-2} \text{ d}^{-1}$ ), compared to the fluxes detected in the rest of mangrove stands with available  
377 isotopic data. Part of the variability in the  $\text{CO}_2$  ( $R^2 = 0.42$ ) and  $\text{CH}_4$  ( $R^2 = 0.40$ ) emission rate  
378 seems to be explained by the origin of the organic matter being decomposed, estimated here as  
379 the  $\delta^{13}\text{C}\text{-CO}_2$  and  $\delta^{13}\text{C}\text{-CH}_4$ . Organic matter with lighter isotopic composition could enhance  
380  $\text{CO}_2$  emissions, whereas organic matter with heavier isotopic composition could enhance  $\text{CH}_4$   
381 emissions (Fig. 5), possibly suggesting a different preferential use of organic matter by different  
382 microbial groups in mangrove sediments. Future studies exploring this idea with further  
383 considerations of carbon isotope fractionation would help solidify the role of the origin of  
384 organic carbon stored in mangrove sediments on their GHG emissions.

385  
386 **5 Conclusion**  
387  
388 This study is first in reporting  $\text{CO}_2$  and  $\text{CH}_4$  fluxes from Red Sea mangrove sediments,  
389 contributing to the scant data on arid mangrove systems (Atwood et al. 2017, Almahasheer et al.

390 2017), essential to establish a solid baseline on GHG emissions for future studies. Results show  
391 that maximum CO<sub>2</sub> and CH<sub>4</sub> flux rates from Red Sea mangrove sediments are well below those  
392 reported elsewhere, and that, even when considered in terms of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalents, carbon burial  
393 rates largely outweigh GHG emission rates at the air-sea interface in this region. This study also  
394 highlights the importance of determining the source of organic matter in GHG flux studies, as  
395 emissions appear to be supported by organic matter from mixed sources in the majority of  
396 studied mangroves, potentially enhancing CH<sub>4</sub> production over CO<sub>2</sub> fluxes in this system.  
397 Seasonal variation should be considered in future studies on GHG emissions by Red Sea  
398 mangroves to better determine annual emission rates from this system, which reaches some of  
399 the warmest temperatures experienced by mangrove forests worldwide. Similarly, a wider spatial  
400 coverage within the mangrove forest should be considered to confidently determine net GHG  
401 fluxes that can be upscaled to the entire stock of Red Sea mangroves.

402 Methods presented in this study include the use of an air-sea equilibrator connected to a CRDS to  
403 measure GHG fluxes at the air-sea interface, measuring the dissolved CO<sub>2</sub> component of the  
404 larger seawater carbonate system. This methodology is one of many used to measure GHG flux  
405 rates; establishing a unified sampling technique at both the soil-atmosphere and air-seawater  
406 interface will aid future researchers in determining total carbon budgets and accurately informing  
407 policymakers of their findings. In combination with consideration of isotope effects, a full  
408 determination of the carbonate system will be beneficial in future studies to further resolve GHG  
409 fluxes in arid mangroves, allowing us to better ascertain the role of these forests in global carbon  
410 budgets.

411

412 *Data availability.* All data will be accessible in the repository Pangea pending manuscript  
413 acceptance.

414

415 *Competing interests.* The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

416

417 **Author contribution**

418 MAS, NG-B, VS and CMD designed the study. MAS and NG-B performed the measurements  
419 and calculations. MAS, NG-B, VS and CMD interpreted the results. All authors contributed  
420 substantially to the final manuscript.

421

## 422 **Acknowledgements**

423

424 This research was funded by King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST)  
425 through baseline funding to C.M.D. We thank D. Krause-Jensen, N. Massoudi, and K. Baldry  
426 for help during sampling, and the captain and crew of KAUST R/V Thuwal for support. M.A.S.  
427 was supported by King Abdullah University of Science and Technology through the VRSP  
428 program. We thank P. Carrillo de Albornoz for lab instrument support, and M. Ennasri for help  
429 with sediment analysis.

430



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615 FIGURE HEADINGS

616

617 **Fig. 1.** Mangrove stands sampled along the Saudi coast of the Red Sea. Numbers indicate  
618 positions of sampling sites from this study. S1 and S2: King Abdullah University of Science and  
619 Technology; S3: Duba; S4 and S5: Al Wahj; S6 and S7: Farasan Banks.

620

621 **Fig. 2.** Change in CO<sub>2</sub> (left panels) and CH<sub>4</sub> (right panels) concentrations over time in triplicated  
622 mangrove sediment cores from mangrove stations S3-S7. Shaded areas represent night time and  
623 each replicate is coded by different symbols.

624

625 **Fig. 3.** Relationship between day and night fluxes for CO<sub>2</sub> (top panel) and CH<sub>4</sub> (bottom panel) at  
626 all mangrove stations.

627

628 **Fig. 4.** Keeling plots for mangrove stations S3-S7, showing the linear regression of the inverse of  
629 CO<sub>2</sub> concentration (left panels) and CH<sub>4</sub> concentration (right panels) versus  $\delta^{13}\text{C}-\text{CO}_2$  and  $\delta^{13}\text{C}-$   
630 CH<sub>4</sub>. Y-intercepts were used to estimate the isotopic signatures of produced gases.

631

632 **Fig. 5.** Relation between the carbon isotopic signature of the produced CO<sub>2</sub> ( $\delta^{13}\text{C}-\text{CO}_2$ ) and CO<sub>2</sub>  
633 fluxes (top panel) and carbon isotopic signature of the produced CH<sub>4</sub> ( $\delta^{13}\text{C}-\text{CH}_4$ ) and the CH<sub>4</sub>  
634 fluxes (bottom panel) in Red Sea mangroves. Error bars indicate standard error of the mean.

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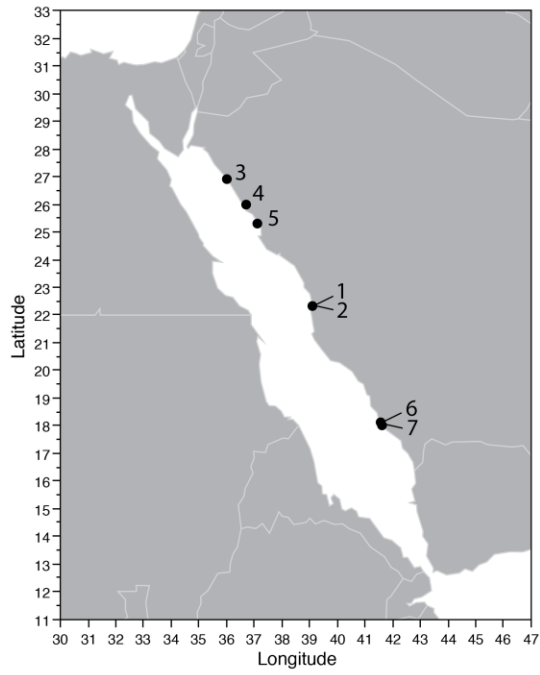
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645 **Figure 1**



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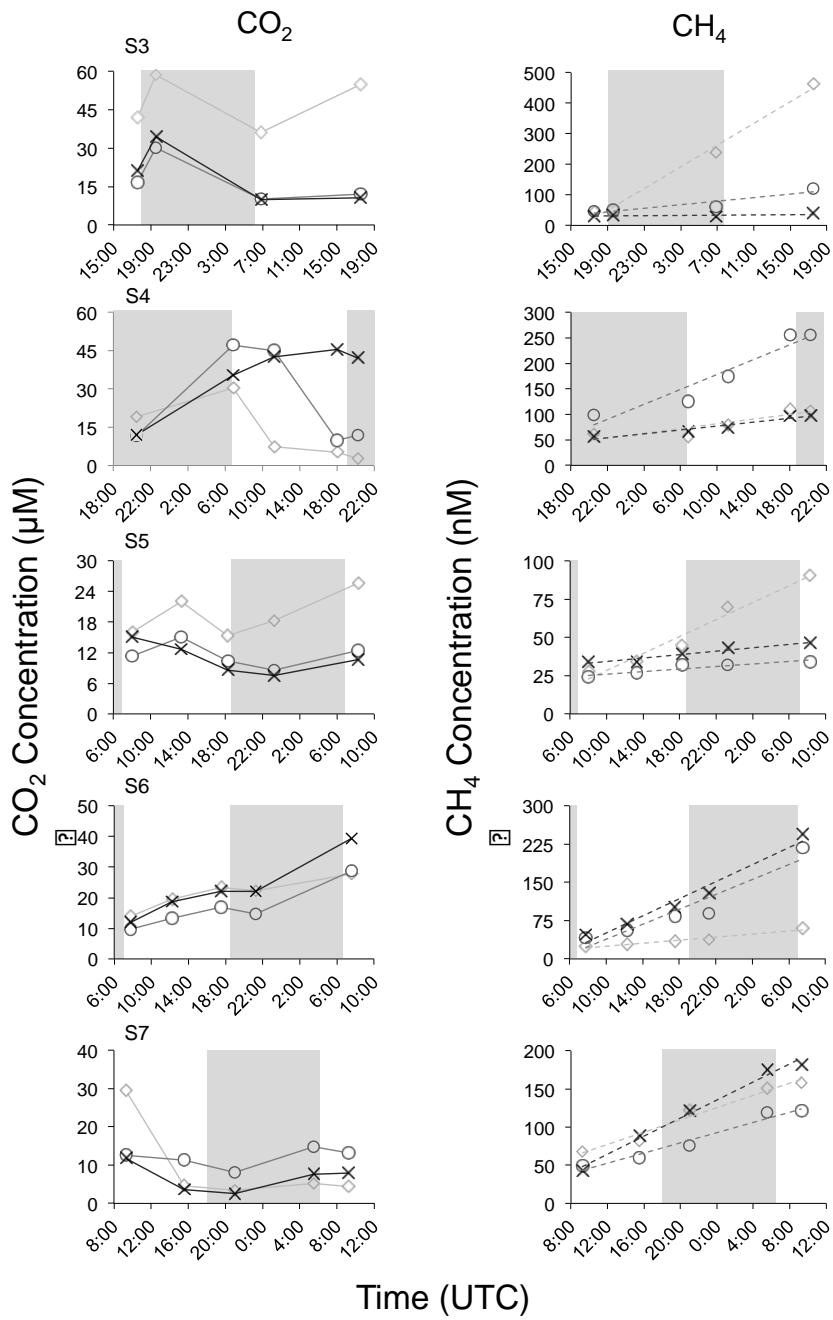
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655 **Figure 2**



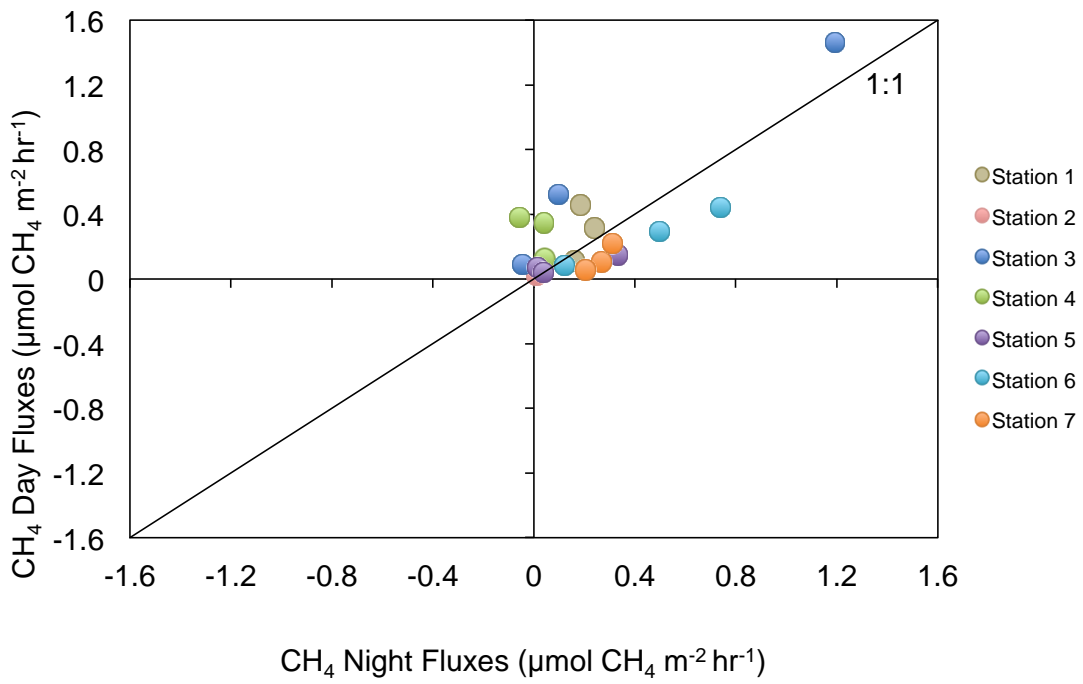
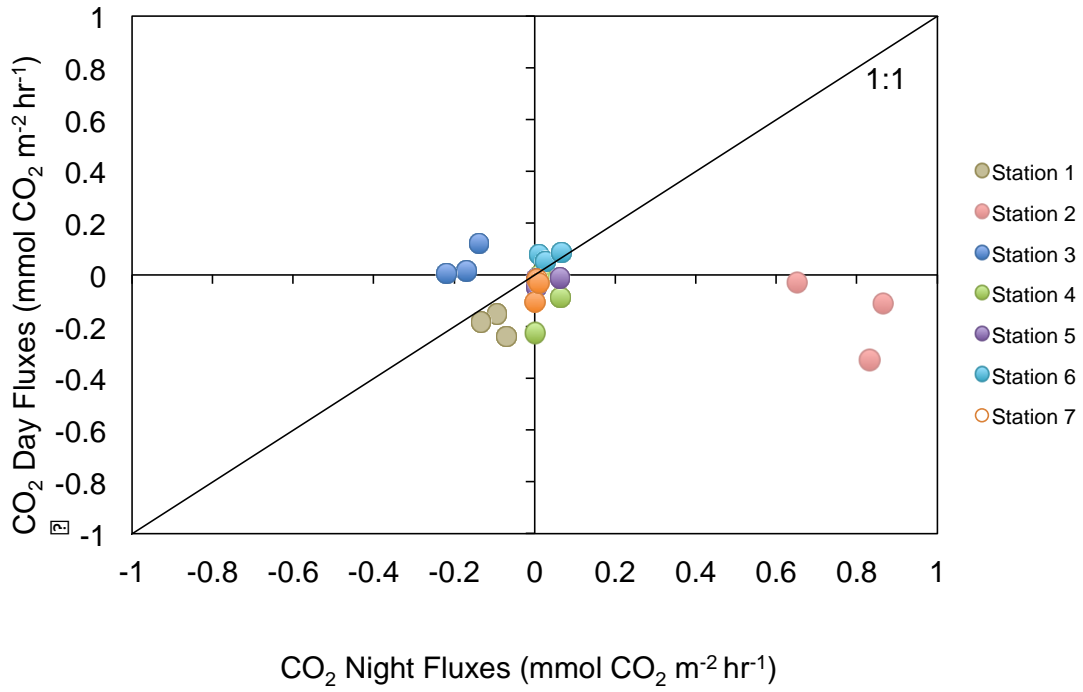
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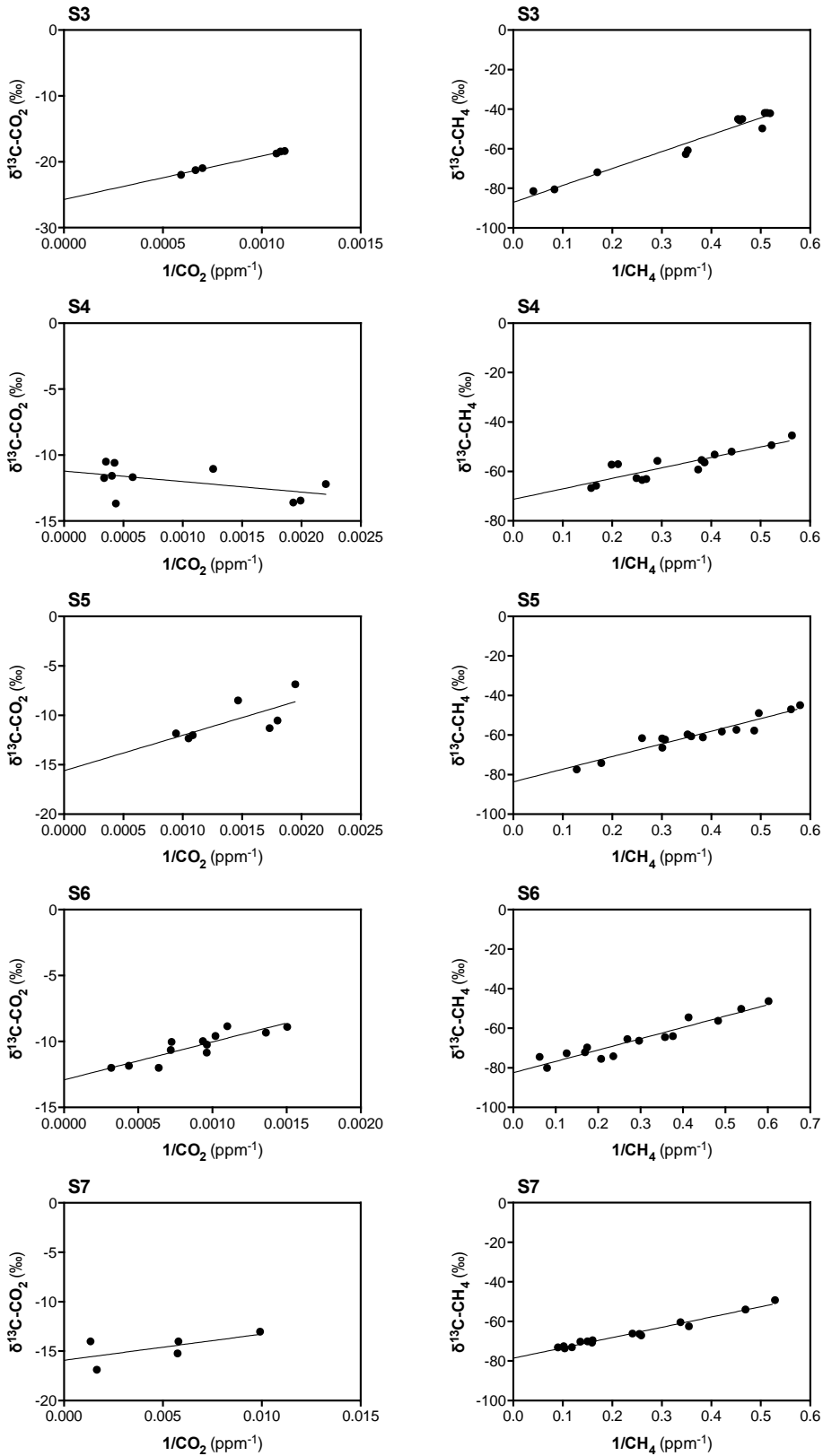
659 **Figure 3**

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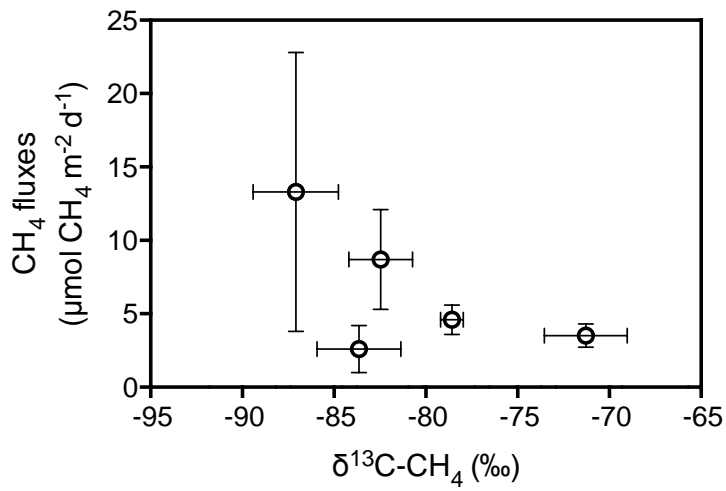
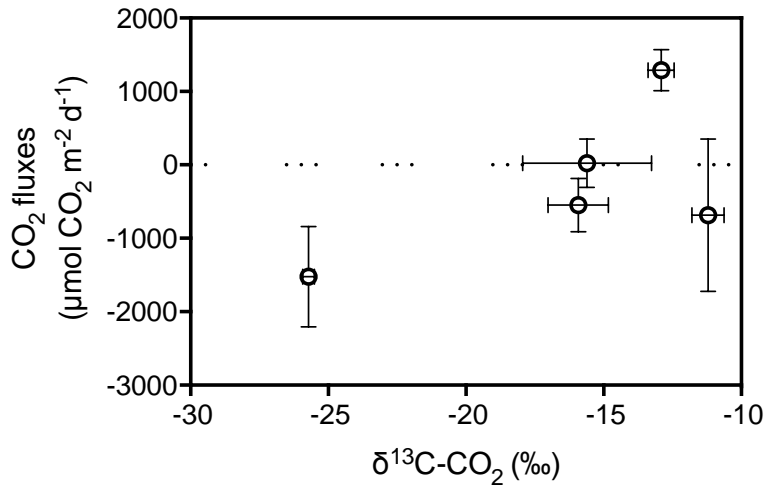
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665 **Figure 5**

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**Table 1.** Summary of greenhouse gas fluxes and sediment characteristics from studied mangrove forests. CH<sub>4</sub> fluxes in brackets represent CO<sub>2</sub> equivalents in terms of global warming potential for a time horizon of 100 years (GWP<sub>100</sub>), taking into account climate-carbon feedback as suggested by the AR5 of IPCC (Myhre et al., 2013). Data represent the mean ± SEM and nd means no data available.

Station	CO <sub>2</sub> Day Flux ( $\mu\text{mol CO}_2 \text{ m}^{-2} \text{ hr}^{-1}$ )	CH <sub>4</sub> Day Flux ( $\mu\text{mol CH}_4 \text{ m}^{-2} \text{ hr}^{-1}$ )	CO <sub>2</sub> Night Flux ( $\mu\text{mol CO}_2 \text{ m}^{-2} \text{ hr}^{-1}$ )	CH <sub>4</sub> Night Flux ( $\mu\text{mol CH}_4 \text{ m}^{-2} \text{ hr}^{-1}$ )	Daily CO <sub>2</sub> Flux ( $\mu\text{mol CO}_2 \text{ m}^{-2} \text{ d}^{-1}$ )	Daily CH <sub>4</sub> Flux ( $\mu\text{mol CH}_4 \text{ m}^{-2} \text{ d}^{-1}$ )	$\delta^{13}\text{C-CO}_2$ (‰)	$\delta^{13}\text{C-CH}_4$ (‰)	Nitrogen Density ( $\text{mgN cm}^{-3}$ )	C <sub>org</sub> Density ( $\text{mgC cm}^{-3}$ )	Chl <i>a</i> ( $\mu\text{g Chl a/gr sediment}$ )
1	-188 ± 25	0.30 ± 0.17 [10.2]	-99 ± 18	0.19 ± 0.04 [6.46]	-3452 ± 271	5.9 ± 1.3 [201]	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
2	-157 ± 89	0.05 ± 0.02 [1.7]	782 ± 66	0.03 ± 0.01 [1.02]	7500 ± 894	0.9 ± 0.25 [31]	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
3	49 ± 37	0.69 ± 0.4 [23.46]	-176 ± 23	0.42 ± 0.39 [14.28]	-1524 ± 686	13.3 ± 9.5 [452]	-25.7 ± 0.2	-87.1 ± 2.3	1.03 ± 0.05	13.33 ± 1.01	nd
4	-86 ± 79	0.28 ± 0.1 [9.52]	29 ± 19	0.01 ± 0.03 [0.34]	-684 ± 1038	3.5 ± 0.8 [119]	-11.1 ± 0.6	-71.3 ± 2.3	0.80 ± 0.03	8.98 ± 0.86	1.02 ± 0.05
5	-22 ± 11	0.09 ± 0.03 [3.06]	24 ± 20	0.13 ± 0.10 [4.42]	23 ± 331	2.6 ± 1.6 [88]	-15.6 ± 2.3	-83.6 ± 2.3	1.12 ± 0.05	13.34 ± 0.98	1.03 ± 0.04
6	73 ± 10	0.27 ± 0.10 [9.18]	35 ± 17	0.45 ± 0.18 [15.30]	1289 ± 280	8.7 ± 3.4 [296]	-12.9 ± 0.5	-82.5 ± 1.7	1.51 ± 0.14	10.58 ± 0.82	0.43 ± 0.14
7	-51 ± 28	0.13 ± 0.05 [4.42]	5 ± 3	0.26 ± 0.03 [8.84]	-547 ± 363	4.6 ± 1.0 [156]	-15.9 ± 1.1	-78.6 ± 0.6	3.30 ± 0.55	33.43 ± 6.69	1.86 ± 0.12

**Table 2.** Comparison of GHG fluxes from global mangrove forests and Red Sea mangroves. Literature values converted from reported form for comparison purposes. Measurements made at the: 1. soil-atmosphere interface, 2. air-sea interface with DIC calculation methods, and 3. air-sea interface with equilibration methods.

			CO <sub>2</sub> (mmol m <sup>-2</sup> d <sup>-1</sup> )		CH <sub>4</sub> (μmol m <sup>-2</sup> d <sup>-1</sup> )	
Author	Year	Place	Minimum	Maximum	Minimum	Maximum
Allen et al. <sup>1</sup>	2007	Australia	-	-	4.5	25974
Allen et al. <sup>1</sup>	2011	Australia	-	-	70.3	2348
Alongi et al. <sup>1</sup>	2005	China	17	121	5	66
Chen et al. <sup>1</sup>	2016	China	-16.9	279.2	-2.1	8015.1
Kristensen et al. <sup>1,2</sup>	2008b	Tanzania	28	115	0	87.6
Livesley & Andrusiak <sup>1</sup>	2012	Australia	50	150	50	749
Borges et al. <sup>2</sup>	2003	Papua New Guinea	-	43.6	-	-
Bouillon et al. <sup>2</sup>	2003	India	-	70.2	-	-
Bouillon et al. <sup>2</sup>	2007a	Kenya	3	252	-	-
Bouillon et al. <sup>2</sup>	2007b	Kenya	-	52	-	-
Bouillon et al. <sup>2</sup>	2007c	Tanzania	1	80	-	-
Call et al. <sup>3</sup>	2015	Australia	9.4	629.2	13.1	632.9

Ho et al. <sup>3</sup>	2014	United States	20	118	-	-
Jacotot et al. <sup>3</sup>	2018	New Caledonia	3.12	441.8	4.32	4129.7
Rosentreter et al. <sup>3</sup>	2018a	Australia	58.7	277.6	-	-
Rosentreter et al. <sup>3</sup>	2018b	Australia	-	-	96.5	1049.8
This Study <sup>3</sup>	2017	Red Sea	-3.5	7.5	0.9	13.3